

# #History: A Journal of Student Research

---

Volume 1

Article 8

---

2017

## #History Volume 1

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.brockport.edu/hashtaghistory>



Part of the [History Commons](#)

---

### Repository Citation

(2017) "#History Volume 1," *#History: A Journal of Student Research*: Vol. 1 , Article 8.

Available at: <http://digitalcommons.brockport.edu/hashtaghistory/vol1/iss1/8>

This Full Issue is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @Brockport. It has been accepted for inclusion in #History: A Journal of Student Research by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @Brockport. For more information, please contact [kmyers@brockport.edu](mailto:kmyers@brockport.edu).

# Volume 1 (2016)

## *Faculty Advisors' Introduction*

Greetings and welcome to the inaugural issue of #History, the student scholarship journal of the Department of History at the College at Brockport. As faculty co-advisors for this journal, we want to take this occasion as an opportunity to sing the praises of some of the people who made this first issue possible. Without their contributions, this first installment would never have gotten off the ground.

First and foremost is our colleague, Dr. Angela Thompsell, who really did the lioness' share of the heavy lifting that brought the journal to life: She oversaw everything from the basics of design and artwork, to supervising the student editors — showing them the ropes and keeping them on track. The launch of this first issue is really very much her achievement

Next up would be our student Managing Editor, Martin Norment, and his team of student editors, who reviewed all the submissions and did much of the copy editing, as well. The results, we believe, reveal the scholarly strengths of our student historians, both undergraduates and graduate students.

Finally, we also owe a debt of gratitude to Kim Myers, our Digital Commons point person at the College at Brockport, and the production staff at Bepress. Their responsiveness and eagerness to help made the complex task of putting together a new online journal and getting up and running seem simple.

Welcome once again, and we hope you enjoy the articles and papers in issue number 1 of #History.



## Editors

### **Managing Editor**

Martin Norment

### **Associate Editors**

Nathan Daugherty

Matty Kuhar

Richard Stocking

### **Faculty Advisors**

Dr. Angela Thompsell

Dr. Carl Davila

Dr. Paul Moyer

## Mission Statement

*#History: A Journal of Student Research* is a student driven, peer-reviewed, electronic journal that publishes articles by graduate and undergraduate students from any accredited college or university. *#History* showcases and shares exceptional student scholarship in a variety of formats including research papers, master theses, capstone projects, oral history interviews, posters, historical documentaries, and photo essays. By engaging students from multiple institutions, *#History* seeks to connect students from different schools and to create an intellectual forum that encourages historical dialogue and the exchange of ideas. The journal also offers promising student historians at the College at Brockport an opportunity for hands-on experience with the publishing end of the profession.

## Aims & Scope

*#History: A Journal of Student Research* presents student scholarship in all fields of the discipline of history and is open to any topic and any methodology, including original scholarship, historiographic studies, archival studies, oral history (in any medium, including audio/visual), essays addressing historical or historiographic issues, and historical work drawing as well from other fields such as anthropology or literary studies. The only limitations are that all submissions must be the original work of a student at a bona fide institution of higher learning, and must not have been previously published in another venue.

In creating this online journal, the Department of History at the College at Brockport hopes both to reward and encourage student excellence in the study and writing of history, and to make the work of promising young historians available to a wider audience, historians and non-historians alike.

# ***#HISTORY:*** A JOURNAL OF STUDENT RESEARCH

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 1

FALL 2017

---

## *ARTICLES*

**THE PATH TO RUIN: INFLEXIBILITY, DELUSION, AND DISCORD BETWEEN THE KAISER, CHANCELLOR, AND GERMAN HIGH COMMAND IN THE GREAT WAR**

NICHOLAS VECCHIO, THE COLLEGE AT BROCKPORT ..... 1-19

**THE GREAT WHITE DAWN OF THE PUEBLO: REVOLT AND PUEBLOAN WORLDVIEW IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY NEW MEXICO**

MARTIN NORMENT, THE COLLEGE AT BROCKPORT ..... 20-34

**JAMES GUSTAVUS WHITELEY: THE LOST AGENT OF KING LEOPOLD II**

JONATHAN BROIDA, THE COLLEGE AT BROCKPORT ..... 35-45

**GEORGE GRENVILLE**

CALEB FOLLMER, THE COLLEGE AT BROCKPORT ..... 46-56

## *PAPERS*

**THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION AND THE BLACK LOYALIST EXODUS**

JULIA BIBKO, THE COLLEGE AT BROCKPORT..... 57-73

**NEOSLAVERY: THE PERPETUATION OF SLAVERY AFTER THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR**

BEN FALTER, THE COLLEGE AT BROCKPORT..... 74-91

**THE SEXUAL REVOLUTION OF THE “ROARING TWENTIES”: PRACTICE OR PERCEPTION?**

SHELLIE CLARK, THE COLLEGE AT BROCKPORT ..... 92-101

# THE PATH TO RUIN: INFLEXIBILITY, DELUSION, AND DISCORD BETWEEN THE KAISER, CHANCELLOR, AND GERMAN HIGH COMMAND IN THE GREAT WAR

Nicholas Vecchio, The College at Brockport

## Abstract

This paper focuses on the political and military decisions of the German High Command during the First World War. After first examining the unresolved historiographic discourse over Germany's fifth Imperial Chancellor, Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg, it explores the backgrounds of Kaiser Wilhelm II, Chancellor von Bethmann-Hollweg, General Erich von Falkenhayn, and General Erich Ludendorff, and studies the argument within the High Command over whether Germany should focus her war efforts on the western or eastern fronts. Two central theses are argued: (1) Germany had numerous opportunities to end the war diplomatically with favorable terms once it was clear they would not be able to win militarily, but these were all thwarted due to the inability of the war leaders to cooperate and agree in any capacity. (2) Falkenhayn, Ludendorff and Bethmann-Hollweg all vied for the support of the Kaiser in key military and political decisions, but by 1917 the Kaiser was largely supplanted by Ludendorff because the Kaiser failed in his constitutional role as Supreme Warlord and mediator between civilian and military branches. [Keywords: Germany, WWI, Kaiser Wilhelm, Ludendorff, Falkenhayn, strategy]

## CONFLICTING INTERPRETATIONS: THEOBALD VON BETHMANN-HOLLWEG

The discourse over Germany's war leaders in the First World War has been highly debated since the end of the war. Throughout the 1970s, Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg was scrutinized by the leading European historians of the day. In *Das Deutsche Kaiserreich*, Hans-Ulrich Wehler judged Bethmann-Hollweg as a "conflict shy bureaucrat, who failed in his policy of administering problems in a system that could no longer be governed."<sup>1</sup>

Willibald Gutsche's *Aufstieg und Fall eines kaiserlichen Reichskanzlers* argued that the Chancellor's policies were contradictory, and claims that he was a "cunning imperialist politician" who championed the German war of conquest, while at the same time merely pretending to favor pacifism.<sup>2</sup> However, many American historians have interpreted Bethmann-Hollweg's policies and demeanor more positively within the contextual framework of Imperial Germany. Gordon Craig claimed that Bethmann-Hollweg was "careful and energetic in his policy, but his moderate foreign policy brought about his undoing under the pressure of the egotistic military."<sup>3</sup>

A contemporary interpretation of Bethmann-Hollweg by Mark Hewitson argued that, "despite occasional forebodings, Bethmann-Hollweg was confident that Germany could win a war of annihilation and achieve a complete surrender of France and Russia."<sup>4</sup> Hewitson further argued

Vecchio, Nicholas. "The Path to Ruin: Inflexibility, Delusion and Discord Between the Kaiser, Chancellor, and German High Command in the Great War," #History: A Journal of Student Research, n. 1 (December 2016). Brockport, NY: Department of History, The College at Brockport, S.U.N.Y.: 1-19.

that many of Bethmann-Hollweg's decisions during the period immediately preceding the war were based on a policy of continental domination, and the Reich's leaders including Bethmann-Hollweg, were ready for an offensive war.<sup>5</sup> Although Hewitson's paper focused on Imperial Germany's decisions at the beginning of the First World War, his critique of Bethmann-Hollweg implies that he was little different than any of the annexationist military leaders like Erich Ludendorff.

Despite Hewitson's more recent discussion of the Chancellor, Konrad Jarausch offers the most nuanced interpretation of Bethmann-Hollweg's actions. Jarausch incorporated previously unused documentation to help shape his view of the Chancellor. The Jewish journalist Theodor Wolff was the editor-in-chief of the leading liberal newspaper, the *Berliner Tageblatt*, who conducted several in depth interviews with Bethmann-Hollweg in 1915. The Wolff interviews revealed that the Chancellor harbored deep enmity towards the Pan-German annexationists like Ludendorff.<sup>6</sup> Bethmann-Hollweg wanted Germany to become the dominant country in the European continent, but he was opposed to large-scale annexations. Bethmann-Hollweg sought to establish indirect political, economic and military ties with Belgium in the west, and Poland in the east to serve as buffer zones, without directly annexing them. During the war, Bethmann-Hollweg championed political reform and peace. However, Jarausch correctly argues that the Chancellor's weakness was his inability to force a moderate course on Germany's immutable military leaders.<sup>7</sup> Bethmann-Hollweg failed to achieve a peaceful resolution to the First World War, and his efforts were undermined by the inflexibility of Germany's military leaders.

## BACKGROUND AND BUILDUP TO WAR

In order to understand how Kaiser Wilhelm II came to his wartime decisions, his role as the German Emperor must be evaluated in the years leading up to the war that defined his character and gave insight into how he would act once war broke out. Kaiser Wilhelm II came to power in 1888 after the premature death of his father, Frederick III. Wilhelm II had grown up with the conflicting ideologies of his progressive, liberal father and his conservative grandfather, Wilhelm I. According to Christopher Clark, Wilhelm II was raised with the some teachings of traditional, militaristic Prussian doctrine like his grandfather, Wilhelm I. However, the marriage of Wilhelm's father to the English Princess, Victoria, and the growing rift between political factions caused Wilhelm's upbringing and education to be pulled in two different directions.

One side was Anglophile, liberal-bourgeois, and based upon the creation of civil virtues, while the other was from the old-Prussian, aristocratic school of thought which centered on the cultivation of military skills and discipline.<sup>8</sup> The struggle between the different pedagogical ideologies gave Wilhelm a unique personality which allowed him to be thoughtful and responsive to the needs of others, while also allowing him to maintain a sense of admiration for the military, despite not being strategically adept.<sup>9</sup> Wilhelm's upbringing is of importance for the purposes of

our evaluation because it is the reason why Wilhelm never formed a decisive set of principles and values, and this flaw hurt him later in his reign.

An important part of Wilhelm's reign was his period of "personal rule" from 1897-1900. Wilhelm was a firm believer in the idea of the Divine Right of Kings and as such, he believed it fell to him, and only him, to make the decisions in the best interests of different regions and classes.<sup>10</sup> The Kaiser's period of 'personal rule' included several reform programs such as the Penal Detention Bill (Zuchthausvorlage) in 1898 and the Canal Bill of 1899. Both of these programs were designed with the right intentions. The Penal Detention Bill was supposed to provide legal protection to those who continued to work during a strike. The Canal Bill was the product of the Kaiser's dream of uniting the industrial west with the agricultural east of Germany.<sup>11</sup> Regardless of how much influence the Kaiser desired, it meant little in the new world under the Imperial Constitution of 1871. According to the new constitution, the Kaiser could prepare and promulgate new laws, but needed a consensus from both the upper (Bundesrat) and lower (Reichstag) houses to pass them.<sup>12</sup> Most politicians believed that Wilhelm's programs were too far-reaching. As a result, the majority of the Kaiser's bills were quickly shot down by the members of the Reichstag and never came to fruition.

Wilhelm II believed in personal diplomacy, and wished to use existing familial ties between his nation, Britain, and Russia to strengthen Germany's political position.<sup>13</sup> He attempted to use these ties to alleviate the other nations' fears of a rising, powerful Germany. However, Wilhelm was overzealous in his efforts, often acting without consulting his advisors, and his direct negotiations did not get far.<sup>14</sup> Wilhelm wooed Great Britain, France, and Russia in an attempt to prevent Germany from becoming politically isolated. In the summer of 1890, the Kaiser moved to strengthen Germany's relationship with Great Britain; a few months later he pursued a policy to strengthen Germany's ties with France.<sup>15</sup> However when Wilhelm visited France without first consulting the Foreign Office, he did more harm than good, and relations between the nations cooled. After senselessly allowing former Chancellor Otto Von Bismarck's Russo-German Reinsurance Treaty to lapse, the Kaiser attempted to repair relations with Russia in 1891. However, the Russians were not particularly receptive, as they were in the process of building a new alliance with France.<sup>16</sup>

The Kaiser tried to single-handedly improve foreign relations up until 1907 when the *Daily Telegraph* affair took the wind out of his proverbial sails. Wilhelm had stayed at High Cliffe Castle in Surrey, England after visiting Windsor. There he conducted a mock interview with Colonel Edward Stuart Wortley, who published the conversation in the *Daily Telegraph*.<sup>17</sup> Rather than improve relations, the Kaiser's outbursts during the interview treated Great Britain, France, Russia and even Japan with disdain. The Kaiser's conduct infuriated the Reichstag parties, who condemned his conduct. While the current Chancellor Bernhard von Bülow should have been held responsible for allowing the article to be published, he sat on the sidelines while the public berated the Kaiser.<sup>18</sup> Some of the more liberal political parties called for a possible abdication by the Kaiser or even a change in the constitution to prevent the debacle from happening again. The

*Daily Telegraph* affair left a lasting mark on Wilhelm and thereafter he made fewer public appearances and did not interfere with policies as before.<sup>19</sup>

Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg was born in 1856 at Hohenfinow near Berlin and became Reich Chancellor in 1909 after the Kaiser dismissed von Bülow. He was a longtime friend of the Kaiser, and while in power Bethmann-Hollweg attempted to pursue a policy of "diagonals," meaning that rather than leaning left or right (liberal or conservative), his policies sometimes appealed to the Liberals and other times to the Conservatives. Bethmann-Hollweg sought to transcend party politics and build a bridge between the political Left and Right, hence the policy of the diagonal.<sup>20</sup> While he was an imperialist by nature, Bethmann-Hollweg was a flexible politician who tried to please the political Right with new territorial annexations, but was realistic enough to pursue more limited means, including advocating for a separate peace with one or more of the Allied powers once the conservative dream of a Greater Germany no longer appeared to be feasible. Unfortunately, Bethmann-Hollweg ended up alienating both the Liberals and Conservatives, as his policies often undercut one side or the other. By the time of his resignation he had practically no supporters on either side, and today is often seen as a tragic character whose policies were undermined by those around him.<sup>21</sup>

Erich von Falkenhayn was born in West Prussia in 1861. He became a cadet soldier at the age of eleven and eventually became the Prussian Minister of War in 1913. He was one of the major players who advocated that Germany declare war in 1914. While he is remembered today as the "bloody butcher of Verdun," he was actually a man who learned from his mistakes and tried to incorporate both his successes and failures into his designs.<sup>22</sup> After Germany suffered a defeat on the western front in the beginning of the war, he immediately changed tactics and proposed that Germany should instead pursue a strategy which would propel a military victory into a political negotiation with one of Germany's enemies.<sup>23</sup> However, once Falkenhayn believed he had figured out the best solution to a problem he stuck to his guns on the matter; his inflexibility led him into direct conflict with General Erich Ludendorff, who commanded the armies in the eastern front.

Erich Ludendorff was born in 1865 in the Province of Posen. He was a hard Right conservative who was narrowly focused on complete military victory, with little regard for politics. He had been trained (like all Prussian generals) under the incomplete but influential military doctrine of Karl von Clausewitz, which emphasized the outright crushing of the enemy's forces. After Germany failed to win the war in its opening offensive, and General Falkenhayn failed to win a decisive victory at the Battle of Verdun, it was up to Ludendorff to engineer a decisive battle that would bring victory to Germany.<sup>24</sup> This goal led to him into direct conflict with Falkenhayn, Bethmann-Hollweg, and the Kaiser himself. Ludendorff proved to be the most stubborn of the Kaiser's entourage: he deviously, yet brilliantly, increased his own power throughout the war to bring down not only Falkenhayn and Bethmann-Hollweg, but inadvertently, the Kaiser and his government as well.<sup>25</sup>

The assassination of Austria's Archduke Franz Ferdinand in June, 1914 led to a mounting crisis in the Balkans, as Austria wished to punish Serbia for the death of the Austrian heir to the



throne. The following month, known today as the “July Crisis,” amounted to the buildup of tension between the European powers and eventually culminated in world war. While Germany was the most powerful country in Europe in 1914, historian Niall Ferguson argues that German leaders pessimistically came to the conclusion that Germany would ultimately lose an arms race to Russia, who could have then used their overwhelming numbers to crush Germany. The German generals gambled on a preemptive attack to check Russia’s growing power and consolidate its own status as a major world power. Ferguson provides ample evidence to back up his claims of German paranoia by providing multiple quotes from Generals Moltke, Ludendorff, Grand Admiral von Tirpitz and others.<sup>26</sup> When the Archduke was assassinated, it provided Germany with a political opportunity to launch their preemptive attack. This notion is challenged in the Kaiser’s postwar memoirs where he states:

General von Moltke was of the opinion that war was sure to break out, whereas Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg stuck firmly to his view that things would not reach such a bad pass. Not until General Moltke announced that the Russians had set fire to their frontier posts, torn up frontier railways, and posted red mobilization notices did a light break upon the diplomats in the Wilhelmstrasse and bring about both their own collapse and powers of resistance. They had not *wished* to believe in the war. This shows how little we expected—much less prepared for war in July 1914.<sup>27</sup>

However, one must be wary of apologetic literature written after an event, especially writing that was meant to explain failure. In 1922, the Kaiser had the luxury of defending his actions to make himself appear blameless for Germany’s entry in the war.

Historians disagree as to the extent of the Kaiser’s desire for war in 1914. Historian Christopher Clark maintains that after hearing the news of the Archduke’s assassination aboard his royal yacht, Wilhelm returned to Berlin at once so ‘he could take the situation in and preserve the peace of Europe.’<sup>28</sup> In this context, Wilhelm appears as a champion of peace. However, historian John Röhl disagrees with this conclusion, questioning the validity of the statement. Röhl claims that Clark’s quote was actually just a paraphrase by Lamar Cecil, the Kaiser’s American biographer, in a letter written in December 1919 after Germany’s defeat.<sup>29</sup> Röhl believes the Kaiser was in favor of the war, saying that on July 30 the Kaiser was determined to ‘settle accounts with France’ and ‘free the Balkans from Russia forever!’<sup>30</sup> After two decades of alienating most of Europe, the Kaiser allowed Germany to be plunged into a world war in 1914. Regardless of Germany’s war aims and the Kaiser’s desire for war, Germany had to fight a war on two fronts, and with two relatively weak allies. The Kaiser was Supreme Warlord of the army after all, at least for the time being.

At the onset of the war every member of the German Supreme Command, including the Kaiser, was confident of a quick, decisive military victory through the use of the vaunted “Schlieffen Plan,” which consisted of a sweeping attack through Belgium to get to France more

easily. Although the Kaiser dreamed of upholding his constitutional duty as Supreme Warlord, he quickly relinquished this idea as soon as the war began. The Schlieffen Plan failed at the Battle of the Marne in September 1914, and forced each side to dig in and become locked in trench warfare. The Kaiser's nerves were shaken from this unexpected defeat and he slipped into a depression, consoling himself by reading military dispatches in an overly positive tone.

To combat the Kaiser's hesitancy, his military staff purposefully shielded him from any bad news from the front.<sup>31</sup> Wilhelm was kept of the loop of current military affairs, and even when the Kaiser visited the war front he was offered only vague or outdated news to keep him busy. The effect of these actions limited the Kaiser's influence and allowed the military leaders to conduct affairs as they pleased without interference.<sup>32</sup> For now, the Kaiser was content to remove himself from military affairs, but this isolation was not to last and would result in disastrous consequences for Germany.

After the Chief of the General Staff Helmuth Johann Ludwig von Moltke suffered a nervous breakdown and loss of confidence, the Kaiser relieved him of his command. Under Article 18 of the constitution, the Kaiser had the right to appoint imperial officials.<sup>33</sup> However, by the end of the war this exclusive power of the Kaiser was superseded by Ludendorff. Moltke was replaced by Erich von Falkenhayn, whom the Kaiser personally knew and trusted. The appointment of Falkenhayn was not well received by the rest of the High Command, and he became increasingly loathed as the war progressed and Germany failed to break through in the West. Despite Falkenhayn's flaws (he was known to be a gambler), the Kaiser almost never attempted to alter Falkenhayn's outlook while he was Chief of the General Staff.<sup>34</sup> The failure at the Marne prompted discussion as to what direction the war should take from there on out.

## EAST OR WEST? THE POLITICAL AND MILITARY DEBATE AFTER THE BATTLE OF THE MARNE

After the Battle of the Marne, Bethmann-Hollweg urged a cessation of hostilities as soon as possible. He lost faith that Germany could win a total victory, and recognized that Germany was outmatched in terms of raw manpower and economic stability. The Allies were content to prolong the war, but Germany needed to end it quickly. To this end, Bethmann-Hollweg proposed that Germany should isolate one member of the Entente Powers and conclude a separate peace with them. Bethmann-Hollweg surmised that if Germany could break up the Entente, they could coerce the other two countries to the negotiating table, on Germany's terms.<sup>35</sup>

However, Bethmann-Hollweg soon shifted his initial opinion that Germany needed to win the war quickly. He held that Germany must defend the Western Front and outlast the Allies. While the West held firm, the Germans could advance slowly eastward and convince the Russians to sue for peace. Bethmann-Hollweg used the Danish King Hans Neil Andersen as a mediator to determine whether Russia was interested in peace. However, he was quickly disappointed to learn

that Tsar Nicholas II was confident Russia would win the war and thus were not interested in any negotiations.<sup>36</sup>

Civilian leaders such as Bethmann-Hollweg attempted to feign military competence by dressing in military uniform while giving speeches or talking to military leaders. However, Bethmann-Hollweg admitted that it was impossible for a member of government with only general military knowledge to determine potential military possibilities or necessities.<sup>37</sup> Thus, Bethmann-Hollweg and the rest of the civilian government continued the war unsure of their military capabilities. Meanwhile, the military generals forged onwards with complete confidence in their martial skills.

As a result of this dilemma, the flow of information between the two branches decreased. Falkenhayn did not tell Bethmann-Hollweg about his operational agenda and Bethmann-Hollweg neglected to involve Falkenhayn in diplomatic affairs.<sup>38</sup> Falkenhayn and Bethmann-Hollweg never worked together, so how could Germany expect to win the war when the two most crucial branches failed to communicate with one another? While Bethmann-Hollweg was busy chasing peace, the generals pursued efforts to win a total military victory.

General Falkenhayn believed that Germany should focus its efforts on breaking through in the Western Front. They were close to achieving this at the Marne, and he believed that by transferring troops from the East to the West, that breakthrough could be achieved. However, General Ludendorff and his like-minded partner Paul Von Hindenburg believed that Germany's forces should concentrate on the Eastern Front since they had already achieved major victories over the Russians at the Battles of Tannenberg, Lodz, and the Masurian Lakes in 1914-1915. Ludendorff was adamant that if Falkenhayn diverted troops to the Eastern Front, he would be able to completely encircle the Russians at Lodz at the bend of Vistula River and achieve the knockout blow that Germany sought.<sup>39</sup> Falkenhayn, however, was narrowly focused on the West. He dismissed Ludendorff's pleas and after the war commented on the subject stating that, "It was a grave mistake to believe that our western enemies would give way, if, and because Russia was beaten. No decision in the East, even though it were as thorough as it was possible to imagine, could spare us from fighting to a conclusion in the West."<sup>40</sup>

Falkenhayn was the Chief of the General Staff and outranked Ludendorff. He ignored Ludendorff's protests and launched a second assault on the French city of Ypres, which was repulsed with heavy casualties. Yet even after this defeat, Falkenhayn's resolve did not waver. As a result, by the end of 1915 the Russian armies were severely weakened but crucially still in the field, while Germany continued to fight an exhausting war on two fronts. The commanders in the Eastern Theatre were appalled by this series of unfortunate events and resorted to name-calling and petty hostility to Falkenhayn.<sup>41</sup> In October 1915, Falkenhayn sought to support Austria in an attack against Serbia and wanted to pull troops from the east to support the endeavor. Ludendorff and Hindenburg viewed this as a personal attack on their authority and filed a formal complaint with the Kaiser. However, the Kaiser resolutely supported Falkenhayn, who got his way.<sup>42</sup> The

Serbs were forced to retreat all the way back into Greece, but they were not completely defeated. With the situation in the east stabilized, Falkenhayn now looked back to the west for victory.

Falkenhayn was not as close-minded as his rival Ludendorff, and he believed that Germany needed to pursue a new strategy to win the war. He didn't think Germany had the strength of numbers to dictate the peace that it had sought at the start of the war. Like Bethmann-Hollweg, he reasoned that Germany needed to broker a separate peace with one of the countries to divide the Entente.<sup>43</sup> While he viewed Great Britain as the largest threat, he determined that France should once again be the target. He judged that France's morale was weaker, and an offensive along the Meuse River could "bleed the French army white" and force France to sue for peace with Germany.<sup>44</sup> This would in turn put Russia in a poor position without her main ally, and force her to sue for peace. Then Germany could focus on its most stalwart enemy, Great Britain.<sup>45</sup>

It is critical to note that at the commencement of the war the generals convinced themselves that the only way they could save the monarchy was through military victory and subsequent territorial annexations.<sup>46</sup> The Supreme Command regarded a victorious peace associated with large-scale annexations and financial reparations to be the only acceptable outcome of the war. The Supreme Command assumed that a negotiated peace, let alone a military defeat would destroy the status of the officer corps, the monarchy, and the whole fabric of society as well.<sup>47</sup> Ludendorff maintained this belief throughout the war. He was worried about liberal political reform in the empire and he believed victory could assuage civilian unrest. Conversely, Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg adapted better to Germany's present situation. Whereas Ludendorff championed total military victory, Bethmann-Hollweg pursued separate peace negotiations. While Ludendorff unrelentingly strove for outright annexations in the east and west without regard to the political ramifications, Bethmann-Hollweg favored more subtle measures, such as indirect economic ties and military conventions in those areas.<sup>48</sup>

Which direction, east or west, was the correct front on which to focus? While the greater threat to Germany was the combined might of France and Great Britain in the west, these two were also less likely to break than Russia. After the initial westward thrust by the Germans, only reinforcements from troops in the east might have provided enough manpower to break through. This confusion might have been enough to isolate France, who would have been under immediate threat and thus forced to sue for peace. However, the resistance from Bethmann-Hollweg, Ludendorff and Hindenburg made this a daunting task. The trenches of the western front also reduced the chances of a successful breakthrough offensive.

The successful German Gorlice-Tornow Offensive of May 1915 was a major blow to Russian morale. The Russian Tsar, Nicholas II, declared himself front-line supreme commander to inspire the faltering troops.<sup>49</sup> Consequently, each subsequent Russian defeat was blamed on the Tsar and his government. Had Falkenhayn transferred the required battalions to the east at the Battle of Lodz, the Russian army would have been completely annihilated—much like the fate suffered by the German 6<sup>th</sup> army against the Russians in a reverse situation at Stalingrad during World War II. A decisive defeat at the Battle of Lodz could have produced a political and social

crisis significant enough to bring Russia to the negotiating table. With Russia out of the war in 1915, the Central Powers would not have resorted to the question of unrestricted submarine warfare because of the Allied economic blockade, denying the excuse for America to join the war, and allowing most of the eastern forces to bolster the west for a true knockout blow that the High Command desired. However, the inability of the German High Command to work together prevented a favorable outcome, and the struggle for dominance between Falkenhayn and Ludendorff soon reached a climax.

## VERDUN, THE FALL OF FALKENHAYN, AND ANOTHER CHANCE FOR PEACE

Ludendorff and Hindenburg worked hard to replace Falkenhayn as Chief of the General Staff, but as long as Falkenhayn maintained the support of the Kaiser, he was nearly untouchable. The chancellor did his best to shape German policy, but the decision was ultimately in the hands of Falkenhayn because he was supported by the Kaiser. A policy of attrition as a means to victory was thus put in place without regard to the political implications.<sup>50</sup> The Kaiser was unable to reconcile military and political demands and chose to side more with the military views of Falkenhayn, in part because he favored him, but also to curtail the growing popularity of Hindenburg, who had become a celebrity after the victory at Tannenberg in 1914.<sup>51</sup> In order to end the war using his new strategy of “bleeding the French white,” Falkenhayn chose the fortress of Verdun as the target for his next attack. Although this battle is traditionally remembered today as an atrocious meat grinder that amounted to little more than needless bloodshed, the battle was never intended to develop the way it did.

French offensives in the spring and fall of 1915 in the Champagne region using triple the number of men and three and a half times the number of artillery pieces were repulsed by the Germans with little need for reinforcements, who also inflicted heavy casualties on the French in the process.<sup>52</sup> Falkenhayn sought to goad the French into another major attack while the Germans controlled a strong, defensive position so they could inflict a disproportionate number of casualties on the French. In order to accomplish this, Falkenhayn concluded that the Germans would have to at least threaten to take a strategic objective that the French High Command could not afford to lose.<sup>53</sup>

Falkenhayn ultimately chose Verdun as his target for several reasons. First, it had significant sentimental value to the French. Second, it was a central point in the French line and its loss would severely weaken the French’s ability to maintain their front. Third, Verdun was located in a salient which could be surrounded by the Germans on three sides and bombarded from above. Finally, the land behind the German front was well supported by rail lines and the German artillery could easily sever the French rail lines.<sup>54</sup> Thus, Verdun seemed an ideal target on which to focus. To Falkenhayn, it didn’t matter whether the Germans could successfully capture the fortress. He simply wished to launch an assault on Verdun, gain favorable ground, dig in, and wait for the inevitable French and/or British counterattack. Falkenhayn kept a large force in reserve to

thwart the eventual Allied counterattack, and believed that his heavy artillery could produce enough casualties to bring the French to the negotiating table.<sup>55</sup> However, miscommunication and disagreement between Falkenhayn and the commanders of the German 5<sup>th</sup> army undermined this unique plan for limited victory.

The commanders of the 5<sup>th</sup> army, who represented the brunt of the German assault believed that they should employ artillery on the three available sides surrounding Verdun. Artillery would be used to thoroughly bombard Verdun, and then the 5th army could take it. The attack order given to troops on January 27, 1916 urged the soldiers to fight much more aggressively than Falkenhayn intended. "The entire battle for the fortress of Verdun depends upon the attack never coming to a halt, thereby preventing the French from ever having the opportunity to construct new positions in their rear and reorganizing their shattered resistance."<sup>56</sup>

Falkenhayn did not want to risk such a complicated three-prong attack, and instead told the 5<sup>th</sup> army to limit their attack on just the east bank of the Meuse River; after-all, it didn't matter if they took the fortress, they just needed to be in a desirable position and provoke an Allied counterattack. The discord between Falkenhayn and the 5<sup>th</sup> army produced disastrous consequences for the German forces. Although the initial wave of attacks against Verdun were successful in inflicting massive casualties on the French, Falkenhayn refused to deploy his reserve force to shatter the faltering French line. Crown Prince Wilhelm, the son of the Kaiser, was one of the commanding generals of the 5<sup>th</sup> army and after the battle he lamented that:

On the evening of the 24 February, the resistance of the enemy was actually broken; the path to Verdun was open!... We were so close to a complete victory! However, I lacked the reserves for an immediate and ruthless exploitation of the success we had achieved. The troops, who had been engaged in unbroken, heavy combat for 4 days, were no longer in the condition to do so. Thus, the psychological moment passed unused.<sup>57</sup>

Falkenhayn's reluctance to commit his reserves on time allowed the Franco-British forces to reinforce the area. The Germans were halted well short of the line Falkenhayn wished to hold to conduct his offensive-defensive battle, and the French were content to bombard the Germans with their own artillery from the west bank of the Meuse. The Battle of Verdun dragged on with mounting casualties, but the numbers were not lopsided enough to produce the political effect Falkenhayn hoped for. The initiative was finally called off on December 17, 1916. Thus the battle was not only a tactical failure, but a strategic one as well, actually producing the opposite effect than was intended, bringing the French people together as a nation rather than breaking their morale to the point of suing for peace.<sup>58</sup> This battle served to discredit Falkenhayn, and was a political victory for Ludendorff and Hindenburg.

The Battle of Verdun did not succeed mainly due to the miscommunication of Falkenhayn and the generals of the 5<sup>th</sup> army. The generals of the 5th army were certain that military victory could have been won outright had Falkenhayn committed his reserves when they were needed in

the initial thrust. However, Falkenhayn proposed a new tactic to win the war through attrition. By December, while the Battle of Verdun was winding down, the German General Mackensen had succeeded in crushing much of the Romanian army in the Balkan Front of the war. Bethmann-Hollweg jumped at this new opportunity to begin peace negotiations while Germany was in a stronger position. Despite more objections from Ludendorff and Hindenburg, the Chancellor managed to convince the Kaiser that this was a prime opportunity to secure peace. However, even though Ludendorff was unable to stop the talks, he did manage to alter the German note to the Allied Powers with his own aggressive rhetoric. The note read, “based on the consciousness of their military and economic strength, prepared to continue the struggle to the last man if need be, but simultaneously inspired by the desire of preventing further bloodshed... the four allied governments are proposed to enter into peace negotiations immediately.”<sup>59</sup>

The Entente Powers swiftly rejected the peace note claiming it was a “maneuver of war.” The Entente clearly did not want the war to end if there was any prospect of German victory, no matter how limited that victory may be. Bethmann-Hollweg looked to American President Woodrow Wilson as a mediator for the two sides, but Wilson was moving closer and closer to the Pro-Entente camp.<sup>60</sup> Wilson had demanded that Germany give up all claims to a German controlled Belgium if peace was to be attained. However, Ludendorff and Hindenburg simply refused to acquiesce to this demand. They were dead set on possessing Liège and Belgian railways, and on maintaining open access to occupying the country whenever Germany saw fit.<sup>61</sup> Bethmann-Hollweg’s failed bid for peace provided the opportunity for Ludendorff to bring up the notion of unrestricted submarine warfare as a new way to win the war, which ultimately became the great turning point.

By August, 1916 Falkenhayn’s days were numbered. The disaster at Verdun proved to be a massive blow against his credibility, but the knockout punch came when Romania entered the war against the Central Powers. Falkenhayn believed he could handle the situation in the Balkans, but this new war front located in the east proved to be enough for other generals to take action against him. Bethmann-Hollweg, Ludendorff, Hindenburg and Generals Lyncker and Plessen argued for a removal of Falkenhayn as Chief of the General Staff. The Kaiser agreed, and Falkenhayn was replaced by what became known as the Third Supreme Army Command (OHL) under the command of the poisonous duo, Ludendorff and Hindenburg.<sup>62</sup>

In the same month, Bethmann-Hollweg also attempted to broker peace negotiations separately with Russia. According to Ludendorff’s memoirs, the Kaiser had taken an earnest interest in the peace offer, and he notes that Wilhelm “displayed clearly his high sense of responsibility to bring peace to the world at the earliest moment.”<sup>63</sup> Russia demanded that Poland, and especially the capital city of Warsaw, be returned to them. Not surprisingly, Ludendorff and the rest of the High Command flatly refused to entertain such ridiculous demands. Poland was theirs now. The German Governor-General of Warsaw, von Beseler believed that Poland’s manpower could be harnessed to bolster Germany’s numbers in the field. He proposed that Poland be declared independent with the stipulation of a minimum three regiment strong volunteer Polish

army who would fight for the Central Powers. Ludendorff approved of this plan and although Bethmann-Hollweg did not think it would work, he did not actively resist it because he was largely unsupported and outnumbered by the military leaders. However, once the plan was put in place, the military leaders were quickly disappointed. Most Poles believed that even if they fought for Germany they would receive neither compensation nor gratitude. Instead they chose to passively resist all German machinations. Instead of adding to Germany's strength, Poland became another problem.<sup>64</sup>

Here is a case where a purely political matter where peace with Russia could have been possible. However, Ludendorff's expansionist innuendos in the peace note to the rest of the Allied Powers sabotaged real efforts to end the war. Instead, the military sphere was allowed to encroach into a political affair over the chancellor of the political sphere. What is even more astonishing is the sheer lack of reflection by the military leaders. Ludendorff was fixated on winning the war, yet even through a purely military-oriented lens, Ludendorff failed to recognize that conceding a small piece of territory to Russia in exchange for peace would have eliminated a major front in the war and given him an opportunity to win through military means. Then, after the rest of the Allies were beaten or sued for peace, Germany could re-annex Poland with much less fear of reprisal. Ludendorff's narrow-sightedness is astonishing on multiple levels, and his ineptitude continued with the debate over unrestricted submarine warfare.

## GRAPPLING OVER UNRESTRICTED SUBMARINE WARFARE, AND THE FALL OF BETHMANN-HOLLWEG

After the failure of the Schlieffen Plan at the beginning of the war, Grand Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz pressed for a "wonder weapon" to defeat the Allied Powers quickly and efficiently. From the beginning of the war the British had used the Royal Navy to apply an economic blockade of Germany. Tirpitz believed that using unrestricted submarine warfare, (using submarines to attack enemy merchant vessels while warning neutral merchant craft to not tread into the designated warzone) would serve as a strong counter to the blockade.<sup>65</sup> Tirpitz also believed that unrestricted submarine warfare would inflict so much damage on the British shipping industry that they would be forced to surrender within a few months.<sup>66</sup> The Grand Admiral was supported by Falkenhayn as well as Ludendorff who had this to say on the matter:

The Field Marshall (Hindenburg) and myself, in our view of the whole situation and in our too correct doubt as to the success of the peace proposals, had already had under consideration, as part of our military problems, the possibility of carrying on the submarine campaign in an intensified form Unrestricted submarine warfare was now the only means left to secure in any reasonable time a victorious end to the war... Our honor, our existence, our free economic development, must come unimpaired out of this terrible struggle... In the face of the enemy's will to (our) annihilation, (this is) a call to fight to the last.<sup>67</sup>



Bethmann-Hollweg and as well as the Kaiser were acutely aware of the political repercussions of using an outlawed method of warfare. They correctly argued that if the Germans resorted to this tactic, America would join the war against them, thereby erasing any chance for Germany to win.<sup>68</sup> Tirpitz and Falkenhayn countered that the U-boat campaign would be so successful that Britain would be out of the war long before America would be able to increase its strength to meaningful numbers.

The question over whether to employ unrestricted submarine warfare took place over three debate phases over the course of 1915-1917, and throughout each phase the military and civilian branches struggled to win the Kaiser's approval. The first phase began in February, 1915. After the sinking of the *Lusitania*, America demanded that Germany cease sinking merchant vessels. In this initial crisis, Falkenhayn was on Bethmann-Hollweg's side and agreed that it was a matter of good military policy to halt unrestricted submarine warfare.<sup>69</sup> The Kaiser was also firmly against unrestricted submarine warfare, and this coalition denied Tirpitz.

The second U-boat debate phase occurred from January to May 1916. During this phase Falkenhayn switched sides after talking to Tirpitz about the probability of success, and tried to persuade Bethmann-Hollweg by claiming that unrestricted submarine warfare was crucial to his Verdun strategy and without it Germany would lose the subsequent war of attrition.<sup>70</sup> The Kaiser had the final say in this debate between Falkenhayn and Bethmann-Hollweg. Although he wished to end the war quickly, the Kaiser recognized the significance of the USA's entry into the war, as well as the danger of giving Germany's enemies more propaganda to show how barbaric the Germans were. The Kaiser refrained from declaring unrestricted submarine war, thus temporarily shelving the issue.<sup>71</sup>

The third U-boat debate phase took place during January 1917. By this time Falkenhayn's strategy of attrition had failed, and the blockade was taking a toll on the Central Powers' food supply and materials. After the rejection of their peace offer in December 1916, the military leaders believed they had a favorable political opportunity to reinstate unrestricted submarine warfare. In a meeting between all relevant civilian and military leaders, it is evident that Bethmann-Hollweg was still in doubt about unrestricted submarine warfare but did not press his opposition too far, while Ludendorff maintained a firm, pragmatic stance.

Bethmann-Hollweg: The determination to launch the unrestricted U-boat war depends, then, upon the results which we may expect. Admiral von Holtendorff assumes that we will have England on her knees by the next harvest. On the whole, the prospects for the unrestricted U-boat war are very favorable. Of course, it must be admitted that those prospects are not capable of being demonstrated by proof. The U-boat war is the "last card." A very serious decision. But if the military authorities consider the U-boat war essential, I am not in a position to contradict them. However, it may be imagined that the U-boat war might postpone the end of hostilities.

Ludendorff: The U-boat war will bring our armies into a different and better situation. Through the lack of wood needed for mining purposes and for lack of coal, the production of ammunition is hard-pressed. It means that there will be some relief for the western front. And, too, Russia's power of initiative will be detrimentally affected by the lack of ammunition which will result from shortage in tonnage.<sup>72</sup>

In this critical moment the Kaiser changed his mind and supported the OHL and their request for unrestricted submarine warfare. Although Bethmann-Hollweg still opposed the measure, the Kaiser maintained that this was a purely military matter that did not concern the Chancellor.<sup>73</sup> Thus, Germany resumed unrestricted submarine warfare, and two months later, the United States entered the war.

Although Bethmann-Hollweg was initially content with Falkenhayn's dismissal, he soon came to regret the role he played in the former Chief of the General Staff's demise. The Third OHL consisting of Ludendorff and Hindenburg now had control over the military, and they slowly reduced the Kaiser's influence from 1917-1918. The duo also worked very hard to remove Bethmann-Hollweg and replace him with a conservative puppet chancellor who supported their ideals. The Kaiser still looked favorably at Bethmann-Hollweg but against the relentless attacks from the OHL, his days were numbered. David Craig argues that Bethmann-Hollweg might have saved his position as chancellor after losing the battle over submarine warfare had he acquiesced wholeheartedly to the designs of the OHL. However, he stuck to his beliefs.

Up until this point, the civilian population had continually demanded political reform from the government. Bethmann-Hollweg now sought to fulfill the people's desires and regain some support for himself. Bethmann-Hollweg convinced the Kaiser that political reform would get the civilians back on his side and increase the Kaiser's popularity, of which the Kaiser was always conscious. The Kaiser delivered his "Easter Message" to the people on April 7, 1917, promising political reform at the conclusion of the war. This move prompted a backlash from the Conservatives under Ludendorff.<sup>74</sup>

On April 23, 1917 the OHL prompted the Kaiser to call a meeting to reevaluate Germany's war aims. Bethmann-Hollweg was invited by the Kaiser who had been once again making efforts to obtain a separate peace with Russia after the February Revolution forced the abdication of the Tsar and the creation of a provisional government. This meeting, known as the Kreuznach Conference, served as the first real instance in which the Kaiser lost faith in the Chancellor. Bethmann-Hollweg argued that excessive demands would upset this delicate balance and force Russia to fight on. However, the OHL was fixated on expansionist aims including the annexation of Courland, Lithuania, and the maintenance of control of Poland, even though Germany was not in a strong position to demand them.<sup>75</sup>

The Kaiser's Easter Message was an embarrassment for him due to the negative reaction from the Conservatives. He attempted to rectify this mistake by taking the OHL's side during the Kreuznach Conference. Thus, once again peace efforts were thwarted because of the expansionist

demands of the OHL. However, because peace negotiations were in the political sphere, Bethmann-Hollweg, not Ludendorff and Hindenburg was the one who was blamed for the failure. This would not be the last time that the failures of the OHL were placed at the Chancellor's feet.

By June 19 the U-boat wonder weapon had lost its luster. While the tonnage of ships sunk were initially well above the navy's projections, the Allied Powers soon adopted a transatlantic convoy system that limited the number of ships sunk and allowed them to inflict some damage of their own. Amazingly, the OHL blamed the failed U-boat initiative on Bethmann-Hollweg, claiming that the only reason the Allies continued fighting was because they were counting on an internal collapse of Germany stemming from his statements about political unrest in the country.<sup>76</sup> Ludendorff and Hindenburg then continued their crusade by turning members of the Reichstag against Bethmann-Hollweg by arguing that Bethmann-Hollweg's position in office jeopardized Germany's chance for victory. Confident that Bethmann-Hollweg's support was sufficiently eroded, the duo played their trump card. On the July 12, they telephoned the Kaiser and submitted their resignations, saying they could no longer cooperate with the Chancellor. This childish form of blackmail placed the Kaiser in a hopeless position. The war effort could not afford to lose its two most popular generals. To save His Majesty from embarrassment, Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg resigned as chancellor.<sup>77</sup>

Article 18 of the imperial constitution gave the Kaiser the power to appoint a chancellor. However, Bethmann-Hollweg's successor was chosen by the Supreme Army Command, thus undermining the authority of the monarchy. Georg Michaelis was hand-picked because he was easy to control and would not get in the Supreme Army Command's way like Bethmann-Hollweg did. The Kaiser had never heard of Michaelis, but folded under pressure from Ludendorff, and agreed to Michaelis's appointment as the next chancellor.<sup>78</sup> Throughout the war the people attributed military victories more to Ludendorff and Hindenburg than their sovereign, who neglected his military responsibilities. Now the Kaiser could not even choose his own chancellor. The constitutional authority of the Kaiser was being eroded more and more by the men who were opposed to political and social reform because it might weaken the power of the crown.<sup>79</sup> They wished to preserve the monarchy but were too delusional to recognize the damage that was being done.

After Ludendorff's last ditch Spring Offensive concluded in failure on 18 July 1918, the German troops were at their breaking point and to desperate for peace. They believed that if the Kaiser was removed, then the Allied Powers were more likely to accept a swift peace and bring four years of bloodshed to an end. The OHL was also at its breaking point, but Ludendorff continued to vacillate. After telling the Kaiser the war could not be won and Germany should conclude an armistice with the Allies, he reneged on his words and soon avowed that Germany should continue the war and that the civilian leaders who wished for peace were 'pessimists.'<sup>80</sup> At this point, Ludendorff completely lost the confidence of the Conservatives because of his repeated failures and capricious demeanor. A coup to remove Ludendorff was devised, and when Ludendorff found out he convinced Hindenburg to submit his resignation along with his own, in

an attempt to gain leverage over the Kaiser once again. However, with Ludendorff finally politically weakened, the Kaiser regained temporary fortitude. He accepted Ludendorff’s removal but rejected Hindenburg’s and demanded that he stay, a request to which Hindenburg acquiesced.<sup>81</sup> However, this act proved to be too little, too late.

The removal of Ludendorff did not improve conditions for the Kaiser and the government. Despite repeated advice urging the Kaiser to abdicate in favor of one of his sons to give the monarchy a better chance at survival, Wilhelm stubbornly believed he could stay in power, saying, “I will not abdicate. It would be incompatible with my duties, as successor to Frederick the Great, towards God, the people and my conscious... My abdication would be the beginning of the end for all German monarchies... But above all my duty as Supreme Warlord forbids me to abandon the army now.”<sup>82</sup>

Unfortunately for him, the army did not share the same sentiments towards their Emperor. In the wake of the German Revolution, Wilhelm II fled to Holland in exile where he lived out the remainder of his life in the hope of someday returning to power. Even after Adolf Hitler took control of Germany, the Kaiser still strangely believed that Hitler would give up his position and reinstate Wilhelm as Kaiser.

By the conclusion of World War I Wilhelm, Bethmann-Hollweg, Falkenhayn, and Ludendorff had all lost their power. Chief of the General Staff Erich von Falkenhayn and Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg were ousted by the machinations of Erich Ludendorff, who was in turn removed by the Kaiser. Although not defeated in battle, the German army and people were tired of the war, and in their eagerness for peace, they forced the Kaiser from power as well. These four men vied for power and tried to pull Germany in their own desired directions. But, because of the inflexibility of Ludendorff and the Kaiser, the delusion of Ludendorff, Falkenhayn, and the Kaiser, and the discord between them all —Germany not only lost its chance to win the war, it lost multiple chances for a favorable peace as well. Had the civilian and military branches worked better together, and the man constitutionally in charge of them been stronger and more self-reflective, Germany’s fortunes might have been very different.

---

<sup>1</sup> Konrad Jarausch, “Revisiting German History: Bethmann-Hollweg Revisited,” *Central European History*, v. 21, no. 3, (1988): 227.

<sup>2</sup> Jarausch, “Revisiting German History,” 225.

<sup>3</sup> Jarausch, “Revisiting German History,” 228.

<sup>4</sup> Mark Hewitson, “Germany and France before the First World War: A Reassessment of Wilhelmine Foreign Policy,” *The English Historical Review*, v. 115, no. 462, (2000): 604.

<sup>5</sup> Hewitson, “Germany and France before the First World War,” 605-606.

<sup>6</sup> Jarausch, “Revisiting German History,” 233.

<sup>7</sup> Jarausch, “Revisiting German History,” 242.

<sup>8</sup> Christopher Clark, *Kaiser Wilhelm II: A Life in Power*, (London: Penguin Books, 2009), 6.

<sup>9</sup> Clark, *Kaiser Wilhelm II*, 309.

<sup>10</sup> Clark, *Kaiser Wilhelm II*, 80.

- <sup>11</sup> Clark, *Kaiser Wilhelm II*, 114-119.
- <sup>12</sup> Articles 5 & 17, Constitution of the German Empire, 16 April 1871. Accessed November 25 2015. [http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub\\_document.cfm?document\\_id=1826](http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=1826).
- <sup>13</sup> Wolfgang Mommsen J., "Kaiser Wilhelm II and German Politics," *Journal of Contemporary History* 25 (1990): 297.
- <sup>14</sup> Mommsen, "Kaiser Wilhelm II and German Politics," 297.
- <sup>15</sup> Clark, *Kaiser Wilhelm II*, 171-172.
- <sup>16</sup> Clark, *Kaiser Wilhelm II*, 172-173.
- <sup>17</sup> Mommsen, "Kaiser Wilhelm II and German Politics," 304.
- <sup>18</sup> Mommsen, "Kaiser Wilhelm II and German Politics," 304.
- <sup>19</sup> Mommsen, "Kaiser Wilhelm II and German Politics," 304.
- <sup>20</sup> Konrad Jarausch, *The Enigmatic Chancellor: Bethmann Hollweg and the Hubris of Imperial Germany*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), 349.
- <sup>21</sup> Jarausch, *The Enigmatic Chancellor*, 5-7.
- <sup>22</sup> Robert T Foley, "A New Form of Warfare? Erich Von Falkenhayn's Plan for Victory in 1916," 1.
- <sup>23</sup> Foley, "A New Form of Warfare," 4.
- <sup>24</sup> Martin Kitchen, *Silent Dictatorship: The Politics of the German High Command under Hindenburg and Ludendorff, 1916-1918*, (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers Inc., 1976), 21-22.
- <sup>25</sup> Kitchen, *Silent Dictatorship*, 22.
- <sup>26</sup> Niall Ferguson, "Arms and Men," in *The Pity of War*, (London: Basic Books, 1999), 85, 88, 97-98.
- <sup>27</sup> Wilhelm II, *The Kaiser's Memoirs, Wilhelm II Emperor of Germany, 1888-1918*, trans. Thomas R. Ybarra, (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1922), 248-249.
- <sup>28</sup> Clark, *Kaiser Wilhelm II*, 280.
- <sup>29</sup> John Röhl, "Kaiser Wilhelm II, 1859-1941: A Concise Life," (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 152.
- <sup>30</sup> Röhl, *Kaiser Wilhelm II: A Concise Life*, 159.
- <sup>31</sup> Isabel V. Hull, "Absolute Destruction: Military Culture and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany," (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 267.
- <sup>32</sup> Hull, *Absolute Destruction*, 267-269.
- <sup>33</sup> Article 18, Constitution of the German Empire, 16 April 1871. Accessed November 25 2015. [http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub\\_document.cfm?document\\_id=1826](http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=1826).
- <sup>34</sup> Clark, *Kaiser Wilhelm II*, 313.
- <sup>35</sup> Jarausch, "The Enigmatic Chancellor, 230-232.
- <sup>36</sup> Jarausch, *The Enigmatic Chancellor*, 235-237.
- <sup>37</sup> Hull, *Absolute Destruction*, 202.
- <sup>38</sup> Hull, *Absolute Destruction*, 203.
- <sup>39</sup> Gordon Craig, *Politics of the Prussian Army: 1640-1945*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956), 302.
- <sup>40</sup> Erich von Falkenhayn, *The German General Staff and its Decisions, 1914-1916*, (London: Hutchinson & Co, 1926), 61.
- <sup>41</sup> Craig, *Politics of the Prussian Army*, 304.
- <sup>42</sup> Craig, *Politics of the Prussian Army*, 305.
- <sup>43</sup> Foley, "A New Form of Warfare?," 6.
- <sup>44</sup> Foley, "A New Form of Warfare," 1.
- <sup>45</sup> Foley, "A New Form of Warfare," 5.
- <sup>46</sup> Isabel V. Hull, *The Entourage of Kaiser Wilhelm II: 1888-1918*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 274-275.
- <sup>47</sup> Mommsen, "Wilhelm II and German Politics," 311.
- <sup>48</sup> Hull, *The Entourage of Kaiser Wilhelm*, 274.
- <sup>49</sup> Stephen Kotkin, *Stalin: Volume I: Paradoxes of Power, 1878-1928*, (New York: Penguin Press, 2014), 158.

- 
- <sup>50</sup> Jarausch, *The Enigmatic Chancellor*, 270.
- <sup>51</sup> Jarausch, *The Enigmatic Chancellor*, 270-271.
- <sup>52</sup> Foley, "A New Form of Warfare," 11.
- <sup>53</sup> Foley, "A New Form of Warfare," 12.
- <sup>54</sup> Foley, "A New Form of Warfare," 13.
- <sup>55</sup> Foley, "A New Form of Warfare," 16.
- <sup>56</sup> Foley, "A New Form of Warfare," 20.
- <sup>57</sup> Foley, "A New Form of Warfare," 20.
- <sup>58</sup> Foley, "A New Form of Warfare," 21-22.
- <sup>59</sup> Jarausch, *The Enigmatic Chancellor*, 253.
- <sup>60</sup> Jarausch, *The Enigmatic Chancellor*, 254-255.
- <sup>61</sup> Craig, *Politics of the Prussian Army*, 316-317.
- <sup>62</sup> Jarausch, *The Enigmatic Chancellor*, 292-293.
- <sup>63</sup> Erich Ludendorff, *Ludendorff's Own Story: August 1914-November 1918*, (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1919), Accessed 5 December 2015.  
<https://archive.org/stream/ludendorffsowns05ludgoog#page/n386/mode/2up>.
- <sup>64</sup> Craig, *Politics of the Prussian Army*, 313-316.
- <sup>65</sup> Clark, *Kaiser Wilhelm II*, 319.
- <sup>66</sup> Jarausch, *The Enigmatic Chancellor*, 280.
- <sup>67</sup> Ludendorff, *My Own Story*, 369, 382.
- <sup>68</sup> Clark, *Kaiser Wilhelm II*, 320.
- <sup>69</sup> Holger Afflerbach, "Wilhelm II as Supreme Warlord," in *The Kaiser: New Research on Wilhelm II's Role in Imperial Germany*, ed. Annika Mombauer & William Deist. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 438.
- <sup>70</sup> Hull, *Absolute Destruction*, 224.
- <sup>71</sup> Afflerbach, "Wilhelm II as Supreme Warlord," 439.
- <sup>72</sup> *Official German Documents Relating to the World War*, Translated under the supervision of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1923), II: 1320-1321. Accessed December 9, 2015.  
[http://wwi.lib.byu.edu/index.php/German\\_Discussions\\_Concerning\\_Unrestricted\\_Submarine\\_Warfare](http://wwi.lib.byu.edu/index.php/German_Discussions_Concerning_Unrestricted_Submarine_Warfare).
- <sup>73</sup> Röhl, *Kaiser Wilhelm II, 1859-1941: A Concise Life*, 173.
- <sup>74</sup> Craig, *Politics of the Prussian Army*, 322-323.
- <sup>75</sup> Kitchen, *Silent Dictatorship*, 102-103.
- <sup>76</sup> Craig, *Politics of the Prussian Army*, 325.
- <sup>77</sup> Craig, *Politics of the Prussian Army*, 326.
- <sup>78</sup> Kitchen, *Silent Dictatorship*, 136.
- <sup>79</sup> Craig, *Politics of the Prussian Army*, 327-328.
- <sup>80</sup> Kitchen, *Silent Dictatorship*, 260.
- <sup>81</sup> Afflerbach, Wilhelm II as Supreme Warlord, 446.
- <sup>82</sup> Röhl, *Kaiser Wilhelm II*, 176.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Primary Sources

- "Constitution of the German Empire." *German History in Documents and Images*, April 16, 1871.  
[http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub\\_document.cfm?document\\_id=1826](http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=1826).
- Falkenhayn, Erich Georg Anton Sebastian von. *The German General Staff and Its Decisions, 1914-1916*. New York, Dodd, Mead and company, 1920.

<http://archive.org/details/germangeneralsta00falk>.

“German Discussions Concerning Unrestricted Submarine Warfare - World War I Document Archive.” *World War I Document Archive*, August 31, 1916.

[http://wwi.lib.byu.edu/index.php/German\\_Discussions\\_Concerning\\_Unrestricted\\_Submarine\\_Warfare](http://wwi.lib.byu.edu/index.php/German_Discussions_Concerning_Unrestricted_Submarine_Warfare).

Ludendorff, Erich. *Ludendorff's Own Story, August 1914-November 19...* Vol. 1. New York and London: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1919.

<https://archive.org/stream/ludendorffsowns05ludgoog#page/n0/mode/2up>.

Wilhelm II. *The Kaiser's Memoirs: Wilhelm II, Emperor of Germany, 1888-1918*. Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1922. <http://archive.org/details/kaisersmemoirs001358mbp>.

### Secondary Sources

Afflerbach, Holger. “Wilhelm II as Supreme Warlord in the First World War,” in *War in History* v. 5, no. 4, (November, 1998): 427.

<http://connection.ebscohost.com/c/articles/4093418/wilhelm-ii-as-supreme-warlord-first-world-war>.

Clark, Christopher. *Kaiser Wilhelm II: A Life in Power*. Penguin UK, 2009.

Craig, Gordon A. *The Politics of the Prussian Army, 1640-1945*. 1st edition. London: Oxford University Press, 1956.

Ferguson, Niall. *The Pity of War*. London: Basic Books, 1999.

Foley, Robert T. “A New Form of Warfare? Erich von Falkenhayn’s Plan for Victory, 1916.” *Academia*. Accessed October 13, 2015.

[http://www.academia.edu/4955145/A\\_New\\_Form\\_of\\_Warfare\\_Erich\\_von\\_Falkenhayns\\_Plan\\_for\\_Victory\\_1916](http://www.academia.edu/4955145/A_New_Form_of_Warfare_Erich_von_Falkenhayns_Plan_for_Victory_1916).

Hewitson, Mark. “Germany and France before the First World War: A Reassessment of Wilhelmine Foreign Policy,” *The English Historical Review* v. 115, no. 462 (June, 2000): 570-606.

Hull, Isabel V. *Absolute Destruction: Military Culture and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany*. 1 edition. Cornell University Press, 2006.

———. *The Entourage of Kaiser Wilhelm II, 1888-1918*. First Edition. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982.

Jarausch, Konrad Hugo. “Revisiting German History: Bethmann-Hollweg Revisited.” *Central European History* v. 21, no. 3 (September, 1988): 224-243.

———. *The Enigmatic Chancellor: Bethmann Hollweg and the Hubris of Imperial Germany*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973.

Kitchen, Martin. *The Silent Dictatorship: The Politics of the German High Command Under Hindenburg and Ludendorff, 1916-1918*. New York: Holmes & Meier Pub, 1976.

Kotkin, Stephen. *Stalin: Volume I: Paradoxes of Power, 1878-1928*. New York: Penguin Press, 2014.

Mommsen, Wolfgang J. “Kaiser Wilhelm II and German Politics.” *Journal of Contemporary History* v. 25, no. 2/3 (May 1, 1990): 289–316.

Röhl, John C. G. *Kaiser Wilhelm II: A Concise Life*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

# THE GREAT WHITE DAWN OF THE PUEBLO: REVOLT AND PUEBLOAN WORLDVIEW IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY NEW MEXICO

Martin Norment, The College at Brockport

## Abstract

Previous historical scholarship on the origins of the 1680 Pueblo Revolt argues that the rebellion resulted from either poor environmental conditions, harsh Spanish treatment of the Pueblo Indians, or a combination of the two. Using Puebloan myths, Spanish documents from colonial New Mexico, and anthropological studies of various Puebloan groups and religions, this paper contends that the Pueblo identified the disease, worsening environmental conditions, and harsh Spanish treatment as an indicator that they had failed to meet their ceremonial obligations to their ancestors. Therefore, Spanish occupation and prohibition of customary Pueblo religion acted as a barrier to their restoration of harmony. Thus given a tangible cause for their suffering, the Pueblo people rebelled to rid themselves of the Spanish in order to practice rituals and secure their prosperity. [Keywords: Pueblo Indians, New Mexico, Spain, Native American religion]

In 1680 the Pueblo Indians of New Mexico rose in rebellion, quickly regaining their sovereignty by removing their Spanish overlords. Historians intrigued by the unique, but limited, success of the Pueblo Revolt have struggled to explain the origins of the Indian insurrection. Scholars such as Henry Warner Bowden, Ramón A. Gutiérrez, and Jack D. Forbes have cited religious differences and Spanish suppression of native Puebloan rituals as the chief determinants of the uprising. Specifically, the authors see the Franciscan missionaries' violent and despotic enforcement of decrees prohibiting "idolatry" and traditional native religious practices as the motivations for Puebloan assault against their colonial oppressors.<sup>1</sup> Contrasting the claim that the revolt was the result of the Indians' desire for religious self-determination, historian Van Hastings Garner attributed the revolt to economic and environmental conditions. Garner argues that increasingly poor crop yields due to drought, fierce outbreaks of disease, and repeated Navajo and Apache forays against Puebloan settlements demonstrate that the Spanish were not as powerful as they had initially seemed and could not guarantee prosperity or protection.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, Andrew L. Knaut contends that the proliferation of drought, pestilence, and violence significantly increased the burden of Spanish demands for tribute. This, he reasons, prompted the Pueblos to challenge Spanish authority and rise in rebellion.<sup>3</sup>

Although the aforementioned arguments acknowledge many of the conditions in seventeenth-century New Mexico that antagonized the Pueblos, they do not adequately account for the cultural context in which the revolt occurred. The Pueblo Indians possessed a worldview that connected prosperity with the timely performance of traditional rituals and misfortune with the failure to appease their ancient gods and grandmothers through the fulfillment of their



ceremonial duty.<sup>4</sup> The Pueblos' worldview helps to compensate for the lack of Puebloan documents describing the rebellion and the surrounding events, subsequently improving the historical understanding of the revolt.

The Pueblo Indians experienced the Spaniards' religious repression and the proliferation of poor environmental conditions within the context of their cultural understanding of the world. They identified their suffering as the result of a failure to adhere to their ceremonial and ritual norms, which their myths and oral histories confirmed would guarantee prosperity. Thus, the Pueblos revolted in order to remove Spanish authority, which prevented them from paying homage to their ancestors and assured a perpetual decline in security for the indigenous people of New Mexico.

With the advent of Spanish colonization of New Mexico, two distinct changes to the Puebloan experience occurred, subsequently challenging the natural order of their world and motivating the Indians to rebel. First, in 1598 Franciscan missionaries began to destroy all signs of Puebloan religion in their campaign to convert Indians to Christianity. Later, during the seventeenth-century, the Spanish colonial government and missionaries instituted an era in New Mexico where violent repression of native religion was the norm. Then, with the arrival of Governor Juan Francisco Treviño in 1675, the Spanish commenced a crusade against native religion and "witchcraft" that resulted in the execution or imprisonment of those accused. In one instance, "forty-seven medicine men who admitted practicing witchcraft were arrested, flogged, and sold into slavery."<sup>5</sup>

Second, from the onset of Spanish-Puebloan contact, European diseases had decimated native populations in New Mexico. By 1680, the Puebloan population was reduced to one third of estimates from 1600.<sup>6</sup> Beginning in the second half of the seventeenth century drought, famine, and Apache raids further worsened environmental conditions in New Mexico. In the 1660s, the Pueblos suffered a succession of crop failures that led to widespread famine in the 1670s, which prompted starved Athapascan tribes to raid Puebloan settlements in search of sustenance.<sup>7</sup>

The changes in seventeenth-century New Mexico prompted Puebloan medicine men and religious leaders to argue for the revitalization of native religion and the overthrow of the Spanish in order to restore cosmic order. Popé, a Puebloan religious leader from San Juan and an instrumental organizer of the revolt, told the Pueblos that, if they killed the "priests and Spaniards" and returned to their ancient traditions, "they would gather large crops of grain, maize with large and thick ears, and everything else" they needed.<sup>8</sup>

The absence of historical documents regarding the Puebloan interpretation of the 1680 insurrection poses a significant hurdle in the understanding the revolt. Thus, the Pueblo worldview offers the best available insight into how the Indians interpreted their predicament under Spanish colonial rule. The Pueblo peoples are comprised of two major groups: the eastern Pueblo, centered in New Mexico along the Rio Grande, and the western Pueblo, whose villages

dominated Arizona and western New Mexico. The eastern Pueblo include smaller Indian tribes that speak the Keresan and Tanoan languages. Additionally, the western Pueblos include the Hopi, Zuni, Acoma, and Laguna Indians.<sup>9</sup> Although the different Pueblo tribes have their own distinct myths, reciprocity between man and god is an overreaching trait not unique to any one tribe.<sup>10</sup>

Puebloan myths and oral histories establish a relationship between the Pueblos and their gods based on mutual exchange. The Pueblos' primogenitors expected their descendants to honor them with gifts and prayers; in return, the ancestors answered the requests of their descendants. According to Pueblo theology, "The gods control more than man and they, therefore, are basically under the same obligation to share their bounty as man is."<sup>11</sup> Historian Ramón Gutiérrez argues that the Pueblos desired to achieve cosmic harmony through the careful maintenance of their relationship with the gods:

So long as people performed religious rites joyfully and precisely, careful that every prayer was word-perfect and full of verve, and that the ritual paraphernalia was exact to the last detail, the forces of nature would reciprocate with their own uninterrupted flow. The sun would rise and set properly, the seasons of the year would come and go, bringing rainfall and verdant crops in summer, and in the winter, game and snow.<sup>12</sup>

Clearly, the Pueblos attached a strong importance to the relationship between themselves and their gods. The Pueblos concluded that through the repeated performance of rituals they secured a prosperous and harmonious future.

The ritual obligation of ceremonial dancing stimulated the gods to reciprocate the Pueblos' gifts. Within the nature of Puebloan reciprocal obligations, dancing indicated service to the gods which, if done properly, encouraged the gods to "honor man's claims."<sup>13</sup> Similarly, presents of corn given to Puebloan gods produced a return on investment. The Pueblos believed that an oblation of cornmeal required the gods to honor the Indians' requests or, at least forced them to consider their appeal.<sup>14</sup>

The creation myth, *The White Dawn of the Hopi*, demonstrates the idea of reciprocity between the Hopi and their gods. In the legend, the Huruing Wuhti of the east and the Huruing Wuhti of the west, goddesses of the east and west, dried the land once covered in water and brought life to the world. The goddesses made a Hopi man and woman out of clay, brought them to life, and taught them their language; in this way the goddesses populated to world. When the goddesses departed they left clear instructions for the Hopi:

Finally the goddess of the west said to the people: "You stay here; I'm going to live in the middle of the ocean in the west. When you want anything, pray to me there." Her people were sorrowful, but she left them. The Huruing Wuhti of the east did the same...Hopi

who want something from them must deposit their offerings in the village. And when they say their prayers, they think of the two goddesses who live far away.<sup>15</sup>

Similarly, the Acoma creation myth, *Emerging Into the Upper World*, also placed a strong significance on the offering of prayer and cornmeal to obtain happiness and worldly success. In the legend, the Acoma spirit Tistctinako told the first two Acoma sisters to “Pray to the sun with pollen and sacred cornmeal...Ask for a long life and happiness, and for success.”<sup>16</sup> Creation myths instilled the belief that gods would fulfill the the people’s requests as long as they continued to pray and make offerings.

Other legends clearly identify reciprocity as the crucial aspect of the relationship between the Pueblos, their ancestors, and prosperity. The myth, *A Journey to the Skeleton House*, describes the Hopi interpretation of the afterlife and the role that deceased ancestors play in the lives of Hopi Indians. In the story a young man, with the help of a medicine man, embarks on a long journey to the skeleton house, where the dead reside, in order to better understand the afterlife. Upon satisfying his curiosity, the young man returns home and tells his mother, father, and the medicine man about what he has learned: “Then he told them about the nakwakwosis and bahos. ‘If we make prayer offerings to them, they will provide rain and crops and food for us. Thus we shall assist each other.’ ‘Very well,’ they said. ‘Very well; so that is the way.’”<sup>17</sup> In myths discussing both creation and death, tales stressed the importance of reciprocity between the gods and the Pueblos. If the Pueblos pray and make offerings to their gods and ancestors, they will be rewarded with prosperity.

Although Puebloan religious figures held the potential to grant comfort and security, they were also to be feared. If the Pueblos disregarded their ceremonial duties or shunned their ancestors, the gods would punish the Indians. Anthropologist Leslie A. White argues that the Pueblo understood that “to ignore or violate, to lose the customs of the old days, is, according to native feeling and belief, to bring misfortune and disaster, even extinction, upon themselves.”<sup>18</sup> The Pueblos believed, as an Isleta Pueblo tradition demonstrates, that their ancestors created misfortune and sickness to remind the Pueblo of their ritual obligations:

The Mother thought that nobody would remember her after they had come up into this world. So Weide had the Witch chief born with us, come up with us, through whom we could remember the Mother. That is why there are witches, we believe; from getting sick through witches, people will remember the Mother and Weide.<sup>19</sup>

Failure to make proper offerings to the Puebloan gods and purify oneself against the dead could harm cosmic equilibrium and result in negative consequences such as disease, drought, and misfortune.<sup>20</sup>

The cultural importance of the reciprocal relationship between the Pueblo and their gods, and the significance of ritual offerings, sheds light on the 1680 Pueblo Revolt. This worldview

defined the Pueblos' interpretation of the Spanish occupation of New Mexico. The strict religious repression, poor environmental conditions, and events leading the seventeenth-century insurrection challenged the Pueblos' notions of reciprocity between man and the gods. Thus, the Puebloan insurrection should be understood within the context of Puebloan beliefs.

In January 1598, Don Juan de Oñate, a Spanish explorer who had assisted Hernán Cortés in the conquest of Mexico, departed with 129 Spanish soldiers on an expedition to colonize New Mexico.<sup>21</sup> "Your main purpose," his superiors stated, "shall be the service of God Our Lord, the spreading of His holy Catholic faith, and the reduction and pacification of the natives of said provinces."<sup>22</sup> With the party's arrival in New Mexico on April 20, 1598, the Spanish Pueblo quickly submersed the Pueblo Indians in a European-dominated society that demanded acculturation. Ten days after his arrival, Oñate ordered a chapel to be constructed, held High Mass, and forced the Pueblos present to kneel and kiss the feet of the Franciscan missionaries.<sup>23</sup> Quite apart from Oñate's mission of reduction and pacification, and the symbolic loss of Puebloan authority that kneeling in front of the Franciscans represented, life under Spanish rule grew much worse.

Upon the missionaries' arrival, they quickly identified Puebloan religion as a challenge to Christianity. During a late-sixteenth century expedition to New Mexico, a Franciscan friar stated, "Here in this pueblo of Aguico and in the others are some small prayer houses where the Indians speak to the devil and give him offerings."<sup>24</sup> The friars began the Christianization process by removing all forms of Puebloan religion. They instructed the Pueblo Indians to abandon their gods or, according to the missionaries, their devil worship and witchcraft and to disavow their belief in idols. Furthermore, the friars sought to remove all evidence of Puebloan religion through the destruction of their idols. For example, Fray Alonso Benavides described a collection of over one thousand idols, which he took from the house of elderly Indian and promptly burned in a public square.<sup>25</sup>

In addition to the destruction of native idols, the Friars demanded a strict obedience to Christian values and behavior, which they enforced with the use of violence. One method of securing the Indians' abandonment of native ideology was with the use of "spiritual police" and "church wardens," Puebloan subordinates who enforced Christian norms. These religious officers "freely administered half a dozen lashes to anyone found negligent in their Christian duties."<sup>26</sup> Thus, the Spanish incursion into New Mexico forced the Pueblo to renounce their ancestors, an ominous event in Puebloan worldview that guaranteed the gods' abandonment of the Pueblos and the advent of their suffering.

Although the Pueblos appear to have accepted Christianity, at least outwardly, many natives reverted back to their traditional religious beliefs. The Franciscans' entrance into New Mexico convinced many Puebloans that the Spanish were gods who, in accordance with their worldview, would bring prosperity. However, by 1640, "The novelty of their gifts had worn off and their magic had been had proven ineffectual in producing rain, health, prosperity, and peace."<sup>27</sup>

With the world apparently out of order, Puebloan medicine men began an attempt to restore harmony by ridding their communities of Catholic friars and praying to their ancient gods. Several Pueblo towns rebelled against Spanish colonial authority, destroying all signs of Christian culture. In a 1641 report on the state of Christian conversion in New Mexico Fray Bartolomé Márquez writes, “The Pueblo of Taos rebelled, killed its minister, destroyed a very beautiful church and convento, and profaned everything relating to divine worship; a very barbarous people.”<sup>28</sup> Similarly, Fray Márquez notes that the Zuni province was “severely punished” for destroying churches and killing a minister who was working to convert Zuni Indians.<sup>29</sup>

With the realization that the Pueblos had returned to idolatry and devil worship, Spanish government officials and missionaries set out to quell native revitalization by again using violence to enforce Christian norms. Don Fernando de Villanueva, during his service as governor between March 1665 and November 1668, pacified idolatrous Indians who had reverted to their old ways. Villanueva’s service record documents one such example in the pueblo of Senecú where he apprehended several Indians who conspired against the Spanish:

And without any consideration given either to the inconvenience of time or to his man years...he went to the Pueblo of Senecú where the major danger emanated and he had six of the principal heads of the mutiny executed by harquebuses and he punished other delinquents who were the keepers of many idols and instruments of witchcraft and rancor.<sup>30</sup>

In another particularly vicious example, Fray Salvador de Guerra discovered that a Hopi Indian man, Juan Cuna, had been practicing “idolatry” and subsequently whipped him until he was covered in blood. After issuing a second beating, Guerra poured burning turpentine over Cuna killing him, as one historian writes, “in flames that surely resembled those of hell.”<sup>31</sup> While Cuna’s death was particularly savage, the Spanish use of violence as a method of enforcing Christian conformity characterized their war against native religion.

In spite of the Spaniards’ violence, by the 1670s they began to lose control of New Mexico. The Pueblos openly attacked the Spaniards and practiced their traditional religion. In 1672, Indians from Abó Pueblo attacked the Franciscan missionary Fray Pedro de Avila y Ayala, beating him to death with a bell and setting fire to the town’s church. Moreover, Puebloan medicine men began proclaiming that the root of their suffering was the abandonment of their ancestors and ancient gods. With the hope of restoring order to their world, the Pueblos began to defy Spanish prohibitions against native religion, performing ritual dances and making offerings to their ancestors.<sup>32</sup>

Puebloan revitalization became so widespread that Spanish clerics from the districts of Teguas, Taos, Acoma, and Zuni complained of “being unable to work and fulfill completely their obligations as ministers in the midst of so much idolatry.”<sup>33</sup> Governor Don Juan Francisco

Treviño dealt with the Puebloan challenge to authority by launching a crusade against native religion. Treviño ordered the arrest of Indians accused of witchcraft and seized idols from the houses of the accused. During the explosion of Puebloan revitalization, the Spanish arrested forty-seven Puebloans from the Teguas nation for the bewitching of the missionary Fray Andrés Durán and his native interpreter Francisco Guiter. Sargento Mayor Diego López Sambrano, a Spanish soldier, attested to Treviño's use of the arrests to demonstrate that native religion would not be tolerated under the Spanish crown:

Forty-seven Indians were arrested...four of whom, because of having declared that they had committed the witchcraft referred to, were sentenced to be hanged, both for the above crimes and for the other deaths which were proved against them...and of the others who remained, numbering forty-three, some he released with a reprimand, and others he condemned to lashings and imprisonment.<sup>34</sup>

Governor Treviño's campaign against native religion only reinforced Puebloan anger at the Spanish. The Pueblo, with guidance from their traditional spiritual leaders, had identified revitalization as the path to peace and happiness, but continued Spanish attacks on native attempts to restore cosmic order directly challenged native ideas of reciprocity between man and their ancestors, further fueling Puebloan frustrations.

Compounding the effects of Spanish attempts to suppress native religion, poor environmental conditions in the second half of the seventeenth century further challenged Puebloan ideas of proper world order. Beginning in the mid-1660s, New Mexico entered a period characterized by drought, famine, and the proliferation of disease. Between 1666 and 1670, a severe drought initiated the decline of the region's agricultural yields. Despite Spanish attempts to distribute food, the native population of New Mexico plummeted from around 40,000 in 1638 to 17,000 in 1670.<sup>35</sup> In a letter to the king, Fray Francisco de Ayeta documented the bleak outlook of Puebloan life in drought and famine afflicted New Mexico:

In the year 1670 there was a very great famine in those provinces, which compelled the Spanish inhabitants and the Indians alike to eat the hides that they had and the straps of the carts, preparing them for food...by this means almost half the people in said provinces escaped [starvation].<sup>36</sup>

Although the Spanish attempted to aid the starving Indians, a wave of pestilence swept over New Mexico. On June 18, 1669 Fray Juan de Talabán wrote his colonial superiors regarding the spread of famine and disease stating, that the Indians were "dying without any human means of remedy. The conclusion to be drawn from what had been said is that there is no recourse what so

ever there.”<sup>37</sup> In 1671, disease struck again, further worsening conditions in New Mexico and resulting in the deaths “of many people and cattle.”<sup>38</sup>

Also, constant attacks from Apache raiders plagued the Pueblo Indians. In a 1669 letter, Governor Juan de Medrano Messía wrote of the repeated sorties against Puebloan villages:

The Apache Indians, common enemies, who during the seven months I have been governing have killed six Spanish soldiers and 373 Christian Indians, stolen more than two thousand horses, mares, and mules, and more than two thousand head of ganado menor [sheep], the property of the conventos of this holy custodia and of the citizens and inhabitants of these [provinces] so ravaged and destroyed, that it is a miracle anyone remains in them.<sup>39</sup>

The Apache raids constituted such a significant problem that the colonial government of New Mexico commissioned several expeditions to take revenge for the combative tribe’s attacks. Similarly, missionaries frequently complained to the colonial authorities about the devastating effects of the Apache forays.<sup>40</sup>

The drought and great famine of the 1670s, and the subsequent spread of hunger, motivated Apache tribes to increase their attacks on Puebloan and Spanish settlements with a renewed ferocity.<sup>41</sup> In response to a September 1670 Apache raid, Governor Messía described the attack and ordered Spanish retaliation:

By my order, reprisal and just war is to be made against the Apache enemies of the cordilleras [mountains]...because on the third of this month they launched a great ambushade on the pueblo of Humanas, took possession of it, and killed eleven persons, carrying off thirty-one captives, destroying the holy temple...and committing many other atrocities.”<sup>42</sup>

Despite the swift Spanish response to the attacks, the raids continued to plague the Pueblo Indians. Again, Francisco de Ayeta attested to the devastating effects of the Apache incursions:

In the year 1672, the hostile Apaches who were then at peace rebelled and rose up, and the said province was totally sacked and robbed by their attacks and outrages, especially of all the cattle and sheep...They killed, stole, and carried off all except a few small flocks.<sup>43</sup>

Certainly the famine, disease, and Apache raids during the two decades preceding the 1680 rebellion caused the Pueblos to question the power of the Spanish. Contrary to Puebloan assumptions that the Spanish were gods, the Europeans in New Mexico failed to exert control over the environment: They could not provide rain and successful harvests, nor could they halt

the onslaught of disease and Apache incursions. In accordance with Puebloan tradition, the Spanish failure to secure prosperity contradicted native ideas about world order. This realization prompted the Pueblos to question their acceptance of the Spanish and their Christian culture. At this point Indian medicine men began claiming that the source of the suffering was the Spanish and their Christian friars.<sup>44</sup>

The Spanish colonization of New Mexico had forced the Pueblo into a foreign cultural system that actively suppressed their native beliefs. The Spanish government and Franciscan missionaries repeatedly used violence to quell native attempts to restore their ancient belief systems, which the Pueblo believed guaranteed success and prosperity. Then, in 1666, a series of ecological disasters struck the Pueblo. Drought and famine decimated the Indian population and forced them to eat hides and the leather from saddles. Similarly, a wave of disease further reduced the native population. As a result, the Apache, who also suffered from the same natural disasters, renewed their savage campaign against Puebloan settlements in search of sustenance. As the Spanish occupation dragged on, the Pueblo became increasingly frustrated with their colonial overlords.

Medicine men began to argue that the reason for the Pueblo's troubles was that their ancient ancestors and gods were angry. If the Pueblo returned to their old ways and offered maize and deference, the Indian religious leaders argued, the gods would answer their prayers with rain, prosperity and happiness.<sup>45</sup> One such religious leader was a Pueblo Indian from San Juan named Popé. Jerónimo, a Tigua Indian, later described Popé's role in the revolt against the Spanish:

He [Jerónimo] knows that the said Indian Popé presented himself as a great captain, and that it was said that he was the one who made them kill priests and Spaniards, together with their women and children, and burn images and churches...and he caused them to wash their heads in order to take away the water of baptism, so that they might be as the had been in ancient times; and he told them that they would gather large crops of grain, maize with large and thick ears, many bundles of cotton, many calabashes and watermelons, and everything else in proportion.<sup>46</sup>

Soon, the fear of Spanish punishment for practicing idolatry forced Popé to flee to the Pueblo of Taos, where he continued to argue for the return to ancient Puebloan tradition. While in Taos, Popé claimed to enter a kiva, an underground Puebloan ceremonial chamber, where he spoke with ancient spirits from the underworld. The gods told Popé to overthrow the Spanish and to tie knots in a cord that would signify the coming of the revolt and to pass the cord from village to village spreading word of the rebellion. Popé organized a group of Indians who went to other pueblos, ordering all that they encountered to "break up and burn the images of the holy Christ, the Virgin Mary and the other saints, the crosses, and everything pertaining to Christianity, and



that they burn the temples, break up the bells, and separate from the wives whom God had given them.”<sup>47</sup>

On August 9, 1680, Popé set the planned rebellion in motion, sending two messengers carrying deerskins with two knots to all the pueblos, letting the Indians know that two days remained until the revolt. The couriers repeated Popé’s message and told the Pueblos “that the father of all Indians,” Po-he-yemu, “their great captain, who had been such since the world had been inundated,” had ordered all pueblos to rebel. The messengers stated that Popé commanded all the Spanish to be killed, and with this accomplished, “they would live as in ancient times...and gather a great many provisions and everything they needed.”<sup>48</sup>

Despite Popé’s attempted secrecy, the pueblo of San Cristóbal was unwilling accept the message of Po-he-yemu and subsequently refused to participate in the revolt. It is unclear why the San Cristóbal Indians refused to rebel, however, it is clear that they choose to side with the Spanish authorities, whom they promptly notified of the planned attack. Before the Spanish could react to allegations of the impending insurrection, the Pueblos rebelled. On August 10, 1680 Fray Juan Pío, went to collect the Indians for mass in the pueblo of Tesuque only to find it deserted. Pío continued to search for the Indians, who he found gathered outside the village “wearing war paint, with their bows, arrows, lances, and shields.” The father approached them asking, “What is this children; are you mad? Do not disturb yourselves,” and prompted them to return to the pueblo to receive mass. However, the Puebloans dismissed the priests demands, killed Fray Pío, and attacked a Spanish soldier, Pedro Hidalgo, who had been traveling with the priest.<sup>49</sup>

The revolt continued over nine days as Popé and the Pueblo’s ancient ancestors had commanded. Antonio de Otermín, the residing governor during the revolt, stated, “In a single day and hour they broke with everything, renouncing their obligation as Christians and vassals of his Majesty, and waging war hennery throughout the kingdom.”<sup>50</sup> “With barbarous ferocity” Otermín continues, the Pueblos razed everything associated with Spanish rule and the Christian faith. The rebelling Indians killed twenty-one Christian missionaries including eighteen clerical ministers, two lay brothers, and the head of a church. The rebels burned churches, destroyed images of Christianity, and performed ceremonial dances. The Pueblos continued their campaign, killing three hundred and eighty Spaniards, many of whom were women and children, and mutilating their bodies. They proceeded to rob the “whole kingdom, taking possession of the cattle and horses and of everything in the entire kingdom.”<sup>51</sup>

On August 13, 1680, the Pueblo surrounded Governor Otermín’s villa in Santa Fe, sending in an elected native representative to offer the Spanish peace if they agreed to leave New Mexico. Otermín refused and the siege of Santa Fe began. During the nine-day siege, the Pueblos killed four more Spanish soldiers and threatened to annihilate all the remaining Spanish men in New Mexico. On August 21, 1680, Otermín and the remaining Spaniards abandoned Santa Fe, with the hopes of regrouping with other surviving colonists in the pueblo of La Isleta.<sup>52</sup>

Afterwards, the Spanish were determined to learn the reasons for the revolt. In their quest for answers, the Spanish questioned captured Indians. Although Spaniards wrote the records of these interrogations, portraying the Indians from a Spanish perspective, they grant significant insight into the stimuli that motivated the Pueblo to rebel.<sup>53</sup>

Don Pedro Nanboa, an elderly Pueblo Indian whom the Spanish captured after the revolt, answered the Spaniard's questions about why the Indians had risen against the Spanish. On September 6, 1680, when asked why the Indians rebelled "forsaking their obedience to his Majesty and failing in their obligations as Christians," Nanboa stated that for a long time the Pueblos, "because the Spaniards punished sorcerers and idolaters," had been constantly "plotting to kill the Spaniards and the religious." He continued declaring:

That the resentment which all the Indians have in their hearts has been so strong, from the time this kingdom was discovered, because the religious and the Spaniards took away their idols and forbade their sorceries and idolatries; that they have inherited successively from their old men the things pertaining to their ancient customs; and that he heard this resentment spoken of since he was of an age to understand.<sup>54</sup>

Nanboa was not the only Indian to express bitterness over the treatment of ancient Pueblo tradition. Pedro García told Spanish authorities that the Pueblo had rebelled "because they resented it greatly that the religious and the Spaniards should deprive them of their idols, their dances, and their superstitions."<sup>55</sup>

Another Pueblo, Josephe, mentioned similar motivations for the revolt. He stated that the leaders of the insurrection told the Indians to never mention Jesus or Mary again and ordered the destruction of all the churches, rosaries, and crosses. Once the images of Christian religion had been removed, the pueblos "went to offer flour, feathers, and the seed of maguey, maize, and tobacco, and performed other superstitious rites, giving the children to understand that they must all do this in the future."<sup>56</sup>

Other Puebloan testimonies supported Nanboa, García, and Josephe's stories. Two Indian brothers, Juan and Francisco Lorenzo, argued that Popé and the other chiefs of the rebellion had instructed them to burn the churches and images of Christianity and were to observe their ancient gods and that in this way, "they would have everything they might desire."<sup>57</sup>

Popé and other religious leaders' assertion that the Puebloan tribes suffered because they had abandoned their ancestral gods indicated that the Pueblos still clung to their cultural perspective of the world. Despite the significant changes that the Spanish brought to New Mexico, the Pueblo remembered the way in which their forefathers taught them to secure a harmonious world order and prosperous future.

The Pueblo Indians of New Mexico possessed a worldview emphasizing a relationship between man and god characterized by reciprocity. Their oral histories, creation myths, and stories of the dead instructed the Pueblos to remember their ancestors and the gods who created

their world. These narratives instructed the Pueblo to perform ceremonial dances, make offerings of maize, and to pray to their gods and ask for happiness, rain, and prosperity. The Puebloan Indians believed that as long as they continued to fulfill traditional ritual duties, their ancestors would continue to grant them wealth, comfort, and success, and the world would continue as it should. Pueblo cultural traditions also told the natives of New Mexico that if they abandoned their ancestors, the result would be suffering, disease, and an end to their world.<sup>58</sup>

From the onset of Spanish colonial expansion into New Mexico, they attempted to exploit the Puebloan worldview by portraying themselves as gods. Initially, the Pueblo Indians interpreted the foreign presence and demands for conformity within the context of their cultural understanding of the cosmos. However, in 1598, the arrival of the Franciscan missionaries subjected the Indians to an alien ideology that demanded they abandon their customary religious practices. The Spanish outlawed Puebloan rituals, destroyed their idols and ceremonial chambers, and ordered them to live according to Christian values.<sup>59</sup>

The Pueblos soon realized that the newcomers were not omnipotent and were even less successful at bringing rain and happiness to New Mexico than their traditional gods. With this awareness, the Pueblos began to revert to their old ways, performing ceremonial dances and making offerings to their ancestors. In an attempt to enforce conformity to European and Christian values, the Spanish colonial authorities and Franciscan missionaries began to use violence to purge native traditions from the Puebloan New Mexico.<sup>60</sup> This only fueled the prevalent belief that the Spaniards were preventing the Pueblo from worshiping their ancestors and achieving the prosperity they desired.

Additionally, environmental conditions in New Mexico worsened throughout the second half of the seventeenth century. In 1666, drought vastly reduced agricultural yields, giving rise to widespread famine while forcing Indians to eat leather and hides in order to survive.<sup>61</sup> In the midst of this ecological disaster, disease further reduced native populations. Other hostile Indian tribes, such as the Apache, who were affected by the same environmental conditions, began a renewed campaign of violence against Puebloan settlements. Despite Spanish attempts to curb the Apache raids, the Pueblo's enemies continued to destroy their villages and steal what little food they had left. By 1670, these conditions had reduced the native population of New Mexico by over forty-two percent, as compared to 1638.<sup>62</sup> The suffering brought on by drought, famine, the profusion of disease, and the forced desertion of their ancestors aligned with Puebloan traditions, which told the Indians that if they ignored their ancestors, their gods would not grant them happiness and instead would allow the Pueblos to suffer.

The result of Spanish cultural repression, famine, disease, and hostile raids by their traditional enemies gave the Puebloans a grim outlook on their lives under Spanish rule. Puebloan religious leaders, such as Popé, began telling other Puebloans that the cause for their misfortune was the abandonment of their ancestral traditions. The Pueblos identified the Spanish as the barrier that prevented the proper performance of their ceremonial obligations and the observance of their customary belief system. With an explanation for their problems, the Pueblo

rebelled to restore the cosmic order of their world. They sought to remove the Spaniards from New Mexico and return to their traditional lifestyles, thus pleasing their gods and securing a prosperous future with all that they desired.

---

<sup>1</sup> Henry W. Bowden, "Spanish Missions, Cultural Conflict and the Pueblo Revolt of 1680," *Church History* 44, no. 2 (1975): 221-222; Ramón A. Gutiérrez, *When Jesus Came, the Corn Mothers Went Away: Marriage, Sexuality, and Power in New Mexico, 1500-1846*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), 47-49 and 127-131; Jack D. Forbes, *Apache, Navaho, and Spaniard*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1960), 178.

<sup>2</sup> Van Hastings Garner, "Seventeenth-Century New Mexico," in *What Caused the Pueblo Revolt of 1680*, ed. David J. Weber (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1999), 69-70.

<sup>3</sup> Andrew L. Knaut, *The Pueblo Revolt of 1680: Conquest and Resistance in Seventeenth-Century New Mexico*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995), 152-155.

<sup>4</sup> Mathew Liebmann, *Revolt: An Archaeological History of Pueblo Resistance and Revitalization in 17<sup>th</sup> Century New Mexico*, (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2012), 45-46.

<sup>5</sup> Gutiérrez, *When Jesus Came*, 47-49 and 127-131.

<sup>6</sup> Liebmann, *Revolt*, 39.

<sup>7</sup> Garner, "Seventeenth-Century New Mexico," 69-70.

<sup>8</sup> Charles Wilson Hackett, "Declaration of Jerónimo, a Tigua Indian. Place Opposite La Isleta, January 1, 1682," vol. 2 of *Revolt of the Pueblo Indians of New Mexico and Otermin's Attempted Reconquest, 1680-1682*, ed. George P. Hammond (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1942), 360-361.

<sup>9</sup> *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*, s.v. "Pueblo Indians," accessed April 10, 2014, <http://www.britannica.com.ezproxy2.drake.brockport.edu/EBchecked/topic/482769/Pueblo-Indians>.

<sup>10</sup> Byron Harvey III, "An Overview of Pueblo Religion," in *New Perspectives on the Pueblos*, ed. Alfonso Ortiz (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1972), 198 and 208.

<sup>11</sup> Harvey, "An Overview of Pueblo Religion," 208.

<sup>12</sup> Gutiérrez, *When Jesus Came*, 23.

<sup>13</sup> Harvey, "An Overview of Pueblo Religion," 208.

<sup>14</sup> Harvey, "An Overview of Pueblo Religion," 208.

<sup>15</sup> "The White Dawn of the Hopi," in *American Indian Myths and Legends*, ed. Richard Erdoes and Alfonso Ortiz (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 115-116.

<sup>16</sup> "Emerging Into the Upper World," in *American Indian Myths*, 97-105.

<sup>17</sup> "A Journey to the Skeleton House," in *American Indian Myths*, 442-445.

<sup>18</sup> Leslie A. White, *The Pueblo of Santa Ana, New Mexico* (American Anthropological Association, 1942), 88.

<sup>19</sup> Elise Clews Parsons, *Pueblo Indian Religion*, vol.1 pt. 1 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1939), 255.

<sup>20</sup> Harvey, "An Overview of Pueblo Religion," 208; Edward P. Dozier, *The Pueblo of North America*, (Illinois: Waveland Press Inc., 1970), 151.

<sup>21</sup> Gutiérrez, *When Jesus Came*, 47.

<sup>22</sup> George P. Hammond and Agapito Rey, "Instructions to Don Juan de Oñate, October 21, 1595," vol. 1 of *Don Juan de Oñate: Colonizer of New Mexico, 1598-1628*, ed. And trans. Hammond and Rey (Albuquerque, 1953), 65-68.

<sup>23</sup> Gutiérrez, *When Jesus Came*, 47-49.

<sup>24</sup> George P. Hammond, "Diego Pérez de Luxán's Account of the Antonio de Espejo Expedition Into New Mexico, 1582," in *The Rediscovery of New Mexico, 1580-1594* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1966), 186.

<sup>25</sup> Frederick W. Hodge et al., *Fray Alonso de Benavides' Revised Memorial of 1634* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1945), 204-205, 43.

<sup>26</sup> Gutiérrez, *When Jesus Came*, 81.

- <sup>27</sup> Gutiérrez, *When Jesus Came*, 43-44, 127.
- <sup>28</sup> Frances V. Scholes et al. eds., "The State of the Conversions, Churches and Conventos of the Custodia de San Pablo in New Mexico in the Matter of Granting Forty Friars," trans. Eleanor B. Adams in *Juan Domínguez De Mendoza: Soldier and Frontiersman of the Spanish Southwest, 1627-1693* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2012), 294.
- <sup>29</sup> Scholes et al. eds., "The State of the Conversions," in *Juan Domínguez*, 294.
- <sup>30</sup> Scholes et al. eds., "Account of the Services of Don Fernando de Villanueva, Governor and Capitan General of the Provinces of New Mexico by Appointment of the Marqués de Mancera, Viceroy of New Spain," in *Juan Domínguez*, 313.
- <sup>31</sup> Gutiérrez, *When Jesus Came*, 127-128.
- <sup>32</sup> Gutiérrez, *When Jesus Came*, 130; Hodge et al., *Fray Alonso*, 292.
- <sup>33</sup> Hackett, "Declaration of Sargento Mayor Luis de Quintana December 22, 1681," vol. 2 of *Revolt of the Pueblo*, 289.
- <sup>34</sup> Hackett, "Declaration of Diego López," vol. 2 of *Revolt of the Pueblo*, 300-301.
- <sup>35</sup> Gutiérrez, *When Jesus Came*, 130.
- <sup>36</sup> Charles Wilson Hackett ed., "Petition of Father Fray Francisco de Ayeta, Mexico, May 10, 1679," in vol. 3 of *Historical documents relating to New Mexico, Nueva Vizcaya, and approaches thereto, to 1773; Spanish texts and English translations*, (Washington: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1926), 302.
- <sup>37</sup> Scholes et al. eds., "Documents Concerning Provisions and Livestock Given by the Conventos for an expedition against the Apaches," in *Juan Domínguez*, 135.
- <sup>38</sup> Hackett, *Revolt of the Pueblo Indians*, xix.
- <sup>39</sup> Scholes et al. eds., *Documents Concerning Provisions*, in *Juan Domínguez*, 137.
- <sup>40</sup> Scholes et al. eds., *Juan Domínguez*, 132-145.
- <sup>41</sup> Garner, "Seventeenth Century New Mexico," in *What Caused the Pueblo Revolt*, 69.
- <sup>42</sup> Scholes et al. eds., *Juan Domínguez*, 139-140.
- <sup>43</sup> Hackett ed., "Francisco de Ayeta, Mexico, May 10, 1679," vol. 3 of *Historical Documents*, 302.
- <sup>44</sup> Gutiérrez, *When Jesus Came*, 130.
- <sup>45</sup> Gutiérrez, *When Jesus Came*, 130.
- <sup>46</sup> Hackett, "Declaration of Jerónimo, a Tigua Indian. Place Opposite La Isleta, January 1, 1682," in *Revolt of the Pueblo Indians*, 360-361.
- <sup>47</sup> Hackett, "Declaration of Pedro Naranjo of the Queres Nation December 19, 1681," of vol. 2 *Revolt of the Pueblo Indians*, 247.
- <sup>48</sup> Hackett, "Autos as a Result of the Rebellion of the Christian Indians, vol. 1 of *Revolt of the Pueblo Indians*," 4-5; "Declaration of Diego López," vol. 2 of *Revolt of the Pueblo Indians*, 295.
- <sup>49</sup> Hackett, "Autos as a Result," vol. 1 of *Revolt of the Pueblo*, 5-6.
- <sup>50</sup> Hackett, "Auto of Antonio de Otermín October 9, 1680," vol. 1 of *Revolt of the Pueblo*, 194-195.
- <sup>51</sup> Hackett, "Otermín October 9, 1680," vol. 1 of *Revolt of the Pueblo*, 195.
- <sup>52</sup> Hackett, "Letter of Antonio de Otermín to Fray Francisco de Ayeta September 8, 1680," vol. 1 or *Revolt of the Pueblo*, 98-99; *Autos as a Result*, 16-21.
- <sup>53</sup> Hackett, vol. 1-2 of *Revolt of the Pueblo*, 60-62, 239-240, 251.
- <sup>54</sup> Hackett, "Declaration of One of the Rebellious Christian Indians Who Was Captured on the Road September 6, 1680," vol. 1 of *Revolt of the Pueblo*, 60-61.
- <sup>55</sup> Hackett, "Statement of Pedro García September 6, 1680," vol. 1 of *Revolt of the Pueblo*, 62.
- <sup>56</sup> Hackett, "Declaration of Josephe December 19, 1681," vol. 2 of *Revolt of the Pueblo*, 239-240.
- <sup>57</sup> Hackett, "Declaration of Juan Lorenzo and Francisco Lorenzo December 20, 1681," vol. 2 of *Revolt of the Pueblo*, 251.
- <sup>58</sup> Gutiérrez, *When Jesus Came*, 23; "The White Dawn," in *American Indian Myths*, 115-116.
- <sup>59</sup> Hodge et al., *Fray Alonso de Benavides' Revised*, 204-205, 43.
- <sup>60</sup> Gutiérrez, *When Jesus Came*, 127-128.
- <sup>61</sup> Hackett, "Petition Francisco de Ayeta," in vol. 3 of *Historical Documents*, 302.
- <sup>62</sup> Gutiérrez, *When Jesus Came*, 130.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

- Bowden, Henry Warner. "Spanish Missions, Cultural Conflict and the Pueblo Revolt of 1680." *Church History* 44, no. 2 (1975): 217-228.
- Dozier, Edward P. *The Pueblo of North America*. Illinois: Waveland Press Inc., 1970.
- Erdoes, Richard and Alfonso Ortiz, eds. *American Indian Myths and Legends*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1984.
- Forbes, Jack D. *Apache, Navaho, and Spaniard*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1960.
- Garner, Van Hastings. "Seventeenth Century New Mexico." *The Journal of Mexican American History* 4, no. 1 (1974): 41-70.
- Gutiérrez, Ramón A. *When Jesus Came, the Corn Mothers Went Away: Marriage, Sexuality, and Power in New Mexico, 1500-1846*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991.
- Hackett, Charles Wilson, ed. and trans. *Historical Documents Relating to New Mexico, Nueva Vizcaya, and Approaches Thereto, to 1773*. Washington: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1937.
- Hackett, Charles Wilson, ed. *Revolt of The Pueblo Indians of New Mexico and Otermin's Attempted Reconquest*. Translated by Charmion Clair Shelby. Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico Press, 1942.
- Hammond, George P., and Agapito Rey. *Don Juan De Oñate: Colonizer of New Mexico, 1595-1628*. Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico Press, 1953.
- . *The Rediscovery of New Mexico, 1580-1594*. Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico Press, 1966.
- Hodge, Frederick Webb, George P. Hammond, and Agapito Rey, eds. *Fray Alonso de Benavides' Revised Memorial of 1634*. Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico Press, 1945.
- Liebmann, Mathew. *Revolt: An Archaeological History of Pueblo Resistance and Revitalization in 17<sup>th</sup> Century New Mexico*. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2012.
- Ortiz, Alfonso ed. *New Perspectives on the Pueblos*. Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico Press, 1972.
- Parsons, Elsie Clews. *Pueblo Indian Religion*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1939.
- Scholes, France V., and José Antonio Esquibel. *Juan Domínguez De Mendoza: Soldier and Frontiersman of the Spanish Southwest, 1627-1693*. Translated by Eleanor B. Adams. Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico Press, 2012.
- Weber, David J. *The Spanish Frontier in North America*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992.
- Weber, David J., ed. *What Caused the Pueblo Revolt of 1680*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1999.
- White, Leslie A. *Pueblo of Santa Ana, New Mexico*. Washington: American Anthropological Association, 1942.

## **JAMES GUSTAVUS WHITELEY: THE LOST AGENT OF KING LEOPOLD II**

Jonathan Broida, The College at Brockport

[Keywords: Whiteley, Leopold, Belgium, Congo, United States]

At the turn of the nineteenth century, European countries were in a competition to spread their influence around the globe. They began to focus their greed on Africa, one of the last remaining areas of land that Europeans had yet to fully control. Desperate to get in on the action, King Leopold of Belgium convinced other Europeans to allow him to receive a large chunk of the continent that he called the Congo Free State. Thus began a series of events that would lead to the whole-sale slaughter, rape, and manipulation of Congolese peoples living in Leopold's Free State. The terrifying atrocities that happened under Leopold's rule did not go unnoticed. Spearheaded by E.D. Morel, a reform movement gained momentum in Britain then spread across the Atlantic Ocean to the United States. The movement was backed by prominent authors such as Arthur Conan Doyle and Mark Twain, who worked to expose the abuses that Leopold oversaw. They utilized newspapers and other forms of media to spread their message. To combat growing cries for reform in the Congo Free State, Leopold enlisted the help of agents to counter Congo reformers and gain the influence of high-ranking officials in Washington.

The reform movement has been the subject of much research. William R. Lewis wrote extensively on E.D. Morel and the reform movement he led to combat atrocities committed in Leopold's Congo. Similarly, Dean Pavlakis wrote of the reform movement, adding information about its entrance into the United States and how it helped to expose a lobbying scandal in the U.S. senate operated under Leopold.

Stories of Leopold and the Congo reform movement jumped to the forefront of popularity with the success of Adam Hochschild's book, *King Leopold's Ghost*. His work highlights the grotesque crimes perpetrated by the Congo Free State and describes the life of Leopold and his reactions to attacks against his rule. Hochschild writes of agents who worked to support Leopold in the United States, most famously Henry Kowalsky. On December 10, 1906 the *New York American* exposed Henry Kowalsky as an agent working for King Leopold of Belgium. The media fire storm that ensued spread to headlines in papers across the United States. Feeling the heat from media outlets, the U.S. government promptly removed all support for Leopold and his Congo. Kowalsky was merely a pawn in a much larger chess match. While Hochschild wrote of other accomplices to Leopold in the United States, he failed to mention a man named James Gustavus Whiteley. Behind the scenes, James Gustavus Whiteley quietly worked to secure King Leopold II's interests in the United States and garner support for his Congo. His background in financial institutions helped him to arrange business deals that would entice potential supporters. Most of all, Whiteley depended on his inconspicuous nature to work covertly to promote Leopold in the U.S.

Whiteley has remained nearly invisible in the popular histories written on Leopold and the Congo Free State. His elusive nature has left a void in the full understanding of Leopold’s agents’ infiltration of the United States. An article written by Jerome L. Sternstein briefly mentions Whiteley and the role he played in helping Leopold to gain the favor of a high ranking senator in Washington, but Sternstein does not mention who Whiteley was and how he got to play such a high-ranking role for Leopold. Similarly, an article written by Robert G. Weisbord tells of a Catholic Cardinal who led Whiteley to people in Washington who would listen to Leopold’s proposals. The evidence presented in these articles identifies Whiteley as a contributor, but do not address his significance as a key member of Leopold’s lobbying scheme in the United States. The clues found in newspapers from the era and information presented by Sternstein and Weisbord indicate that there is information that has been overlooked regarding Leopold and his battle against the Congo reform movement.

Pulling together these strands of information reveals a more cohesive narrative on Leopold and the Congo reform movement. This more complete story helps to bring a better understanding of Whiteley’s role and how he remained so elusive. It examines his life before he became a key member of Leopold’s ring of agents, his writings, and how his extensive knowledge of language and Belgium led to him to catching the eye of Leopold. Working for Leopold propelled Whiteley down a path from atrocity supporter into acting in a reverse role for Belgium during World War I. He utilized his previous role as Leopold’s agent to become Belgium’s most outspoken supporter during the German occupation of World War I. This research differs from previous works because it presents evidence that has remained excluded from the analysis of Leopold and his fight against the Congo reform movement. It examines Whiteley’s largely unknown story as a key player in countering the Congo reform movement’s allegations against Leopold and his Congo Free State.

James Gustavus Whiteley was born in Baltimore on July 9, 1866. After attending private schools as well as being tutored, he became a clerk at the Savings Bank of Baltimore in 1882.<sup>1</sup> He was not passionate about banking but was very interested in studying “diplomacy and international law.”<sup>2</sup> Whiteley’s studies introduced him to an understanding of the relationships between nations as well as foreign cultures. His interest in foreign cultures and diplomacy led him to “master several languages.”<sup>3</sup> In 1899 Whiteley was part of a delegation in Washington that urged the president to step in and mediate a conflict in Africa between Great Britain, Transvaal and Orange Free State republics.<sup>4</sup> He and the other delegates urged the president to “allay the bloody conflict going on in Africa” and bring terms of peace.<sup>5</sup> An ominous and ironic beginning for Whiteley, this event foreshadowed his career as an apologist for atrocities in the Congo Free State.

As his knowledge of foreign countries and writing ability grew, Whiteley began to write articles for American and foreign periodicals.<sup>6</sup> One of these articles caught the eye of Leopold II of Belgium and jump-started Whiteley’s role as an agent for the king. In August of 1903, Whiteley had one of his book reviews published in the New York Times. The review praised



Leopold for bringing “the blessings of civilization” to central Africa. A place that Whiteley says was a “great blank space with which map makers went to decorate.”<sup>7</sup> Whiteley attributed the growing campaign in London against Leopold’s Congo to a “desire to possess land.”<sup>8</sup> He believed Britain was creating the Congo atrocities movement so that they could have their possessions in the Congo connected “from Cape to Cairo” - a view on Britain Whiteley still held from his previous work on a delegation trying to stop Britain from continuing their participation in the Boer War.<sup>9</sup> Regardless of Whiteley’s motives for writing the article, he clearly viewed Leopold and his Congo Free State as a positive force in the lives of the native Congolese. Leopold jumped at the opportunity to gain an ally, especially one with connections within the United States.

After seeing Whiteley’s article, Leopold quickly invited him to Brussels.<sup>10</sup> One could assume that Leopold wanted more than just to praise Whiteley for his flattering words. Leopold was actively looking to recruit supporters of his regime in the Congo. After reading Whiteley’s work, Leopold saw him as a perfect candidate and turned the visit into a business meeting. Leopold recognized that Whiteley could be extremely useful to him in the United States. His background in foreign relations, interest in diplomacy, and understanding of the Belgian language would undoubtedly have been appealing to Leopold. But in order to make Whiteley a dependable agent, he had to ensure he would be loyal. According to the *National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, “Leopold made Whiteley a director of the Forminiere, gave him a grant of 25,000 acres in the Congo, and appointed him consul-general of the Congo Free State.”<sup>11</sup> This ensured that Whiteley would not just be a supporter of the Congo Free State, he would also have a stake in it.

Leopold must have felt confident in his decision to invest in Whiteley. His diplomatic skills and interest in Belgian culture played a major role in Leopold’s decision. In July of 1904 Whiteley had another book review published in the *New York Times*. His review critiqued a work by Demetrius C. Boulger, titled *Belgian Life in Town and Country*. In the review Whiteley showed an extraordinary knowledge of Belgian government and culture. He wrote that “while differing in language and in origin Belgians have two points on which all agree—industry and religion.”<sup>12</sup> He went on to write that they “are all united by the Catholic communion . . . Belgium, Bavaria and Ireland are considered the three most devoted faithful daughters of the Church.”<sup>13</sup> Seeing that Whiteley had such a vast knowledge of Belgian demographics must have comforted Leopold in his choice of a supporter. Whiteley was not just another paid henchman of Leopold, he was an intelligent diplomat and shrewd business man with extensive knowledge of Belgian affairs. On his return to the United States, Whiteley would get to work finding supporters for Leopold in Washington.

In 1905 Whiteley began his work for Leopold as consul-general for the Congo Free State in Baltimore. He utilized connections—his own as well as those that Leopold had already formed. One such connection was with the Belgian minister in the United States, Baron Moncheur. The Baron was another one of Leopold’s paid agents who, Robert G. Weisbord

writes, “lobbied Senators and Congressmen to prevent American governmental interference in his sovereign’s Congo affairs.”<sup>14</sup> Similar to Whiteley, Baron Moncheur wrote articles in periodicals showing his support for Leopold. In October of 1904, Moncheur had his article published in *The North American Review*. It praised Leopold for bringing “civilization to a benighted people.”<sup>15</sup> He used poetic metaphors comparing the Congo Free State to a “tree which has flourished so excellently in Africa, and which has brought forth such good fruit both in commercial and in a humanitarian sense.”<sup>16</sup> Moncheur and Whiteley used these tactics to conceal the real crimes that had been committed. Their articles argued that Leopold brought the greatness of “civilization and Christianity” to the people of the Congo.<sup>17</sup> Moncheur even went as far as to call Leopold’s accomplishments “one of the wonders of the world.”<sup>18</sup> These tactics attempted to counter Congo Reform Associations movement that had begun to pick up steam in the United States.

Reformers did not hesitate to attack Whiteley directly in the media. An article in *The Medina Daily Journal* said that an investigation into the Congo, led by the British consul, found that “Whiteley contains a number of statements of cruel treatment of natives.”<sup>19</sup> A boy named Epondo claimed “his left hand had been cut off by a native sentry in the service of La Lulonga Rubber Company.”<sup>20</sup> Whiteley denied these accusations, saying that Epondo had lied about his hand being cut off by a sentry and in fact, he “lost it in a boar hunt.”<sup>21</sup> Whiteley went on to say that “mutilated victims” could be blamed on “inter-tribal wars” and not on the Congo Free State.<sup>22</sup> Whiteley and Leopold’s other agents consistently denied these accusations. They knew that they could blame missing limbs on the “barbarism, cannibalism, inter-tribal wars”<sup>23</sup> of the native Congolese and no one would be the wiser. The layman who read an article such as this would assume that cases such as Epondo’s were normal and believe that the government was not responsible for such atrocities. To counter this, reformers such as E. D. Morel would take their claims to important men in the United States government, leading Whiteley and his other agents to maneuver in defense.

On October 17, 1904, E. D. Morel traveled to the United States in hopes of meeting with the President to gain his aid in the Congo Reform movement.<sup>24</sup> Morel had been the most outspoken critic of Leopold and for years had been working against him in Britain. His Congo Reform Association worked tirelessly to find evidence of the misdeeds that Leopold had sponsored and showcase them to the world. Morel was no fool and was aware Leopold had agents attempting to work against him. Morel was correct because it was falsely reported that President Roosevelt turned down the opportunity to meet with him.<sup>25</sup> Morel denied this report but did go on to say that agents of Leopold were “very much in evidence” at a peace congress he attended.<sup>26</sup>

Whiteley and his fellow agents appear to have viewed Morel as a major threat to their work in the United States. Evidence of this can be found in an article published in *The Ogdensburg Journal*, a mere two days after Morel arrived. The article states that The Belgian Minister, Baron Moncheur, hosted a lavish party in the banquet hall of the New Willard building

in Washington D.C. calling it “the most important entertainment of the week.”<sup>27</sup> In attendance were many key figures for Belgium, including Lawrence Townsend, the United States Minister to Brussels; Walter V. Berry, the Minister from the Netherlands; and James Whiteley.<sup>28</sup> The party was hosted for M. Francotte, the Belgian Minister of Industry and Labor, who was visiting the country with his wife.<sup>29</sup> Clearly the party was for more than celebration. Whiteley and the other agents used this time to discuss their next move against Morel and the mounting accusations against Leopold.

Jerome L. Sternstein writes that soon after Whiteley went to Belgium to devise a plan of action with the King.<sup>30</sup> On his arrival back in Washington, Whiteley arranged to meet with Senator Nelson Aldrich, one of the most prominent politicians in the United States and was unofficially named the “general manager of the United States.”<sup>31</sup>

Sternstein’s research highlights Leopold’s growing desire to gain influence in the United States by appealing to the business minds of America’s top political figures. In his article, Sternstein addresses Whiteley’s role in attempting to accomplish this. His meeting with Aldrich was the beginning of Leopold’s attempt to gain influence in Washington and the first attempt by Whiteley to infiltrate the United States political arena. E. D. Morel and his Congo Reform Association were working to garner support in the United States. A subcommittee for Senate Foreign Relations in the U.S. was already considering a Congo Reform Association memorial calling for congressional action in the Congo.<sup>32</sup> To counter this, Whiteley set up a meeting with Aldrich to ask his advice on “the best way to of bringing Leopold’s case before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.”<sup>33</sup> The man that the *New York Times* called “the most powerful man in the United States” would be an important asset to have, and Whiteley knew that Aldrich’s influence would be indispensable in gaining support for Leopold.<sup>34</sup>

Feeling confident in himself and in Leopold’s offer after their first meeting, Whiteley asked Aldrich to introduce a counter memorial in the senate to combat the CRA’s memorial.<sup>35</sup> Aldrich declined, but where some would have felt defeated it appears Whiteley was only convinced to work harder. Conventional public tactics to gain support did not work with Aldrich, so Whiteley turned to a more shrewd backroom approach to gain influence in Washington.

Whiteley used his close businesses ties in the Congo to influence Senator Nelson Aldrich to support Leopold and his Congo in Congress. In 1901, Aldrich and Thomas Fortune Ryan, who was an “influential Catholic Financier and philanthropist,” formed the Continental Rubber Company.<sup>36</sup> The company grew quickly into a “30,000,000 dollar corporation.”<sup>37</sup> But the company was growing faster than the guayule bush from which they harvested crude rubber. As a result, Aldrich and Ryan found themselves in a precarious situation. On January 14, 1906, Whiteley gave Senator Nelson Aldrich a “confidential letter” offering him concessions in the Congo. Whiteley knew of Aldrich’s struggling rubber business and turned it to his advantage. In the letter Whiteley wrote, “I understand you are interested in a new Rubber Company . . . I may add confidentially that I was assured in the ‘highest quarters’ that every facility and encouragement would be given to a properly organized American company.”<sup>38</sup> Jerome L.

Sternstein writes that Whiteley’s letter “allowed Aldrich to choose among five different plans, each of which offered . . . broad and potentially lucrative concessions in the Congo.”<sup>39</sup> The first plan being that Aldrich’s Continental Rubber Company, “could become the exclusive American selling agent for rubber in the Congo.”<sup>40</sup> By approaching Aldrich through a business mindset instead of a political one, Whiteley knew he could convince Aldrich to work for him. Whiteley’s “behind closed doors” mentality allowed him to find support for Leopold without attracting attention to himself.

Whiteley used Aldrich as an ally to gain support for Leopold in Washington. Even though some saw the concessionary deal made with Aldrich as “a blatant attempt by Leopold to ‘utilize the influence of American Trust interests in American politics,’” Aldrich and Whiteley were not worried.<sup>41</sup> Although Aldrich made no formal agreement to improve Leopold’s interest in Washington, his actions in Washington seem to prove that he knew what was expected of him. Amid mounting pressure, Secretary of State, Elihu Root “decided to appoint a Consul General to the Free State to investigate conditions there.”<sup>42</sup> One can easily assume that Whiteley viewed this move as a threat, but even more threatening was the candidate Root wanted to place as Consul. Sternstein writes that Root asked G. Stanley Hall, who at the time was president of the Congo Reform Association (CRA).<sup>43</sup> The CRA was the staunchest opponent of Leopold’s Congo and Whiteley viewed anyone that was affiliated with the CRA as someone who “could not under any circumstance be looked upon favorably by the Congo Free State.”<sup>44</sup> Whiteley must have expressed his concern to Aldrich, who threatened a veto. As a result, Root withdrew his nomination.<sup>45</sup> This example of the influence Whiteley gained in Washington demonstrates his ability to pull the strings while remaining out of site of the press.

Even though Whiteley was successful at lobbying support for Leopold, he could not control the outcome for other agents working for the king. At the height of Whiteley’s influence in Washington, another agent of Leopold named Henry Kowalsky brought it crashing down. The Kowalsky scandal brought an end to Whiteley’s participation as one of Leopold’s agents, but it also shielded him from incrimination. After the *New York American* published the expose incriminating Kowalsky for lobbying in Washington on Leopold’s behalf, the U.S. government acted swiftly. Adam Hochschild writes that only “hours after the story broke, Senator Lodge of Massachusetts . . . introduced a resolution calling for an international investigation of the Congo scandal.”<sup>46</sup> The scandal quickly and decisively “changed the climate in Washington” regarding their position on the Congo and Leopold.<sup>47</sup> As Kowalsky took most of the heat, Whiteley quietly continued his work as consul-general for Leopold’s Free State.

On November 1, 1907, *The New York Times* published an article that Whiteley had sent to their editor. In the article Whiteley denied accusations that “King Leopold has deprived Belgium of a large part of the Congo by transferring the Crown lands to a private company.”<sup>48</sup> This was a blatant lie in the wake of Leopold and Whiteley’s efforts to gain support from Senator Nelson Aldrich.<sup>49</sup> Not to mention the 25,000 acres that was exclusively granted to Whiteley himself. His open denials in the media shielded him from the same fallout that afflicted

Kowalsky and other agents. After Belgium annexed the Congo from Leopold in 1908, Whiteley slipped away from being an agent of Leopold's and "returned to his banking activities in Baltimore and continued to write articles."<sup>50</sup>

Whiteley must have found it hard to regress back to banking duties after living a much more interesting life working for Leopold. World War I provided the opportunity for Whiteley to use his valuable skills once more, this time in defense of Belgium, not Leopold. As the war began, Whiteley entered the service of Belgium.<sup>51</sup> In 1916 he was appointed consul of Belgium at Baltimore once more by King Leopold's heir, King Albert.<sup>52</sup> This time, instead of lobbying for support of Leopold, Whiteley lobbied Washington to send aid in support of German occupied Belgium. He began writing articles for *The New York Times*, speaking out against the German occupation in hopes of gaining support for Belgium. In an article published on October 17, 1915, Whiteley wrote that Germany was using Belgium as a "milch-cow."<sup>53</sup> Ironically, another article Whiteley wrote echoed a similar argument that the CRA used against him and Leopold. He stated that "the brutality of Germany is equaled only by her hypocrisy. Germany's brutality in sending thousands of Belgians into slavery will never be forgiven . . . Germany's sanctimonious pretense that she has enslaved these innocent people 'for their own good and for the good of Belgium' only adds hypocrisy to crime."<sup>54</sup> An interesting comparison coming from a man who so vigorously defended Leopold against the cry of atrocity raised by Congo Reformers. Nevertheless, Whiteley strongly supported Belgium during World War I. He was made secretary-general of the central committee for Belgian Relief Fund. His work in the United States was beneficial to gaining support for Belgium.

After the end of World War I, Whiteley invested his time in restoring war-torn Belgium. He was secretary of the committee for the restoration of University of Louvain that was destroyed by the Germans during the war.<sup>55</sup> He was also given an honorary membership to the Royal Zoological Society of Antwerp for his "aid in restoring specimens destroyed during the First World War."<sup>56</sup> His strong commitment to Belgium left a lasting impression in the country. Even though Whiteley was an American by blood, his heart was fully Belgian. In 1945 he was awarded the *Medaille Civique*, "in recognition of his service to Belgium during the reigns of three kings, and a regent."<sup>57</sup> His benevolent work during and after the war would help to ensure that Whiteley's memory in Belgium would be a positive one that was not directly related to Leopold and his Congo Free State.

Whiteley has remained nearly invisible in histories written about Leopold and the Congo Free State. His elusive nature has left a void in the full understanding of Leopold's agent's infiltration in the United States. Whiteley's articles defending Leopold against Congo Reformers helped to ensure that all accusations would be met with firm denial. Evidence presented by Sternstein tells us that Whiteley's efforts lobbying for Leopold in Washington paid off after he gained Aldrich as an ally. Whiteley used his influence in Washington to prevent legislation from being passed that would negatively affect Leopold. His ability to use others to do the work for him enabled him to remain hidden from the spotlight.

Contributing to his elusiveness was the fact that he was consul-general for Belgium. The consulship was a government position that gave Whiteley legitimacy as he made his rounds to prominent senators in Washington. Henry Kowalsky held no formal titles from Belgium or from any government. This made him an easy target for accusation of lobbying that unfolded into a full-fledged scandal. Whiteley, unlike Kowalsky, was a paid government employee. He used his formal position to cover his back-door lobbying for Leopold. Researchers investigating Leopold’s infiltration of U.S. congress could easily overlook Whiteley as nothing more than consul-general for Belgium, never suspecting him of being a prominent lobbying agents of Leopold’s behind the scenes.

Another reason Whiteley has remained largely removed from the story of Leopold’s lobbying in the United States is the work he did after the fall of Leopold and because his actions in America were overshadowed by his work in Belgium. Whiteley’s most remembered and recorded work is almost entirely related to Belgium. His high honorary status in Belgium led to possible misinterpretation of his citizenship as an American explaining his absence in the history of Leopold and the Congo that focus on the United States. His benevolent work for Belgium after the Leopold era helped to bury his earlier, questionable behavior. In Belgium he is remembered for his charity in re-building a war torn country, not for lobbying for Leopold or his denial of Congo atrocities.

James Gustavus Whiteley’s elusive nature has allowed him to be overlooked in much of the popular historiographies written on Leopold and the Congo Free State. His intelligence and government position provided him with the necessary cover as he worked behind the scenes for Leopold. His dedication and hard work for Belgium during World War I overshadows much of his work before the war. This made evidence of his benevolent work more apparent than his hidden work for Leopold. Whiteley should be remembered as a major player in Leopold’s lobbying of the United States and his defense of Congo atrocities, but he should also be remembered as an intensely loyal man who was devoted to a king and a country for which he cared deeply.

---

<sup>1</sup> *The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, vol. 39, 105.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> *Geneva Daily Times*, October 27, 1899, [http://nyshistoricnewspapers.org/lccn/sn84035773/1899-10-27/ed-1/seq-1/#date1=12%2F01%2F1890&index=3&date2=01%2F31%2F1915&searchType=advanced&SearchType=prox5&sequence=0&words=James+Whiteley&proxdistance=5&to\\_year=1915&rows=20&ortext=&from\\_year=1890&proxtext=james+whiteley&phrasertext=&andtext=&dateFilterType=range&page=1](http://nyshistoricnewspapers.org/lccn/sn84035773/1899-10-27/ed-1/seq-1/#date1=12%2F01%2F1890&index=3&date2=01%2F31%2F1915&searchType=advanced&SearchType=prox5&sequence=0&words=James+Whiteley&proxdistance=5&to_year=1915&rows=20&ortext=&from_year=1890&proxtext=james+whiteley&phrasertext=&andtext=&dateFilterType=range&page=1)

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> *The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, vol. 39, 105.

<sup>7</sup> James Gustavus Whiteley. "THE CONGO." *New York Times (1857-1922)*, Aug 22, 1903.

<https://ezproxy2.drake.brockport.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/96280050?accountid=26985>

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

- <sup>10</sup> *The National Cyclopedia of American Biography*, vol. 39, 105.
- <sup>11</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>12</sup> James Gustavus Whiteley, "Fleming and Walloon," *New York Times* (1857-1922), July 23, 1904.  
<https://ezproxy2.drake.brockport.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/96447734?accountid=26985>.
- <sup>13</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>14</sup> Robert G. Weisbord, "The King, the Cardinal and the Pope: Leopold II's genocide in the Congo and the Vatican," *Journal of Genocide Research*, 38.
- <sup>15</sup> Baron Moncheur, "Conditions in the Congo Free State", *The North American Review* 179, no. 575 (1904): 494.
- <sup>16</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>17</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>18</sup> Baron Moncheur, "Conditions in the Congo Free State", 498
- <sup>19</sup> "Conditions in Congo", *The Medina Daily Journal*, April 5<sup>th</sup>, 1904,  
[http://nyshistoricnewspapers.org/lccn/sn94057567/1904-04-05/ed-1/seq-1/#date1=12%2F01%2F1890&index=1&date2=01%2F31%2F1915&searchType=advanced&SearchType=prox5&sequence=0&words=James+Whiteley&proxdistance=5&to\\_year=1915&rows=20&ortext=&from\\_year=1890&proxtxt=james+whiteley&phrasetxt=&andtext=&dateFilterType=range&page=1](http://nyshistoricnewspapers.org/lccn/sn94057567/1904-04-05/ed-1/seq-1/#date1=12%2F01%2F1890&index=1&date2=01%2F31%2F1915&searchType=advanced&SearchType=prox5&sequence=0&words=James+Whiteley&proxdistance=5&to_year=1915&rows=20&ortext=&from_year=1890&proxtxt=james+whiteley&phrasetxt=&andtext=&dateFilterType=range&page=1)
- <sup>20</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>21</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>22</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>23</sup> Baron Moncheur, "Conditions in the Congo Free State", 494
- <sup>24</sup> Hopes the President will Aid Congo Reform, *The New York Times*, October 17<sup>th</sup>, 1904.  
<http://search.proquest.com/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/96456260/abstract/AB54E5DEB555436BPQ/1>
- <sup>25</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>26</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>27</sup> Grace Porter Hopkins, "Washington in Autumn," *The Ogdensburg journal*, October 18<sup>th</sup>, 1904.  
[http://nyshistoricnewspapers.org/lccn/sn85054113/1904-10-18/ed-1/seq-2/#date1=12%2F01%2F1890&index=2&date2=01%2F31%2F1915&searchType=advanced&SearchType=prox5&sequence=0&words=James+Whiteley&proxdistance=5&to\\_year=1915&rows=20&ortext=&from\\_year=1890&proxtxt=james+whiteley&phrasetxt=&andtext=&dateFilterType=range&page=1](http://nyshistoricnewspapers.org/lccn/sn85054113/1904-10-18/ed-1/seq-2/#date1=12%2F01%2F1890&index=2&date2=01%2F31%2F1915&searchType=advanced&SearchType=prox5&sequence=0&words=James+Whiteley&proxdistance=5&to_year=1915&rows=20&ortext=&from_year=1890&proxtxt=james+whiteley&phrasetxt=&andtext=&dateFilterType=range&page=1)
- <sup>28</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>29</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>30</sup> Jerome L. Sternstein, King Leopold II, Senator Nelson W. Aldrich, and the Strange Beginnings of American Economic Penetration of the Congo, *African Historical Studies*, vol. 2 (1969), 195.
- <sup>31</sup> Weisbord, The King, the Cardinal and the Pope, 38.
- <sup>32</sup> Sternstein, King Leopold II, Senator Nelson Aldrich and Strange Beginnings, 194.
- <sup>33</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>34</sup> "The Big Five" Who Run the U.S. Senate, *New York Times*, March 19, 1905.  
<http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy2.drake.brockport.edu/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/96569242/abstract/616094EE0E54465DPQ/1>
- <sup>35</sup> Sternstein, King Leopold II, Senator Nelson Aldrich and Strange Beginnings, 194.
- <sup>36</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>37</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>38</sup> Ibid., 196.
- <sup>39</sup> Ibid., 196.
- <sup>40</sup> Ibid., 196.
- <sup>41</sup> Ibid., 197.
- <sup>42</sup> Ibid., 198.
- <sup>43</sup> Ibid., 198.
- <sup>44</sup> Ibid., 198.
- <sup>45</sup> Ibid., 198.
- <sup>46</sup> Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost*, (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999), 249.
- <sup>47</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>48</sup> James Gustavus Whiteley, "No Concession of Congo Lands," *The New York Times*, November 5, 1907.  
<http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy2.drake.brockport.edu/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/96723530/abstract/10AAA43628844554PQ/4>

- <sup>49</sup> Sternstein, Leopold II, Senator Nelson Aldrich and Strange Beginnings, 196.
- <sup>50</sup> *The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, vol. 39, 105.
- <sup>51</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>52</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>53</sup> James Gustavus Whiteley, "Belgium Used as a Milch-Cow for Germany," *The New York Times*, October 17, 1915. <http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy2.drake.brockport.edu/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/97692666/abstract/51B2433CD500479EPO/2>
- <sup>54</sup> James Gustavus Whiteley, "How Von Bissing has "Blessed" Belgium," *The New York Times*, December 3, 1916. <http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy2.drake.brockport.edu/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/97820842/abstract/5DADDB459A924C54PQ/2>
- <sup>55</sup> *The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, vol. 39, 105.
- <sup>56</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>57</sup> Ibid.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- "The Big Five" Who Run the U.S. Senate." *The New York Times*, March 19, 1905. <http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy2.drake.brockport.edu/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/96569242/abstract/616094EE0E54465DPQ/1>
- "Conditions in the Congo." *The Medina Daily Journal*, April 5, 1904. <http://nyshistoricnewspapers.org/lccn/sn94057567/1904-04-05/ed-1/seq-1/>
- Geneva Daily Times*, October 27, 1899. <http://nyshistoricnewspapers.org/lccn/sn84035773/1899-10-27/ed-1/seq-1/>
- Hochschild, Adam. *King Leopold's Ghost*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1998.
- "Hopes the President will Aid Congo Reform." *The New York Times*, October 17, 1904. <http://search.proquest.com/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/96456260/abstract/AB54E5DEB555436BPQ/1>
- Hopkins, Grace P. "Washington in Autumn." *The Ogdensburg Journal*, October 18, 1904. <http://nyshistoricnewspapers.org/lccn/sn85054113/1904-10-18/ed-1/seq-2/>
- James Gustavus Whiteley. Vol. 39 of *The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*. New York: James T. White and Company, 1954. <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015078229252>
- Moncheur, Baron. "Conditions in the Congo Free State." *The North American Review* v. 179, no. 575 (1904): 494-503.
- Sternstein, Jerome L. "King Leopold, Senator Nelson W. Aldrich, and the Strange Beginnings of American Economic Penetration of the Congo." *African Historical Studies*, v. 2, no. 1 (1969): 189-204.
- Weisbord, Robert G. "The King, the Cardinal and the Pope: Leopold II's genocide in the Congo and the Vatican." *Journal of Genocide Research*, v. 5, no. 1 (2010): 35-45. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14623520305651>
- Whiteley, James G. "THE CONGO." *The New York Times*, August 22, 1903. <http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy2.drake.brockport.edu/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/96280050/abstract/785DBF04E7A541C7PQ/8>



- Whiteley, James G. "FLEMING AND WALLOON." *The New York Times*, July, 23 1904.  
<https://ezproxy2.drake.brockport.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/ezproxy2.drake.brockport.edu/docview/96447734?accountid=26985>
- Whiteley, James G. "No Concession of Congo Lands." *The New York Times*, November 5, 1907.  
<http://search.proquest.com/ezproxy2.drake.brockport.edu/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/96723530/abstract/10AAA43628844554PQ/4>
- Whiteley, James G. "Belgium Used as a Milch-Cow for Germany." *The New York Times*, October 17, 1915.  
<http://search.proquest.com/ezproxy2.drake.brockport.edu/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/97692666/abstract/51B2433CD500479EPQ/2>
- Whiteley, James G. "How Von Bissing has "Blessed" Belgium." *The New York Times*, December 3, 1916.  
<http://search.proquest.com/ezproxy2.drake.brockport.edu/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/97820842/abstract/5DADDB459A924C54PQ/2>

## GEORGE GRENVILLE

Caleb Follmer, The College at Brockport

### Abstract

British Prime Minister George Grenville is frequently misunderstood. Unlike his predecessors, he sought compromise with the British colonies in North America, did not abuse the power and influence granted to him by his appointment, and did not award himself lavish gifts and a high salary under the guise of financial responsibility. Grenville actively sought to consolidate Britain's debt through his unwavering work ethic and honest business ideas. He also worked to find a new way to govern and control the British North American colonies. Left in debt by the costly Seven Years War, Britain expected her colonies to pay for the war waged for their benefit. At the same time that Britain passed new taxes, the colonies suffered a severe economic depression. Thus British attempts at debt reconciliation left the colonists hostile towards Grenville and Great Britain, who they perceived as ignoring their financial plight. Grenville heard their complaints and concerns, understood they felt threatened by British lawmakers enacting a direct tax in their country, and offered them the chance to tax themselves. When the colonists failed to provide a new system, he fell back on his original taxation plan created through Parliament. [Keywords: American colonies, Britain, American Revolution, salutary neglect, taxation]

Often vilified by the American Revolutionary effort, Prime Minister George Grenville became a lightning rod for misguided colonial anger. Frustrated with what they saw as unjust taxation, colonists called for an end to the Sugar and Stamp Acts that Grenville conceived. As tensions rose and tempers flared, Grenville found himself stuck between an unsympathetic king and colonists who complained of taxation without representation. When Grenville entered the office of Prime Minister in 1763, two major problems awaited him: the hemorrhaging debt from defending the British colonies in the Seven Years War, and the question of how to govern the territories added to the empire by the Treaty of Paris. First, Grenville saw the need to stop the illegal trade that had arisen between the colonies and the French during the war and began a series of political reformations in the colonies that severely punished those caught trading with the French. New tax acts followed, the purpose of which was to consolidate the accumulated debt, create new revenue for the British, and to cover the cost of the British Army in America. Colonists at first met the new regulations with mild forms of resistance, but generally complied. As time went on, colonial resistance became louder and more sophisticated.

When the Stamp Act passed in 1765, the situation reached its boiling point, and groans of frustration evolved into active resistance. A clash resulted between colonial desire to return to a policy of salutary neglect and Britain's determination to balance her budget and return her colonies to their subservient role. Grenville showed a desire to listen to colonial concerns about an intrusive Britain in a time period where many colonists felt they were not being represented or heard in British government. Parliament did not approve, arguing that if colonists could influence lawmaking, they ceased to be colonies and would become a completely separate nation. Caught on both sides by the growing instability of the colonial situation and the King's frustration at his personal conduct, Grenville was removed from office only two years after his appointment.

How then could someone so willing to listen be so vilified in the eyes of the colonists and their leaders? In order to understand the complicated legacy Grenville left, his life before, during, and after his position in office must be closely examined. A well-educated and motivated young man with close familial ties to politics, his entrance into the life of a career politician was all but predetermined by his parents. Holding a variety of important political roles in varying levels of local and national government, Grenville became known for his business skill with managing and creating money where needed. Britain needed both a fresh take on a new situation with the colonies and an economically-minded man to correct horrendous spending policies. Grenville fit the bill. Grenville's business-first approach with financing led him into the Prime Minister role in 1763 and led to his resignation only two years later. His greatest strength proved to be his greatest weakness.

George Grenville was born on October 14<sup>th</sup>, 1712. He was educated at Eton before entering into college at Christ Church, Oxford. Grenville originally trained to be a lawyer, and succeeded in being called to the bar in 1735.<sup>1</sup> With a politically powerful brother (Lord Temple) on one side of him, and an equally politically active brother-in-law (William Pitt) on the other, Grenville soon left the law behind to join his family in politics. Grenville entered Parliament in 1741 as member for Buckingham, a post he held until his death in 1770.<sup>2</sup> Both Pitt and Temple saw their relative as a means of garnering more support for their plans and policies. Grenville was smart enough to help push their politicking, but not well-liked enough to pose any threat to their own political careers. Although he was respected by his superiors for his dedication to business and efficiency, his less-than-amiable personality caused his peers and superiors to question his usefulness in higher posts. Grenville's work ethic surprised both himself and his family members, and he excelled early in his political life. In December 1744 he became a lord of the admiralty in the Pelham administration, and three years later in June 1747, Grenville became a lord of the treasury.<sup>3</sup> These early posts culminated in his appointment as Treasurer of the Navy in 1754. His legacy at this post included the the Navy Act of 1758, a law which made it easier for sailors of the royal navy to receive their wages and send them back home to wives and loved ones.<sup>4</sup> It was not the first time, nor would it be the last, that Grenville helped those of the working class. Upon his resignation from the post of Prime Minister, Sir James Porter

commented that the King's servants owed Grenville a statue because he ensured the regular payment of their wages.<sup>5</sup>

Despite George Grenville's experience in financial management, finances still caused the greatest friction between the British colonies and their motherland. With a larger empire than the British could have ever imagined, they faced the question of how to solve their debt crisis utilizing the colonies they had spent so much to defend. The source of this issue began during the Seven Years War, long before George Grenville became Prime Minister. The cost of the war aside, the conduct of the colonies during the conflict left a sour taste in the mouths of British rulers and merchants. Colonists had engaged in a deep and illegal trade network with the French, selling them provisions and goods that aided their war effort directly (wood and guns) or indirectly (supplies and foodstuffs). The first step in Grenville's plan was to stop the illegal French-American trade. As the former first lord of the Treasury, Grenville was undoubtedly familiar with the trade connections and how much money the colonists had generated at the expense of the British.<sup>6</sup> Swiftly moving into action, Grenville established new incentives for Royal officers and privateers to search, find, and seize colonial ships involved in any illegal dealings. The same act also created new maritime courts in the colonies so that smugglers could no longer get off easy on account of their familiarity with the colonies' judges and juries.<sup>7</sup> Colonial merchants said it was an injustice to use British judges to try colonial criminals, but their complaints fell on deaf ears. Even the rich and well-connected found themselves, if not summoned to court on suspicion of illegal trade, intimidated enough to cut their smuggling ties. Grenville also established new positions and promoted new customs officials to make sure that the taxes and duties he created were well-enforced and followed to the letter. No longer could rich colonial merchants drop money into the pockets of customs collectors in exchange for their silence. Each collector was well-respected and made aware that their compliance to British law would be worthwhile in the end.

Next came the start of debt reconciliation. During the war, the British asked local colonial governments to provide militia men to bolster military ranks and supportive taxes to help fund the war effort. Their pleas for both were often ignored often; no men arrived to help the Royal troops, nor were any taxes received to pay for guns, ammunition, and food. Debt continued to accumulate and by the end of the war, Britain had reached a total deficit of one hundred and thirty-two million British pounds<sup>8</sup>, a massive amount of money that almost doubled the debt left from the 1748 War of Austrian Succession.<sup>9</sup> The money had to come from somewhere, and Grenville knew more money could not be pulled from the British people. The English already paid exponentially higher taxes than their colonial counterparts, and their pockets were emptying fast; Grenville instead looked to the colonies. The first to propose a tax strictly to raise revenue from the colonies, Grenville said that it was the right of the British to request that such taxes be paid in fair proportion. In an address to Parliament he once said:

That this kingdom has the sovereign, the supreme legislative power over America, is

granted. It cannot be denied; and taxation is a part of that sovereign power...The nation [Britain] has run itself into an immense debt to give them [the colonies] this protection; and now they are called upon to contribute a small share towards the public expense...<sup>10</sup>

Grenville looked first to an older law set to expire in the same year of his election, the Molasses Act of 1733.<sup>11</sup> Passed as the Revenue Act of 1764 but known more commonly as the Sugar Act, this act altered its predecessor's duty collection. Originally, the Molasses Act had a sixpence-per-gallon duty per gallon on molasses and sugar. At the time, the law sought to prohibit French-American trade with such a damagingly high tax. The smuggling during the Seven Years War proved how ineffective the plan was. Grenville altered the tax and proposed cutting the duty in half. He stated that a lowered duty finally paid (and paid more often) would increase revenue, and stronger British control of the seas would force compliance. Parliament passed the new law without a word of protest.<sup>12</sup>

After the passage of the Sugar Act, more regulatory measures came about. For years colonies had printed their own paper money as a medium of trade and exchange. One of the most influential regulatory laws was the Currency Act of 1764. In an attempt to stabilize trade relations between Britain and America, this act sought to end colonial money printing.<sup>13</sup> Colonists needed a currency to exchange during inter-colonial trade. They faced shortages of paper currency regularly because the only way to get new paper money was in trade regulated by Great Britain. American colonial governments began to print their own paper money to solve the shortage problem. For colonists conducting their colonial business, no problems arose. For the British looking on, the issue with the colonial money laid in its backing, or lack thereof. The British pound had a "hard" backing, in that it held value through gold or silver in the British treasury, while colonial money was based upon mortgaged land.<sup>14</sup> Without a "hard" backing, colonial paper money was distrusted and held no value in the eyes of the British. Further complicating the issue was the lack of standard value and uniformity in money issuance. Some notes had interest payments, others did not. Some could only be used for purchases and not for debt payments, the opposite was true for other issued money.<sup>15</sup> When a British merchant received colonial bills as payment, they were useless anywhere outside of the American colonies and often of no use outside of the specific colony in which it was issued.<sup>16</sup> In legal cases when a British merchant sued a colonial trader, his payment if he won was issued in the form of colonial dollars issued by the colony in which the legal action took place. Stuck with worthless colorful paper, English merchants clamored to Parliament for restrictions and regulations, and got their wish with the passage of the Currency Act

George Grenville recognized that even the enormous amount of money raised from the Sugar Act would not be enough to cover all of Britain's debts. The colonies posed a special problem that none of his predecessors could have predicted. It was necessary to protect British colonial interests and prevent the colonies from forcing Britain to extend so much capital. To limit trans-Atlantic military costs, Grenville planned to station ten thousand active troops in the

colonies. The question then became how to prevent this expense from adding to Britain's massive debt. In early 1765, Grenville proposed a colonial Stamp Tax on any and all official papers, including newspapers, pamphlets, diplomas, legal documents, and even playing cards.<sup>17</sup> Such a law existed already in Britain, so it made sense to extend similar taxes to their colonies. Grenville defended the act, saying that unlike the Sugar Act, funds raised by the Stamp Act did not go to the British, but would remain in the colonies to help facilitate colonial defense and other local needs; colonists, however, did not care. The eventual passage of the Stamp Act left in its wake angry and motivated colonists, ready to actively push back against its overbearing motherland and to fight against taxation without fair representation.

Grenville's next quandary was how to govern the new land and to control the colonies after the financial situation was eventually resolved. The majority of the issues between the American colonies and George Grenville's office were due to a lack of identity for the colonies. After the French and Indian War, the colonial economy began to boom. Ready to take the step away from being a middleman for British trade, colonists became restless with the countless regulations and trade restrictions placed upon them. Grenville's strict Admiralty courts and maritime laws ensured that smuggling no longer gave them the profiting outlet they desired. The colonies wanted more: not only the economic freedom granted to them during the years of salutary neglect, but the ability and freedom to nurture their maturing industries. Before chaos could erupt, the colonies sent representatives to British Parliament and Grenville welcomed them. Grenville, like the colonial representatives, had high hopes of finding an alternative solution to the British tax plans. One of these representatives was Benjamin Franklin, who wrote to Grenville in February of 1765 asking for the Currency Act to be reformed as an alternative to the Stamp Act: "we...beg leave to submit [sic] to your consideration a measure calculated for supplying the Colonies with a Paper Currency, become absolutely necessary to their Circumstances, by which Measure a certain and very considerable Revenue will arise to the crown."<sup>18</sup> Grenville entertained these representative bodies and listened to each argument with an open mind. He recognized the pushback against his Stamp Tax and offered the representatives a chance to suggest an alternative. Seeing the concern the representatives had over a strictly enforced law from across the ocean, Grenville desired a plan that would leave the colonists complacent and willing to contribute their fair share. Grenville even wrote to other colonial leaders who were unable to make the trip to Britain to expand his understanding of the situation and why the law was so abhorred by their constituents.<sup>19</sup> In the end, it was decided that a locally created and enforced tax to generate the revenue would be necessary and satisfactory to pacify the colonial administrations. Grenville was happy to comply, and asked what tax plan they planned to create and how much revenue could be expected as a result. When neither those he wrote to nor those in person were able to answer this question, a frustrated George Grenville made it known that the Stamp Act would go into effect in November of 1765.

When word reached home that no settlement had been reached, American colonists were incensed. In October the colonists created a Stamp Act Congress to establish a more unified

voice, but their attention focused on an appeal to the crown, rather than to the financial leader George Grenville.<sup>20</sup> Even if colonists had aimed their ire at him it would have had no effect: Grenville had resigned from his office in July of 1765. Nevertheless, the colonial mob took to the streets and effectively boycotted British goods. Local papers published the names of residents who did not follow through on the boycott to force them to correct their behavior. Colonists publicly burned stamps instead of applying them to their papers, they harassed local Stamp Tax collectors, and went as far as to dismantle the home of a local governor and staunch Loyalist, Cadwallader Colden, an activity which became a popular tool of protesting crowds.<sup>21</sup> The colonial resistance was further motivated by the timing of the Currency Act. At the end of the war, colonies felt the pressure of a post-war recession. Extra ships sat in harbors, unemployed sailors roamed the streets causing trouble, and warehouses sagged under the weight of unsold goods.<sup>22</sup> Just when the colonists needed a source of money to help their suddenly-sagging markets most, it was taken away.

What George Grenville might have done to quell the colonial riots will forever be a mystery. Unpopular in the colonies because of assumed British arrogance, and increasingly unpopular in Britain herself, Grenville resigned from his post with a mixed legacy. Though he left the office of Prime Minister, that was not the end for Grenville in politics. He kept his seat in Parliament where he defended his American colonial policies with an even deeper passion, and called for the taxes to remain in place. In an address for the King in February of 1766, Grenville warned of the dangers of backing down to colonial pressure for the future of colonial rule:

America would not have been in this condition if they had believed that we would enforce the law...Whoever advises the King to give up his sovereignty over America is the greatest enemy to this country and will be accused by all posterity. ...Says he finds the Americans disputing the authority of this country and was willing to try how far their disobedience could reach ...Let those who encourage America and have raised and increased this condition by such encouragement extricate us out of it, and God grant that they may meet with success.<sup>23</sup>

Grenville wanted to remind the colonists that they were not a sovereign nation, but subjects of the British government and were expected to behave as such. Despite Grenville's impassioned warning, his successor, the Marquis of Rockingham, had the Stamp Act repealed in March of 1766.<sup>24</sup> To prevent future misunderstandings about the rights of the motherland over the colonies, Parliament passed the Declaratory Act later that same month. This Act cemented Parliament's right to make laws binding the colonies in whatever manner Britain saw fit.<sup>25</sup> The American colonists saw the Declaratory Act as a desperate attempt for Britain to save face after crumbling under colonial pressure to repeal the Stamp Act. Such weakness from their overbearing government gave fire to the colonists who saw that they could influence change if they pushed for it. Grenville's words proved prophetic. Britain's inability to hold-fast and enforce

colonial laws and codes would be the undoing of the empire.

A legacy of mixed emotions and misdirected hate characterized the tenure of George Grenville. Well-respected for his work ethic, the man climbed the ranks of the British colonial system quickly, efficiently, and honorably. Known as a businessman, not a statesman, Grenville's legalistically structured mind dictated his policies and the beliefs to which he clung while in office. As a member of the Whig Party, Grenville and his fellow party members believed strongly in the importance of preserving the British Empire and way of life. No one knew how to govern such a wide expanse of territory, stretching from North America, across the ocean to the Far East. Such an expansive empire over such different cultures and land had never before been seen on Earth. What is known now as the Commonwealth system had never been suggested or created. This system, if thought of at the time, would have brought the peaceful solution the colonies and Britain desired. While Grenville did not directly suggest the Commonwealth system, he gave examples and hints of a similar system of unification in which both sides had their voices heard. Much of the debate over what to do with the colonies came during the time of the Stamp Act debate in Parliament. Issues with roles of the American colonies in the empire as well as their other territories became hotly debated topics with no answers. "All colonies [American and other] are subject to the dominion of the mother country, whether they are a colony of the freest or the most absolute government."<sup>26</sup> When other Parliamentary members discovered that Grenville had listened to the colonial suggestion that they would take it upon themselves to raise the necessary funds through self-imposed taxes, Parliament struck out against the idea. Despite warnings that allowing the colonies such autonomy could spark feelings of independence and endanger the empire, Grenville remained undaunted. He was not alone: William Beckford stated that, "No precedent found of foreign taxation but the Post Office,... If this principle was established, why not tax Ireland . . . The North Americans would be glad to be rid of the troops from the Government and the expense of supporting them."<sup>27</sup> Colonel Isaac Barré built upon these ideas, praising Grenville's slow and cautious progression, but warned about the future. "We are working in the dark, and the less we do the better. Power and right; caution to be exercised lest the power be abused, the right subverted..."<sup>28</sup> Barré continued later that time could be taken to see the efficacy of the Sugar Act, reminding his compatriots that it had not yet been a year since the law took effect. This debate continued long after George Grenville had resigned. No one knew quite how to handle the American colonies and no one seemed willing to create a brand new governing system.

How then does Grenville fit into the framework of history? Grenville did not support American independence, but he did support the unification of the colonies with England, and recognized the importance of this relationship for the future success of the British empire. Grenville felt that the colonies had a role to play, and that they needed to be brought under control to better play it. His taxation plans and the reorganization of colonial rule both sought to rectify this situation. He saw the future before the idea took hold, and his arguments in Parliament and his taxation plans and ideas paved the way for a future system that considered



relative colonial freedom and autonomy. Not freedom to the extent of the system of the British Commonwealth; a system where unification depended on loyalty to similar languages, histories, and the British crown, but more than subjects of (and to) whatever the British willed. Grenville's unique position came from his willingness to listen, though he undoubtedly placed the will of the British government above that of the American colonies or colonial government. What Parliament said would be law would be the supreme law of the British Empire. This is evident from his tax conversation with colonial leaders. He reminded them that should they not be able to solve their own problem, Parliament would solve it for them. Yet, he still listened. For a man portrayed as uncaring and oppressive, he heard the airing of their frustrations and concerns loud and clear. Colonists had long complained that they felt like second class citizens to their English brethren on the British Isles. Even the rallying cry to the Revolution, "no taxation without representation" cast light on their feelings of subordination. Grenville did not see them in this manner, however. While he saw colonial governments as second class, he did not see the people in this way. He wanted to give them the chance and the opportunity to speak for themselves and to participate in the financial life of their colonies. He wanted them to have a voice. It was only when the colonists could not solve the issues presented to them that Grenville saw the need to intervene and directly enforce the taxes. One can only imagine what would have happened had the colonists devised their own taxation plan, as Grenville would have more than likely implemented it. Maybe the Commonwealth system would have been created then and there, or perhaps some new form of mutual governance between the two nations. The simple fact remains that the possibility existed for colonists to exercise a freedom they requested and felt they deserved. The blame for their inability to solve their own issue was wrongly placed on Grenville.

The effect that this knowledge has on American history is noteworthy. From the first day of school, we are told the story of a British government who cared little for their American colonies, who exploited and abused them and never listened when they cried out for a response. Grenville's actions are an example of the willingness British officials had to listen to the colonies. Most American historians write from the stand point of a young America fighting desperately for her freedom, but the idea of a unified America and Britain is discussed by historian Charles McLean Andrews. At the time of his study after the First World War, Andrews had the benefit of seeing and experiencing the British Commonwealth system firsthand. As he wrote about our history, he lamented the fact that the two powers did not find this system of government before the bloodshed of the American Revolutionary War. Grenville's willingness to listen reminds us to be wary of those who present the Revolution as a completely one-sided affair. George Bancroft argued that the American Revolution was a war to give Americans back the freedom and liberty that Britain had stolen from them, but fails even once to mention the diplomatic alternatives that were presented to the colonists. The importance lies in what could have happened and the understanding that Americans had the chance to make it happen. Charles Beard argued that upper-class colonists sparked the Revolution as a response to the thinning of their fat wallets. How could he then defend the inability of these men to come up with a system

that protected and guided their interests? Members of this high class came to Britain to talk with George Grenville face to face, and he corresponded with them through letters. They did not seize the chance presented to them and then focused their anger on the most public figure they could find, the face behind the Acts and taxes they so loathed: George Grenville.

The information in this paper is important to the study of both pre-Revolutionary times and of George Grenville's life. Traditionally, Grenville and King George are painted as the Revolutionary enemies of America. They are evil and repressive, set to smother the colonies in their crib before they have the chance to grow. Grenville is the victim of circumstance and the political climate of the time. He established and created a variety of new laws and regulations set to correct the vagaries of British rule and bring the colonies back under the influence of Great Britain. With only two years in office, he did not have the ability to restructure and then police any of his new policies. Given the way he fixed, listened and reformed, perhaps the Revolution could have been avoided all together. Beyond Parliamentary debates in regards to the Stamp Act and his insistence that the taxes remain in place, he could not influence his regulations anymore or alter them after his dismissal. His behavior with the King is no less to blame for his shaky legacy. King George once remarked, “When he has wearied me for two hours, he looks at his watch to see if he may not tire me for an hour more.”<sup>29</sup> Considered a terrible bore because he was all-business, Grenville could not repair the damage he had done, and his inability to politic became his undoing. So then how should George Grenville be looked upon in history? He should be remembered as exactly what Britain had asked for; a business-minded man ready to help his country solve her financial crisis, not the villain of the Revolution as he is so often portrayed. Grenville worked diligently to consolidate British debt and reign in the American colonies, while trying simultaneously to repair the strained relationship between the two. This no-win situation made him an easy scapegoat for colonists looking for a target and for members of Parliament to criticize and blame. Grenville still did not give up, even after resigning as Prime Minister. From his seat in Parliament and until his death in 1770, he continued to warn Britain about the growing unrest in the American colonies and the need to come to an agreement.

---

<sup>1</sup> “George Grenville,” NNDB, accessed November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2014, <http://www.nndb.com/people/959/000103650/>.

<sup>2</sup> Sir Lewis Namier, “Grenville, George,” *The History of Parliament*, accessed November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2014, <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1754-1790/member/grenville-george-1712-70>.

<sup>3</sup> “George Grenville,” NNDB.

<sup>4</sup> “George Grenville,” gov.uk, accessed November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2014, <https://www.gov.uk/government/history/past-prime-ministers/george-grenville>

<sup>5</sup> Namier, *The History of Parliament*.

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Percy and Mary Dickson, *World Civilizations*, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1997) accessed November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2014, <http://www.wwnorton.com/college/history/ralph/research/sovidoc2.htm>.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas Truxes, *Defying Empire: Trading with the Enemy in Colonial New York*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 133.

<sup>8</sup> Majorie Bloy, “The Ministry of George Grenville (April 1763 - July 1765),” last modified October 26<sup>th</sup>, 2013, <http://www.historyhome.co.uk/c-eight/ministry/grenmin.htm>.

<sup>9</sup> Bloy, “The Ministry of George Grenville.”

<sup>10</sup> John L. Bullion, *A Great and Necessary Measure: George Grenville and the Genesis of the Stamp*

- Act, 1763-1765, (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1982).
- <sup>11</sup> “Grenville’s Sugar Act,” *Boundless U.S. History*, Boundless, August 13<sup>th</sup>, 2014, accessed November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2014 from <https://www.boundless.com/u-s-history/textbooks/boundless-u-s-history-textbook/the-british-empire-and-the-colonial-crisis-1754-1775-6/the-sugar-and-stamp-acts-1763-1765-60/grenville-s-sugar-act-368-9432/>.
- <sup>12</sup> Truxes, *Defying Empire: Trading with the Enemy in Colonial New York*, 189.
- <sup>13</sup> “The Currency Act,” *Declaration of Independence*, Independence Hall Association, July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1995, accessed November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2014, <http://www.ushistory.org/declaration/related/currencyact.htm>.
- <sup>14</sup> “The Currency Act,” *Declaration of Independence*.
- <sup>15</sup> “The Currency Act,” *Declaration of Independence*.
- <sup>16</sup> Ron Michener, “Money in the American Colonies,” EH.net Encyclopedia, June 8<sup>th</sup>, 2003, accessed April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2016, <http://eh.net/encyclopedia/money-in-the-american-colonies/>.
- <sup>17</sup> Marjie Bloy, “George Grenville (1712-1770),” last modified February 19<sup>th</sup>, 2002, <http://www.victorianweb.org/history/pms/grenville.html>.
- <sup>18</sup> Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Pownall to George Grenville, February 12<sup>th</sup>, 1765, accessed on [franklinpapers.org](http://franklinpapers.org)
- <sup>19</sup> Edmund and Helen S. Morgan, *The Stamp Act Crisis*, (Williamsburg: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 57-58.
- <sup>20</sup> Truxes, *Defying Empire: Trading with the Enemy in Colonial New York*, 194-95.
- <sup>21</sup> Truxes, *Defying Empire: Trading with the Enemy in Colonial New York*, 196-97.
- <sup>22</sup> Truxes, *Defying Empire: Trading with the Enemy in Colonial New York*, 190
- <sup>23</sup> Namier, *The History of Parliament*.
- <sup>24</sup> Percy and Dickson, *World Civilizations*.
- <sup>25</sup> “The Declaratory Act,” *Declaration of Independence*, Independence Hall Association, July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1995, accessed November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2014, <http://www.ushistory.org/declaration/related/declaratory.htm>.
- <sup>26</sup> “Parliamentary Debate on the Stamp Act, 9 February 1765, selections,” *America In Class*, accessed November 20<sup>th</sup>, 2014, <http://americainclass.org/sources/makingrevolution/crisis/text3/parliamentarydebate1765.pdf>
- <sup>27</sup> “Parliamentary Debate,” *America In Class*.
- <sup>28</sup> “Parliamentary Debate,” *America In Class*.
- <sup>29</sup> Christopher Hibbert, *Redcoats and Rebels*, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1990), xvii.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- America In Class. “Parliamentary Debate on the Stamp Act, 9 February 1765,” Accessed November 20<sup>th</sup>, 2014 <http://americainclass.org/sources/makingrevolution/crisis/text3/parliamentarydebate1765.pdf>
- Bloy, Marjie. “George Grenville (1712-1770).” Last modified February 19<sup>th</sup>, 2002, <http://www.victorianweb.org/history/pms/grenville.html>.
- . *A Web of English History*. “The Ministry of George Grenville (April 1763 - July 1765),” last modified October 26<sup>th</sup>, 2013, <http://www.historyhome.co.uk/c-eight/ministry/grenmin.htm>.
- Boundless. “Grenville’s Sugar Act.” *Boundless U.S. History*. August 13<sup>th</sup>, 2014. Accessed November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2014 <https://www.boundless.com/u-s-history/textbooks/boundless-u-s-history-textbook/the-british-empire-and-the-colonial-crisis-1754-1775-6/the-sugar-and-stamp-acts-1763-1765-60/grenville-s-sugar-act-368-9432/>.
- Bullion, John L. *A Great and Necessary Measure: George Grenville and the Genesis of the Stamp Act, 1763-1765*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1982.

- 
- Franklin, Benjamin and Thomas Pownall. "Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Pownall to George Grenville. February 12<sup>th</sup>, 1765." Accessed through franklinpapers.org.
- "George Grenville," Accessed November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2014,  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/history/past-prime-ministers/george-grenville>
- "George Grenville," NNDB, accessed November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2014,  
<http://www.nndb.com/people/959/000103650/>.
- Hibbert, Christopher. *Redcoats and Rebels*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1990.
- Independence Hall Association. "The Currency Act." *Declaration of Independence*. July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1995. Accessed November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2014,  
<http://www.ushistory.org/declaration/related/currencyact.htm>.
- . "The Declaratory Act." *Declaration of Independence*. July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1995. Accessed November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2014, <http://www.ushistory.org/declaration/related/declaratory.htm>.
- Michener, Ron. "Money in the American Colonies." *EH.net Encyclopedia*, edited by Robert Whaples. June 8<sup>th</sup>, 2003, revised January 13<sup>th</sup>, 2011. Accessed April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2016,  
<http://eh.net/encyclopedia/money-in-the-american-colonies/>
- Morgan, Edmund and Helen S. *The Stamp Act Crisis*. Chapel Hill University of North Carolina Press, 1995.
- Namier, Sir Lewis. "Grenville, George." *The History of Parliament*. Accessed November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2014, <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1754-1790/member/grenville-george-1712-70>
- Notable Names Database. "George Grenville." Accessed November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2014,  
<http://www.nndb.com/people/959/000103650/>.
- Pearcy, Thomas and Mary Dickson. *World Civilizations*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1997. Accessed November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2014.  
<http://www.wwnorton.com/college/history/ralph/research/sovidoc2.htm>.
- Truxes, Thomas. *Defying Empire: Trading with the Enemy in Colonial New York*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008.

# THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION AND THE BLACK LOYALIST EXODUS

Julia Bibko, The College at Brockport

## Abstract

This paper provides an account of the experiences of Black Loyalists in Nova Scotia, London, and Sierra Leone after the American Revolution. Tens of thousands of North American slaves fled to the ranks of the British army when they were promised freedom in return for service. When the British lost the war, they began the evacuation of both White and Black Loyalists out of the colonies. Black Loyalists were sent primarily to Nova Scotia and England and, to a lesser extent, the Bahamas and West Indies. Yet the Black Loyalists were not content with freedom alone; they actively fought for equality and against discrimination in their new countries. Black Loyalists thus took charge of their own emancipation by fighting for the British and continuing to fight for equality even after their exodus from the colonies. The results of the Black Loyalist exodus were mixed, as shown by letters from the Sierra Leone colonists themselves. Yet the experience of the Black Loyalists is significant because this massive migration of free Blacks had international implications, the founding of the Sierra Leone colony being one example. This narrative also brings into question the concept of the Revolution as a national struggle for independence, in addition to revealing the complexity of Loyalist ideology. [Keywords: American Revolution, Britain, race relations, slavery, emancipation, Loyalists]

Ever since the American Revolution, historians have written and rewritten the Loyalist narrative countless times. Yet within this narrative, the Loyalists are often portrayed as a small, homogenous group. In reality, the Loyalists were highly diverse; there were a significant number of Black Loyalists during the Revolution, most often escaped slaves who fought for the British. They won their freedom after the end of the war, even though they were on the losing side. The 1783 poem, "The Tory's Soliloquy," captures the dilemma that faced all Loyalists after the war's end: "To go - or not to go - is that the Question?"<sup>1</sup> Massive numbers of escaped slaves took this opportunity to leave America as Loyalist refugees for Canada, England, and other various destinations. In this way, the Black Loyalists were able to facilitate their emancipation by fighting for the British and then continued their pursuit of equality after they settled in their new countries. By synthesizing previous research on the black Loyalists, this paper intends to reveal a diverse, but often neglected perspective on the American Revolution. This work challenges the traditional definitions of loyalism, in addition to complicating the concept of the Revolution as a struggle for national liberation.

## I. DEFINING LOYALISM

Who were the Loyalists? The historical stereotype is that they were an elite group of wealthy, educated Anglicans that had close ties to Britain. Maya Jasanoff argues that in reality, Loyalists came from all different regions, social classes, races and ethnicities, making them as diverse as their patriot counterparts. As a group, their size is often underestimated. Estimates today claim that Loyalists made up a fifth to a third of the population of the American colonies. These people did not have one unified ideology, but in fact held a wide range of beliefs. Some were loyalists for intellectual reasons, others for economic reasons, and still others preferred maintaining the status quo to all-out revolution.<sup>2</sup>

Yet defining and analyzing loyalism in the American colonies becomes much more complicated when race is considered. Besides the White Loyalists, there were Indian tribes that decided to support the British. Most relevant to this paper, however, is that there were a large number of Black Loyalists. The British promised freedom to slaves who signed up to fight in their army and, according to Jasanoff, twenty thousand Black slaves took this opportunity.<sup>3</sup> Because of these promises, Black Loyalist ideology was different from White Loyalist ideology. Both free and enslaved Blacks seem to have aligned with the Loyalist cause because they firmly believed that a British victory would benefit their race. By becoming Loyalists, slaves believed they were fighting not just for their own personal freedom, but the end of slavery and racial prejudice. American slaves came to see the British as "an enemy to slavery," and the British army was flooded with runaway slaves ready to fight for their emancipation.<sup>4</sup> Mary Beth Norton argues that there was an irony in slaveholding Patriots arguing for the "equal rights of man" and writing about their fear of being "enslaved" by Britain. Recognizing this paradox, American Blacks flocked to the British cause.<sup>5</sup>

Yet historians still debate whether Black Loyalists should be called Loyalists at all. This debate exists in part because defining loyalism is complex. Jasanoff characterizes Loyalists somewhat simplistically as "colonists who had sided with Britain during the war."<sup>6</sup> She uses the phrase "black Loyalists" again and again throughout her book, yet she never fully addresses where this group fits within her definition of loyalism. James W. St. G. Walker argues that those Blacks who fought for the British showed an ideological commitment to their cause by doing so, for not all runaway slaves joined the British army.<sup>7</sup> Yet in an earlier article, Walker writes that the Black Loyalists were "less pro-British than they were pro-Black," suggesting they were risking their lives in pursuit of freedom rather than victory.<sup>8</sup> These conflicting arguments show the difficulty of examining these former slaves-turned soldiers within the traditional definitions of loyalism. Perhaps the most complete definition can be found in *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, which describes Loyalists as "American colonists of varied ethnic backgrounds who supported the British cause during the American Revolution...for highly diverse reasons."<sup>9</sup> This paper will focus on the Black Loyalists who fought for the British and their resulting exodus. Therefore

they will continue to be referred to as Loyalists, despite their complicated relationship with the British government during and after the Revolution.

The Loyalist cause was attractive to many Blacks because it came to symbolize their liberation. The most famous promise of freedom in return for military service came from Lord Dunmore of Virginia in November 1775. In his proclamation, Lord Dunmore declared that “all indented servants [and] negroes...able and willing to bear arms” in support of the British would be given their freedom for doing so.<sup>10</sup> By making such promises of freedom, the British army attracted tens of thousands of Black recruits over the course of the Revolution. These new loyalists fled from their masters in Virginia, Maryland, and the Carolinas, before heading north to New York City, where the British army was headquartered. Men of all ages were sorted into Black regiments, guerilla units, or else used as spies, pilots, and wagon drivers. Black women also contributed to the British war effort by working as cooks, servants, and laundry maids.<sup>11</sup> It is interesting to note that the slaves of White Loyalists were never offered liberation and in fact there were measures in place to retrieve these slaves if they did escape.<sup>12</sup>

Historians have struggled to pinpoint the exact number of Black Loyalists. Many provide only a wide range, such as Graham Russell Hodges, who estimated that 25,000 to 50,000 fugitives came north to join the British.<sup>16</sup> Thomas Jefferson estimated in 1778 that 30,000 slaves had escaped from Virginia alone - he lost thirty slaves personally - and some historians have used this figure as the basis for their own estimates.<sup>17</sup> Still other historians make different estimates. Maya Jasanoff claims in *Liberty's Exiles* that only twenty thousand American slaves escaped and joined the British cause. Some historians fail to acknowledge Black Loyalists at all in their accounts of the Revolution, mentioning only the slaves of Loyalists. Even if scholars have not reached a consensus about the exact number of Black Loyalists, they have been able to agree on the historical significance of their escape as the greatest emancipation of slaves in North America prior to the Civil War.<sup>18</sup>

## II. THE AFTERMATH OF THE REVOLUTION

David V. J. Bell writes that with every revolution, there is also “some type of counterrevolution, one aspect of which may involve expatriation.” Bell examines the Loyalists as the “first American expatriates,” and looks at the difficult choices that faced them after the Revolution, the worst being whether to stay or leave. Even after the conclusion of the war, public attitudes toward Loyalists were cold, if not outright hostile. John Adams argued that the Tories should all be fined, imprisoned, and hanged, while George Washington called them “abominable pests of society” and suggested that suicide would be most appropriate. Thomas Paine argued for a distinction between the British soldiers and the American Loyalists that fought with them: “The first are prisoners, but the latter are traitors. The one forfeits his liberty, the other his head.”<sup>19</sup>

Because of this pervasive anti-Loyalism, Bell argues that the choice of Loyalists to leave America was hardly voluntary. The situation would have been even more dangerous and complex for Black Loyalists. According to state lists of "disloyal practices," Black Loyalists were guilty on at least two accounts: for enlisting on the "royal side" and also for escaping from their masters. If Loyalists did not sign oaths of allegiance to the new American government, they could face punishments ranging from disenfranchisement to incarceration.<sup>17</sup> Yet it is unlikely that these oaths were offered to runaway slaves. Even if they had the opportunity to declare their allegiance, Blacks still would have had few rights in post-revolutionary America. Upon consideration of these factors, it becomes clear that the Black Loyalists had just two choices after the war. They could stay in America and risk re-enslavement, or they could leave during the British evacuation and hope to find freedom beyond the colonies.

The British made their slave proclamations to attract recruits and support their war effort. Once defeated, however, British officials had to begin evacuation plans and the status of Black veterans had to be addressed. Walker argues that the evacuation of Boston in 1776 set a precedent for including "loyal Blacks" in their retreat.<sup>20</sup> Anticipating a patriot attack, Boston was evacuated in March 1776 and British military headquarters were relocated to New York City.

Before leaving Boston, General William Howe issued an order granting free passage to Loyalists who wished to leave the city in the wake of the British army. Approximately eleven hundred civilians left Boston for Halifax, Nova Scotia, making this the first major evacuation of Loyalists.<sup>21</sup> Although Walker claims that "loyal blacks" participated in this retreat, his account is problematic because it is never explained whether they were free Blacks or in fact the slaves of Loyalists.<sup>22</sup>

In 1782, the British began to process claims from Black Loyalists who wanted to leave the colonies. The evacuation of Charleston was addressed first, as it boasted the largest concentration of Black Loyalists. General Alexander Leslie, who was the British commander for Charleston, created a commission that would handle appeals made by former slaves as well as owners. If the runaways had served the British, the stated policy of the commission was to compensate their owners and then recognize these veterans as free Blacks. By June 1782, General Leslie reported that there were 4,000 Black Loyalists wishing to emigrate, as well as 6,000 slaves ready to depart with their White Loyalist masters. Freedmen had boarding priority, but some White Loyalists circumvented this by claiming their slaves were free Black Loyalists in order to gain passage. In the end, over 5,000 Blacks departed from Charleston, the majority of which were likely freed Loyalists. This departure occurred while peace negotiations were still taking place in Paris.<sup>25</sup>

In a similar manner, other Black Loyalists left from Savannah and later New York City. The main record of this exodus is the register that was kept of Black Loyalists departing from New York City, which became known as "The Book of Negroes." As African Americans were



considered property, the list included their names, ages, former owners, physical descriptions, and other notes; no such record exists of White Loyalist refugees. In spite of its racist undertones, the “Book of Negroes” is an exceptional document that has provided historians with information for 3,000 of the Black Loyalists who left the colonies after 1783.<sup>26</sup> Graham Russell Hodges compiled the immigration records known as the “Book of Negroes” into one volume and added later records from England as an appendix, as well as other relevant primary sources. Thumbing through his “Black Loyalist Directory,” one gains a sense of the diversity of the Black Loyalists who left the colonies after the war. Adults and children, men and women, families and lone travelers; the one thing these African Americans had in common was their newly earned freedom.<sup>27</sup>

As the Loyalist diaspora began, freed Blacks sailed toward uncertain futures in foreign lands, leaving family, friends, and all that they knew behind them in America. Free Blacks and slaves traveled together, which increased the risk of confusion and abuse. Some of these Black refugees would move several more times after their initial departure. Yet many still held onto the hope that their lives would be better as British subjects.<sup>28</sup>

### III. BLACK LOYALIST IMMIGRATION TO CANADA

After the Revolution, the choice that faced all Loyalists was not whether to leave America, but where to go. Due to its proximity, emigration to Canada was an attractive destination for all Loyalist refugees. Black Loyalists in particular flocked to Canada by the thousands. Nova Scotia received the majority of Loyalist refugees to British North America in the years after the war. Population surveys conducted in 1784 found that Nova Scotia had gained over 28,000 new inhabitants, which was double the number of settlers who had lived there before the war. By the end of the Loyalist migration, about 30,000 refugees had arrived in Nova Scotia. This estimate includes 3,000 free Blacks, as well as 1,200 slaves brought over by their Loyalist masters. In July 1783, a town was founded near Port Roseway as a settlement for Loyalist refugees. This town was named Shelborne, and by the end of the year it already had almost 8,000 settlers. During this influx of refugees, Nova Scotia Governor John Parr decided that Black Loyalists should have a separate settlement nearby, rather than residing within Shelborne. This neighboring settlement was named Birchtown, after the general who had signed certificates of freedom for the Black Loyalists in New York. By January 1784, Birchtown had become a parallel Loyalist town that was home to 1,485 free Blacks, making it one of North America’s biggest Black settlements.<sup>29</sup>

Quoting a British traveler, Jasanoff writes that the Shelborne Loyalists were “much at variance with one another,” while the Birchtown Loyalists appeared to be a close-knit group. Land allotments for Blacks were often only a quarter or half acre each, which was much smaller than given to most White Loyalists. Black refugees often had fewer resources as well and struggled to finish their houses before winter. Yet as former slaves, they possessed valuable skills and were better prepared for hard labor than their White counterparts, most of which had

lived in cities in America. A vibrant Christian community also grew up in Birchtown, mainly of the Methodist and Baptist denominations. David George, a Black preacher from Charleston, was responsible for founding Nova Scotia's first Baptist church.<sup>30</sup>

Although these Black Loyalists had left slavery behind them in America, racial discrimination followed them to Nova Scotia. Wage labor was a foreign concept for freed Blacks, and White Loyalists capitalized on this, hiring them to work for low wages. Other Birchtown Blacks became indentured servants or sharecroppers, working for Whites in Shelburne in a system of quasi-slavery. At the core of these issues were the widespread racial beliefs "connecting servitude and skin color," which greatly influenced how free Blacks were treated in Nova Scotia.<sup>31</sup> Black Loyalists also faced discrimination during land allotment, as a select few received small, poor quality lots while the majority got none. Free Blacks in Nova Scotia were also not allowed to vote, were subject to discriminatory laws, and were segregated in communities like Birchtown.<sup>32</sup>

Despite these hardships and disappointments, scholars like Walker recognize that Black Loyalists received good treatment in Nova Scotia compared to other destination countries. Yet Walker also notes that Black Loyalists in British North America were not content with being free; they also wanted equality. They actively petitioned Britain to end slavery in Nova Scotia, as their Black settlements started to attract the runaway slaves of White Loyalists. Despite their loyalty, Blacks realized that they did not have the full rights of British citizens. The Black Loyalists of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick even sent a representative, Sergeant Thomas Peters, to London to bring their complaints directly to the British government. Walker argues that the "Peters mission" demonstrates the desire for true equality and full citizenship among Black Loyalists.<sup>33</sup>

Peters' trip did little to change conditions at home in Nova Scotia, but it did have one significant result. When Peters returned, he was accompanied by John Clarkson, an agent of the recently formed Sierra Leone Company. They began to spread the offer that the British government had made to Black Loyalists of a new life in the colony of Sierra Leone. If the Black Loyalists migrated, they were promised farms, full equality including political rights, the full abolition of slavery in Sierra Leone, and a homeland.<sup>34</sup> After experiencing years of poverty and discrimination in Nova Scotia, this proposal was received enthusiastically by many free Black Loyalists. Unlike their White neighbors, Black Loyalists did not have the option of returning to the United States, where their freedom was not guaranteed. Therefore, in January 1792, about 1,200 Blacks left British North America for a new life in Sierra Leone.<sup>35</sup> Once there, they encountered other disillusioned Black refugees from London who had arrived years before and together they struggled to establish a settlement for themselves despite countless challenges.

#### IV. BLACK LOYALIST IMMIGRATION TO BRITAIN

Another major destination for Loyalists after the war's end was Great Britain. This would seem an obvious choice: many Loyalists viewed Britain as a refuge, or even "home."

Yet when they arrived in London, the city was both overwhelming and alienating. Many White Loyalists chose to move out to smaller towns, like Bristol and Bath, where the cost of living was lower and life moved a little more slowly. Jasanoff estimates that up to five thousand Black loyalists immigrated to Britain, the majority of them male and former soldiers. Those who were lucky (or unlucky) enough to survive the war now struggled to make a living in England. It soon became common to see Black veterans begging for food on the streets of London.<sup>36</sup>

Black Loyalists soon realized that they could hardly rely on the British government for aid. In order to be compensated, claimants needed clear proof of their losses, evidence of their freedom, and most importantly, money. Therefore "the illiterate, the poor, and the poorly connected" were routinely marginalized within this system.<sup>33</sup> Only 47 Blacks successfully filed claims for pensions or property compensation from the British government. The result was that just one man was awarded money for his property losses, while three received meager annual allowances and twenty were given small sums that ranged from five to twenty pounds. In contrast, few White Loyalists were totally denied assistance, while the majority of Blacks received nothing. Allowances for even the poorest Whites tended to be higher than those for the wealthiest Blacks and Whites who were given direct compensation rarely collected fewer than twenty-five pounds.<sup>37</sup>

The discrimination practiced by the commission becomes even clearer in their reports. In cases with Black claimants, the reports include variations of the same key phrase: "he ought to think himself very fortunate in being in a Country where he can never again be reduced to a state of Slavery."<sup>38</sup> The commissioners clearly believed that since these Blacks had been given their freedom by the British, they should view that as compensation enough for their loyalty. This attitude resulted in many Black Loyalists being denied relief after reaching England. In the words of the commission itself, claims made by Black Loyalists "hardly deserve[d] a serious Investigation or a serious Answer."<sup>39</sup>

While Black Loyalists waited in vain to receive their claims, they struggled for survival, many of them homeless and starving. For some Londoners, the sight of poor Blacks begging on their streets only fueled their racist attitudes toward these refugees. However, there were philanthropists like Jonas Hanway who responded differently to the situation, deciding to stand up for London's new arrivals. Together with several of his wealthy friends and fellow businessmen, Hanway decided to form a "Committee for the Relief of the Black Poor" in January of 1786." They started up a collection to help feed the starving Blacks in London and donations soon began to flow in. The fundraising campaign was so successful that by the end of that January, over two hundred poor Blacks began to receive free meals from three soup kitchens funded by the committee. They were also able to give out new shoes and stockings to two hundred and fifty of these people.<sup>40</sup>

The idea behind Hanway's commission was simple: these Black Loyalists had faithfully served Britain, only to end up penniless and hungry on London's streets. These individuals felt that it was unfair that these loyalists were not being compensated and were starving in the streets as a result, just as it was unfair that Black captives were still being sold across the Atlantic as slaves. Abolitionist sentiment was growing in Britain at this time, so it was no coincidence that the committee's largest contribution came from a Quaker abolitionist group. The participation of abolitionists like Granville Sharp would continue to be a significant factor in this relief effort.<sup>41</sup> Yet as the soup kitchen lines got longer and longer, the members of the committee began to realize that their programs could only provide temporary aid. These poor Blacks needed jobs to lift them out of poverty, but the post war depression in England had produced widespread unemployment. With such bleak prospects, some of the "black poor" began to talk of leaving Britain, perhaps for Nova Scotia, where many other Black Loyalists had found refuge. Then word started to spread of another possibility: a much warmer place on the west coast of Africa, called Sierra Leone. Henry Smeathman, an English entomologist, had argued for many years that Britain should colonize Sierra Leone and in 1786 he made his case in front of the Black Poor Committee. He advocated to the philanthropists that London's poor Blacks should be sent down to Sierra Leone as "pioneer colonists," an idea that was met with enthusiasm.<sup>42</sup>

Smeathman's proposal was quickly approved by the committee as well as the British Treasury, which agreed to allot him 14 pounds per emigrant to Sierra Leone. Yet as Mary Beth Norton argues, "so far neither the Treasury nor the committee had displayed the slightest concern for the desires of the Blacks themselves."<sup>43</sup> Greater than any philanthropic motivations was the desire of the committee and the British government to get the black poor off the streets and out of England. The black poor were a nuisance to the English, so the priority during planning was speed, rather than the welfare of the Black refugees. In turn, the black poor seem to have perceived that their only leverage in this situation was threatening not to leave and they used this threat on several occasions.<sup>44</sup>

When Jonas Hanway finally began to discuss immigration with the Black refugees themselves, he was disappointed to find that they were not as enthusiastic as the committee had expected. They refused to set sail for Sierra Leone until they had a written guarantee of their freedom from the British government. Ultimately Hanway had no choice but to surrender, providing the black poor with a formal agreement explaining how the colony would be established and operated. In reality, this agreement promised little; neither the British government nor the committee had committed to protecting the new colony and little was said about the rights the settlers would have. The committee did promise that if the Blacks signed this agreement, they would be committed to immigrate to Sierra Leone. Soon, the situation evolved so that signing the agreement became a requirement for monetary aid. If the black poor wanted to receive their sixpenny daily allowance, they had to sign this legally binding agreement and promise to leave England as soon as the ships were ready.<sup>45</sup>

As the plans for the Sierra Leone colony were evolving, Henry Smeathman died unexpectedly in July 1786. Confusion about how to proceed followed his death, as it was Smeathman who had initiated the whole Sierra Leone scheme. Smeathman was also meant to oversee the Blacks once they landed in Africa, because the committee believed they needed someone to ensure the Black settlers would be “properly trained to labour, and Civil and Religious Government, so as to render them good Subjects.”<sup>46</sup> But rather than looking for a replacement, the committee started to explore other destinations for the black poor, showing a willingness to abandon the Sierra Leone plan completely. The Black Poor Committee considered first sending them to settle in the Bahamas, but the plan could not be carried out because the Black Loyalists refused to go, seeing the danger in trying to establish themselves as free Blacks in these slaveholding islands. Next the committee explored sending them to New Brunswick, but the Blacks were unconvinced that this was a better alternative to settling in Sierra Leone.<sup>47</sup>

After these various setbacks, the committee had no choice but to revisit the Sierra Leone scheme. Joseph Irwin, a former associate of Smeathman, was placed in charge of the colony and the rest of the plans came together quickly. The British Navy Commissioners supplied two ships (and later a third) to hold the 675 people who had been formally contracted to go to Sierra Leone. A Scottish missionary named Patrick Fraser was officially commissioned by the Archbishop of Canterbury to serve as the settlement’s missionary. The Black Poor Committee spread the word that the ships would leave the Thames on October 31, 1786, and there would be no further allowances paid after this date. With the *Atlantic* and the *Belisarius* slowly filling up, everything seemed to be in order. Then in late November, the committee was informed that only 259 people had actually boarded the two ships, although 675 people had signed emigration agreements.<sup>48</sup>

Stunned, the members quickly issued a declaration ordering all the signees to report to the docks as agreed and threatening to use the Vagrancy Act to penalize any who refused. After this declaration, a few hundred more Blacks prepared to leave and they were placed on a third ship, the *Vernon*. The committee never succeeded in sending all 675 out of England, as some Blacks were still unconvinced that they would in fact be free and safe in the new colony. For those waiting on the ships, days and weeks stretched into months as the boarding process dragged on. Conditions on the ships were so poor that 73 of the 259 original passengers counted in November 1786 were unaccounted for three months later, whether because they had died of disease or escaped to shore. After months of delay, the three ships set sail on February 23, 1787, for Sierra Leone.<sup>49</sup>

## V. THE SIERRA LEONE COLONY

The British ships caught sight of land on May 5, and five days later the grueling journey to Sierra Leone was finally over. The colonists landed in Frenchman’s Bay, which they soon renamed St. George’s Bay. Thomas B. Thompson, captain of the *Nautilus*, chose the place nearby where the settlement would be built. Thompson, Joseph Irwin, and Patrick Fraser (the

missionary) officially bought the land on June 11 from King Tom, a local Temne chief. Thompson's naval vessel had served as a convoy for the three settler ships on the journey to Sierra Leone and he wanted to see the colony off to a good start before he returned to England.<sup>47</sup>

By the end of July 1787, Thompson had sent both the *Vernon* and the *Belisarius* home, but he remained in Sierra Leone, becoming increasingly pessimistic about the venture. He wrote to the British Admiralty that the Black settlers' "obstinacy and laziness, which neither remonstrance, persuasion, or punishment have yet been able to subdue, do not give me great hopes of their future welfare."<sup>50</sup> In addition to Thompson's pessimism (which was shared by Fraser), the situation was further complicated because the colonists had landed in Sierra Leone at the start of the rainy season. The poor weather made it difficult for the Black settlers to build huts for shelter, or to plant grain to replenish the stores of food that were brought over on the ships, which were starting to run low. The constant rain also caused "fevers, fluxes, and bilious complaints" among the settlers, according to Thompson. Whatever the sickness being spread, it contributed to the 30 Black settlers between May and July of 1787. Fraser also estimated that of the 330 surviving colonists, about half of them were sick during this time.<sup>51</sup>

The situation deteriorated further when Joseph Irwin died. Thompson told his superiors that he believed Irwin had never been fully committed to the experiment in Sierra Leone, but Irwin had nonetheless been given the responsibility of managing the colony. Therefore his death caused great confusion and concern among the colonists, which no doubt contributed to the disorganization and idleness that Thompson had noted. By the time of his next report at the end of August, conditions in the settlement had thankfully improved. Thompson wrote that the colony was finally recovering from its bout of disease and noted that several of the Black settlers were even "possessed of some share of industry," which made him optimistic. By mid-September, Thompson had unloaded the last of the supplies from the *Nautilus* and on September 16, he started his journey back to England at last. He left in his wake the 268 surviving colonists.<sup>52</sup>

Meanwhile, the Reverend Patrick Fraser continued to have doubts about the venture. Frustrated that the Black settlers had not yet built him a house or a church, Fraser began to spend more and more time on Bance Island, which was home to a slave factory. Here, he lived more comfortably and enjoyed being able to preach regularly to a congregation of "Englishmen and natives." Fraser became so dissatisfied with life in Sierra Leone that he gave up his mission there and returned to England the next spring. Yet Fraser was not the only deserter; by June 1788, the rest of the White men in the colony had "reportedly joined the slavers" on Bance Island.<sup>53</sup>

All the while, the Black settlement on St. George's Bay continued its struggle for survival. They elected a governor, Richard Weaver, but he soon fell ill and James Reid replaced him. During Reid's term in office, over half of the settlement's arms were strangely lost. Weaver took back over as governor, but it was too late to reverse the damage that Reid had done. Now vulnerable, the settlement experienced losses of both materials and men to local slave traders and chiefs like King Tom. When Fraser reported in spring 1788 on the dismal state of the colony,

Granville Sharp decided to send a “relief expedition” to Sierra Leone. He quickly chartered the *Myro*, filled with supplies and a handful of new settlers, to sail to West Africa. According to Norton, the ship landed in August 1788 and “the settlers later told Sharp that it had been their salvation.”<sup>54</sup>

Once the *Myro* left, however, the settlement continued to be threatened by the Bance Island slavers as well as passing slave ships. On several occasions, the Black settlers resorted to retaliatory kidnappings of White captains in order to regain those unlucky enough to be captured by the slave traders. Successful or not, this strategy did not help the reputation of the Black settlers in the surrounding areas. But the colony managed to survive into the summer of 1789 and its population stabilized around 120. Yet its future was jeopardized once again when the settlement was caught in the middle of a conflict between a local chief, an American slaving ship, and a British man-of-war. As the conflict escalated, the chief gave the settlers three days to evacuate and then burned their entire town.<sup>55</sup>

When Sharp received word about the incident, he sent another relief expedition under Alexander Falconbridge. He arrived in early 1791 to find that there were only 60 settlers left in Sierra Leone. Falconbridge gathered the survivors together at a new location about six miles away from the old settlement and then he returned to England. The new site was named “Granville Town.” Given the poor state of the colony, British officials gladly permitted the Black Loyalists from Nova Scotia to move to Sierra Leone. The plans moved forward quickly and these new settlers arrived from Canada in March 1792. Curiously, they decided to settle on the original site that was occupied by the old settlers and named it Freetown (now the capital of modern Sierra Leone). Tensions grew up between the “old” and “new” settlers, peaking when the original colonists were ordered to leave the new settlement by John Clarkson, the leader of the Nova Scotians.<sup>56</sup>

The British were quick to offer up explanations for the failure of the first Sierra Leone settlement. Thompson chose to blame the settlers themselves, who he saw as “a worthless, lawless, vicious, drunken set of people.” Sharp also tended to blame the colonists, rather than considering the difficulties they faced because they could not build or plant during the rainy season. Sharp and Thompson did admit that the timing of the expedition was unlucky, but they never gave due credit to the Black settlers for surviving despite these obstacles. Norton argues that only one observer identified the true cause of the colony’s failure. Ottobah Cugoano, who had been a slave in North America, stated that the colony’s advocates in England never had a clear, thought-out plan for establishing a free Black settlement in Sierra Leone. Instead, Cugoano wrote, the British wanted the Black Loyalists “to be hurried away at all events, come of them what would.”<sup>57</sup> This quote exemplifies the underlying racism that Black Loyalists were confronted with throughout the British Empire. Even with abolitionism on the rise, British notions of paternalism and racial superiority remained strong. Those who survived the war gained their freedom, certainly, but the Black Loyalists consistently suffered as a result of British indifference to their situation.

## VI. OTHER LOYALIST DESTINATIONS

Canada and England were not the only destinations for Blacks after the Revolution. Thousands of loyalists, mainly those from the southern colonies, fled to the Bahamas and the West Indies starting in 1782. It is estimated that 3,000 Loyalists came to Jamaica, bringing with them over 9,000 slaves. Records show that 2,000 Loyalists went to the Bahamas, with about 6,000 slaves in tow. The Loyalist exodus had the most dramatic effect in the Bahamas, as it doubled the White and nearly quadrupled the islands' Black population. Life in the Bahamas and the West Indies was difficult, with overcrowding being the most immediate problem. However, life on the islands would have been most difficult for the Black refugees from the former colonies. With the arrival of the Loyalists and their slaves, Whites were outnumbered for the first time, which led to a tightening of control over the Black population. In the disarray of the evacuations, some Loyalists claimed slaves they did not own (which may have been stolen from patriots) and others enslaved Blacks who should have been legally free. Yet contemporary commentators argued that despite this confusion, slavery as an institution in the Caribbean was "comparatively benign."<sup>58</sup>

Most Black Loyalists avoided the Bahamas and the West Indies, likely because they feared re-enslavement. However, some Black Loyalists did come to the islands, the majority as members of British regiments. After being evacuated out of Charleston, five hundred soldiers from Lord Dunmore's Black regiment sought refuge in Jamaica, as did a Black South Carolina corps. This presence of free Blacks in Jamaica raised concern among the White Loyalist population, unhappy with the example this would set for their slaves. As a result, the White Loyalists were greatly relieved when the Black regiment was relocated to the Leeward Islands, where they would fight again for the king during the French Wars. The regiment's departure meant that Jamaica and the Bahamas were no longer home to a sizeable number of free Black Loyalists; however, they still retained their thousands of North American slaves.<sup>60</sup>

Following this discussion of Loyalist havens after the American Revolution, one might ask: why did these individuals settle where they did? The evacuation of East Florida in the early 1780s provides scholars with a clearer understanding of the Loyalist diaspora. Once the Revolution had begun, the St. Augustine garrison attracted Loyalist refugees from Georgia and the Carolinas. The evacuation of this British colony began in early 1782 under the leadership of East Florida's governor, Patrick Tonyn. British ships relocated the East Florida Loyalists - both White and Black - to England, Nova Scotia, and the Caribbean. Carole W. Troxler argues that the evacuation of East Florida reveals a pattern for White Loyalists' immigration: those who owned slaves tended to relocate to the Bahamas and the West Indies, while those who owned few or no slaves at all went to Canada and Europe.<sup>61</sup>

After studying Troxler's data closely, one can argue that a similar pattern exists for Black Loyalists as well. Historical evidence shows that the majority of slaves were taken to the Bahamas and the West Indies by their Loyalist masters, as this region maintained a strong slave



trade. In contrast, the vast majority of free Black Loyalists settled in Canada and Europe, where slavery was less common. Even though these evacuations created chaos and confusion, these immigration trends show that the Loyalist diaspora was not in fact a random scattering of expatriates, but an exodus based on the pursuit of self-interest. In the case of Black Loyalists, freedom was the ultimate factor in deciding where they settled.

## VII. RESULTS AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BLACK LOYALIST EXODUS

After studying the mass migration of Black Loyalists, one final question must be answered: were these individuals better off because they chose to leave the colonies? In other words, did they benefit from becoming Loyalists? When considered in terms of slavery, the obvious answer is yes. African Americans who decided to fight for the British gained their freedom after the war and were able to leave the colonies with their families. These individuals were clearly better off than the African Americans who had stayed with their masters (whether Loyalist or Patriot) and therefore had no immediate hope of being freed. Yet the answer to this question becomes far more complicated when the lives of these Black Loyalists beyond the colonies is considered. They gained their freedom, but then Black Loyalists struggled to survive in their new countries and were forced to work in servitude to Whites or else live in poverty. Evidence shows that some Black Loyalists did not survive the journey to their new homes, while others died of disease and starvation after arriving.

It is clear that life abroad was extremely difficult for the majority of Black Loyalists, despite having escaped slavery. In Nova Scotia, England, Sierra Leone, and the Caribbean, these newly freed Blacks experienced varying degrees of discrimination as well as disappointment. One could argue that they still benefited in the end from siding with the British, but this assumption should not be made without examining the perspectives of the Black Loyalists themselves. Christopher Fyfe published a series of letters and other documents that were written by relocated settlers from Nova Scotia in the 1790s to the Sierra Leone Company officials. These letters provide a glimpse of how these Black Loyalists viewed their own exodus after having moved twice and experiencing hardships in both places. Some of the letters take the form of simple requests, whether for supplies like soap and food or for marriage licenses issued by the colonial government. However, these humble requests should not be mistaken for submission on the part of the Black settlers. In other letters, the settlers made detailed demands regarding how they felt the colony should be run and what rights they were entitled to as British subjects.<sup>64</sup>

Yet the most telling documents are those in which the Black settlers reflect on their life in the colony. In one such document, titled "Settler's Petition," they wrote to colonial officials in London that "we have feeling the same as other Human Beings...[but] here we are afraid that if such conduct continues we shall be unhappy while we live and our Children may be in bondage after us."<sup>65</sup> Other documents reflect this disillusionment, such as a letter from two settlers who wrote, "We are sorry to think that we left America to come here to be used in that manner,"

referring to perceived misconduct on the part of the colony's governor.<sup>66</sup> Still other letters contain a degree of hopefulness, like the letter written by Richard Corankeapoan, who reported that there were many dissatisfied settlers, but the situation in the colony was slowly improving.

Corankeapoan remarked that "thear is some of our pepol will not Be Contented with aney thing...but we donot mind wat everey one says."<sup>67</sup> These letters and documents help demonstrate the complex perspectives of the Sierra Leone settlers and, by extension, the Black Loyalists. These individuals had been granted their freedom, but they were not content with freedom alone. Many promises had been made to the Black Loyalists, and after their evacuation they began to realize that the British government had not been truly committed to fulfilling them.

No matter the results, the significance of the Black Loyalist exodus is undeniable. The sheer size of this mass migration is remarkable. As has been previously stated, an estimated 20,000 escaped slaves fought for the British and were then given the opportunity to leave the colonies after the war was over. Therefore, an unforeseen result of the American Revolution was the emancipation of slaves on a massive scale, not to be witnessed again until the Civil War.<sup>68</sup> In addition, this was the first voluntary movement of free Blacks out of America. After centuries of slave ships crossing the Atlantic to reach North America, vessels began to take willing Black Loyalists to the far reaches of the British dominion, including West Africa. Black Loyalists were instrumental in the founding of Sierra Leone, a remarkable colonial experiment. In many ways, Sierra Leone helped to inspire the nineteenth-century "back to Africa" movement and the eventual settlement of Liberia by African Americans.<sup>69</sup>

Additionally, research on this subject is significant because it highlights the diversity and complexity of the Loyalist ideology. In the case of Black Loyalists, they chose to fight for the British not for political, but rather personal reasons. By becoming Loyalists, these escaped slaves facilitated their own emancipation in an exceptional way. Despite their motivations, the Black Loyalists became an important asset to the British military and the Loyalist cause itself. For these reasons, the Loyalists should not be studied as a monolithic group, but as a diverse collection of people with a wide range of beliefs and goals.<sup>70</sup>

Furthermore, the experience of the Black Loyalists challenges the fundamental understanding of the American Revolution as a struggle for national independence. Robert M. Calhoun argues that the Revolution was "a special kind of civil war" because it was ultimately a "struggle for national liberation."<sup>71</sup> Yet implicit in this assertion is the irony of the Revolution in regards to African Americans. Crying out for independence from tyrannical British rule, the Patriots wrote of the "equal rights of man," while many of them were in fact slave owners. This irony is noteworthy because as many Americans were fighting to overthrow the British, the Black Loyalists were simultaneously fighting to win independence from their American masters.<sup>72</sup> Upon closer analysis, then, this commonly held view of the Revolution as a national fight for independence is rather one-dimensional.

## VIII. CONCLUSION

Due to their service and loyalty to the British, thousands of escaped slaves were freed after the American Revolution was over. Free Blacks had few prospects in post-revolutionary America and, recognizing this, many of them participated in the British evacuation of the colonies. Black Loyalists traveled all over the British Empire in search of a better life, settling in large numbers in Canada, England, the Caribbean, and eventually Sierra Leone. Though they were often disappointed with life in their new countries, these former American slaves ultimately benefited from their Loyalism because it created the conditions for their emancipation. The Black Loyalist experience had implications both in America and abroad, fueling abolitionism and inspiring other migrations of free Blacks. Yet their journey has been largely ignored by historians, creating a whitewashed account of the American Revolution. Nevertheless, the Black Loyalists deserve to be recognized for their contributions to the war and for their dedication to securing their own liberty at a time when few were truly committed to equality for all mankind.

---

<sup>1</sup> David V. J Bell, "The Loyalists: The First American Expatriates," *University of Windsor Review* 7, no. 2 (January 1972): 70.

<sup>2</sup> Maya Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles: American Loyalists in the Revolutionary World* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011), 8-9.

<sup>3</sup> Jasanoff, 8.

<sup>4</sup> James W. St. G. Walker, "Blacks as American Loyalists: The Slaves' War for Independence," *Historical Reflections/Reflexions Historiques* 2, no. 1 (Summer 1975): 53-54.

<sup>5</sup> Mary Beth Norton, "The Fate of Some Black Loyalists of the American Revolution," *The Journal of Negro History* 58, no. 4 (October 1973): 402-403.

<sup>6</sup> Jasanoff, 6.

<sup>7</sup> James W. St. G. Walker, "Myth, History and Revisionism: The Black Loyalists Revisited," *Acadiensis* 29, no. 1 (Autumn 1999): 98.

<sup>8</sup> Walker, "Blacks as American Loyalists," 53.

<sup>9</sup> Walker, "Myth, History and Revisionism," 98.

<sup>10</sup> Library of Congress, "An American Time Capsule: Three Centuries of Broadsides and Other Printed Ephemera," American Memory, 2008, [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/rbpe:@field\(DOCID+@lit\(rbpe17801800\)\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/rbpe:@field(DOCID+@lit(rbpe17801800))).

<sup>11</sup> *The Black Loyalist Directory: African Americans in Exile after the American Revolution*, ed. Graham Russell Hodges (New York: Garland Publications, 1995), xii-xiv.

<sup>12</sup> Walker, "Blacks as American Loyalists," 59.

<sup>16</sup> *Black Loyalist Directory*, xiv.

<sup>17</sup> Walker, "Myth, History and Revisionism," 98.

<sup>18</sup> Jasanoff, 8.

<sup>19</sup> Bell, 62-65.

<sup>17</sup> Bell, 65.

<sup>20</sup> Walker, "Blacks as American Loyalists," 61.

<sup>21</sup> Jasanoff, 29.

- 
- <sup>22</sup> Walker, "Blacks as American Loyalists," 61.
- <sup>25</sup> Walker, "Blacks as American Loyalists," 61-62.
- <sup>26</sup> Jasanoff, 77, 89.
- <sup>27</sup> *Black Loyalist Directory*, xi.
- <sup>28</sup> Jasanoff, 77.
- <sup>29</sup> Jasanoff, 152, 160, 171-172.
- <sup>30</sup> Jasanoff, 172-174.
- <sup>31</sup> Jasanoff, 174.
- <sup>32</sup> Walker, "Blacks as American Loyalists," 65.
- <sup>33</sup> Walker, "Blacks as American Loyalists," 65.
- <sup>34</sup> Walker, "Blacks as American Loyalists," 66.
- <sup>35</sup> John N. Grant, "Black Immigrants into Nova Scotia, 1776-1815," *Journal of Negro History* 58, no. 3 (July 1973): 256-258.
- <sup>36</sup> Jasanoff, 114-115, 127-128
- <sup>33</sup> Jasanoff, 132-134.
- <sup>37</sup> Norton, 404.
- <sup>38</sup> Norton, 404.
- <sup>39</sup> Norton, 404.
- <sup>40</sup> Jasanoff, 128-129.
- <sup>41</sup> Jasanoff, 129.
- <sup>42</sup> Jasanoff, 129-130.
- <sup>43</sup> Norton, 408.
- <sup>44</sup> Norton 409.
- <sup>45</sup> Norton, 409-410.
- <sup>46</sup> Norton, 410.
- <sup>47</sup> Norton, 410-412.
- <sup>48</sup> Norton, 412-414.
- <sup>49</sup> Norton, 413-417. Scholars have experienced difficulty determining with any certainty how many of these passengers were American, but Norton estimates that "at least half" of the 347 Black passengers on these ships were "ex-slaves from the thirteen colonies."
- <sup>47</sup> Norton, 416, 419-420.
- <sup>50</sup> Norton, 420.
- <sup>51</sup> Norton, 420-421.
- <sup>52</sup> Norton, 421-422.
- <sup>53</sup> Norton, 422.
- <sup>54</sup> Norton, 422-423.
- <sup>55</sup> Norton, 422-424.
- <sup>56</sup> Norton, 424-425.
- <sup>57</sup> Norton, 425-426.
- <sup>58</sup> Wallace Brown, "The Loyalists of the American Revolution in the Bahamas and the British West Indies," *Revista/Review Interamericana* 5, no. 4 (December 1975): 639, 642.
- <sup>60</sup> Brown, 643.
- <sup>61</sup> Carole W. Troxler, "Loyalist Refugees and the British Evacuation of East Florida," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 60, no. 1 (July 1981): 1-2, 21.
- <sup>64</sup> Christopher Fyfe, ed., "*Our Children Free and Happy:*" *Letters from Black Settlers in Africa in the 1790s*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991): 23-26.
- <sup>65</sup> Fyfe, 35-37.
- <sup>66</sup> Fyfe, 42-43.
- <sup>67</sup> Fyfe, 33.
- <sup>68</sup> Jasanoff, 8.

<sup>69</sup> Nemata Amelia Blyden, "'Back to Africa:' the Migration of New World Blacks to Sierra Leone and Liberia," *OAH Magazine of History* 18, no. 3 (April 2004): 23-24.

<sup>70</sup> Jasanoff, 8-9.

<sup>71</sup> Robert M. Calhoun & Timothy M. Barnes. *Tory Insurgents: The Loyalist Perception and Other Essays*. (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2012): 371.

<sup>72</sup> Norton, 402.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bell, David V. J. "The Loyalists: The First American Expatriates." *University of Windsor Review* 7, no. 2 (January 1972): 62-77.
- Blyden, Nemata Amelia. "'Back to Africa:' the Migration of New World Blacks to Sierra Leone and Liberia." *OAH Magazine of History* 18, no. 3 (April 2004): 23-25.
- Brown, Wallace. "The Loyalists of the American Revolution in the Bahamas and the British West Indies." *Revista/Review Interamericana* 5, no. 4 (December 1975): 638-647.
- Calhoun, Robert M., & Timothy M. Barnes. *Tory Insurgents: The Loyalist Perception and Other Essays*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2012.
- Fyfe, Christopher, ed. "Our Children Free and Happy:" *Letters from Black Settlers in Africa in the 1790s*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991.
- Grant, John N. "Black Immigrants into Nova Scotia, 1776-1815." *Journal of Negro History* 58, no. 3 (July 1973): 253-270.
- Hodges, Graham Russell, ed. *The Black Loyalist Directory: African Americans in Exile after the American Revolution*. New York: Garland Publications, 1995.
- Jasanoff, Maya. *Liberty's Exiles: American Loyalists in the Revolutionary World*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011.
- Library of Congress. "An American Time Capsule: Three Centuries of Broadsides and Other Printed Ephemera." *American Memory*. 2008. [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/rbpe:@field\(DOCID+@lit\(rbpe17801800\)\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/rbpe:@field(DOCID+@lit(rbpe17801800))).
- Norton, Mary Beth. "The Fate of Some Black Loyalists of the American Revolution." *The Journal of Negro History* 58, no. 4 (October 1973): 402-426.
- Troxler, Carole W. "Loyalist Refugees and the British Evacuation of East Florida." *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 60, no. 1 (July 1981): 1-28.
- Walker, James W. St. G. "Blacks as American Loyalists: The Slaves' War for Independence." *Historical Reflections/Reflexions Historiques* 2, no. 1 (Summer 1975): 51-67.
- Walker, James W. St. G. "Myth, History and Revisionism: The Black Loyalists Revisited." *Acadiensis* 29, no. 1 (Autumn 1999): 88-105.

# NEOSLAVERY: THE PERPETUATION OF SLAVERY AFTER THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR

Ben Falter, The College at Brockport

## Abstract

Many Americans are under the impression that slavery ended following the Civil War. However, this is a vast oversimplification of the reality that Black men and women faced in the South after the war's end. Freedmen's bureau reports, "Black Codes," and the research of historians demonstrate the ways in which Black men and women were treated following the end of the Civil War. Comparing the conditions revealed in the aforementioned sources to the conditions Black men and women faced during legal slavery reveals startling similarities. Violence against Blacks continued to be widespread in the post-war period, and many Black men and women were even bought and sold through convict leasing. In short, slavery continued in all but name. [Keywords: slavery, American Civil War, Reconstruction, emancipation, race relations]

## INTRODUCTION

After the end of the Second World War, colonial empires broke apart and their former imperial domains asserted themselves as independent nations. However, many of these countries discovered that imperialism had not really ended. Independent nations still found themselves under the control of their former imperial masters. However, the former imperial nations no longer directly controlled these nations politically. Instead the colonizers dominated these new nations economically, culturally, and occasionally militarily. This system is called Neocolonialism and is a powerful force in the world today. Former colonial dominions discovering that they were not truly free from their imperial masters serves as an excellent analogy to a system that this paper terms "Neoslavery." Just as the Second World War brought an end to the colonial empires of nations such as the United Kingdom and France, so too did the American Civil War bring an end to slavery, at least officially. However, former masters still controlled the men and women that had once been their property. The new Freedmen may not have been called slaves anymore, but they were far from free. In short, though the American Civil War technically brought an end to slavery, Whites kept former slaves in bondage.

By no means is this paper the first piece of writing to suggest that slavery did not actually end with the American Civil War, nor is this paper the first to use the term neoslavery. Both David Oshinsky and Douglas Blackmon argue that convict leasing, in which the state leased out prisoners to individuals and corporations as a labor force, was a continuation of slavery. Blackmon uses the

term neoslavery to describe the convict leasing system. Although Blackmon and others have used the term before, this paper uses the term more broadly to describe Blacks' experience more generally after the Civil War, but. John Daly's *The Southern Civil War* argues that Reconstruction was actually a war, where one of the sides was fighting for a return of the old system, of which slavery was the key component. These authors' research explores individual aspects of Blacks' experience following the Civil War in a great deal more depth than this paper will. However, this paper combines elements from these authors' research in order to paint a broader picture of freedmen's experience. Even without these authors' research, primary evidence demonstrates the conditions freedmen faced. Black Codes written into every southern state constitution blatantly took away the rights of former slaves. Violence against freedmen ran rampant as former masters tried to push them back into slavery; Freedmen's Bureau reports attest to this fact. This paper, then, compares the conditions faced by Blacks under Antebellum slavery to Whites' legal and extralegal oppression of Blacks following the American Civil War, attested to in primary documents and other historians' research. By making this direct comparison, this paper will demonstrate that slavery continued after the Civil War in practicality.

In order to make the claim that slavery continued after the conclusion of the American Civil War, this paper will first demonstrate the conditions that men faced under slavery. Doing so will enable a comparison to the conditions Freedmen faced following the end of the Civil War under neoslavery. For this reason, this paper is divided into two broad sections, each looking at a broad time period. The first section will explore the conditions faced by slaves in the Antebellum (literally, before war) Period. The second section will explore the perpetuation of slavery in the Postbellum (after war) Period. Geographically, the focus is on the southern states. That is not to say that racial oppression did not exist in northern states, but neoslavery as a direct extension of Antebellum slavery was primarily a southern phenomenon. By examining and comparing the conditions Black men and women faced in the South during these two periods, this paper will conclusively prove that slavery continued through legal practices and through violence.

## SLAVERY IN THE ANTEBELLUM PERIOD

Slavery was a great evil. As John Boles stated, "Any labor or social system that defined persons as property and deprived them of basic autonomy over their lives was irredeemably evil."<sup>1</sup> Despite the horrid conditions within slavery, slaves experienced a degree of flexibility within the system, which was often dependent on the slave's master. For instance, some slaves could supplement their diet with food that they gathered via fishing, hunting, trapping, and so on.<sup>2</sup> It is precisely this relative flexibility that made Neoslavery so bad. In short, conditions during slavery were extremely poor, even with the noted minor flexibility, precisely because masters treated slaves as property as opposed to human beings.

It should be noted that slaveholding was not the norm. Most Whites did not own slaves, even in the South. Of the Whites who did own slaves, most of them owned only a few.

"Slaveholding was concentrated in the hands of a significant minority of the population, and plantation-sized slaveholding was confined to a tiny minority."<sup>3</sup> Plantations were in the hands of only the extremely wealthy. Plantation owners were the period's "one percent," to use modern parlance. Because the rich were able to concentrate slaves in their hands, a discussion of slavery will necessarily focus on these slaves.

Perhaps the most important part of slavery in the Antebellum South was the slaveholding elite's denial of the basic humanity of slaves. Slaves were property, and masters treated them as such. Much of the injustice perpetrated against slaves stems from this fact. In court, for instance, trials involving slaves were civil suits. "While white men rarely faced criminal prosecution for striking out at slaves, they quite often found themselves in court for civil suits regarding property damage to the slave of another."<sup>4</sup> If a White man injured someone's slave, he would face trial not on the grounds of harming another human being, but rather for damaging property. The solution to many of these trials was that one party would have to pay the other. For instance, in Natchez, Mississippi, there was the 1856 case *Andrew Brown v. Samuel Cox*. Samuel Cox had shot Andrew Brown's slave, Jake. Andrew Brown wanted money for damages.<sup>5</sup>

The jurors ... could have found that Cox was justified in shooting Jake [a slave], simply out of the belief that a runaway slave is inherently threatening. Yet the jury found for Brown and awarded high damages, the full fifteen-hundred-dollar price asked for Jake. ... It seems likely that the jury found for Brown in part because he was prominent and popular in Natchez whereas Cox was unknown, rather than because of any community standard against killing slaves.<sup>6</sup>

In the aforementioned trial, the court only required Cox to pay Brown for damaging his property, even though Cox had killed a man. As noted in Gross, further evidence demonstrating slaves' status as property is the use of slaves as a form of credit. "Slaves were the cornerstone of the Southern credit economy."<sup>7</sup> Gross goes on to point out that "because [slaves] were easily convertible into cash, [they] were 'especially desirable for collateralizing debt arrangements.'"<sup>8</sup> Slaves were worth quite a bit of money, and so, of course, Whites used them for credit and debt related transactions. Moreover, owners would often lend out slaves to other individuals or even "corporate entities, especially towns and cities" for temporary use.<sup>9</sup> If one party breached the terms of the contract, the other would likely sue. "In some similar cases, owners sued hirers for mistreating a slave. More often, these cases resembled warranty suits in that hirers sued owners when the leased slave turned out to be 'unsound,' died, or ran away."<sup>10</sup> Essentially, if the slave's owner felt his property had been damaged, he would sue. If the person leasing the slave felt that he had been leased defective property, he would sue. Of course, slaves themselves were denied access to the courtroom. "The most silent participants in circuit court trials were the subjects of the disputes: the slaves themselves."<sup>11</sup> This makes sense; if two people were to get into a dispute about a chair, they would not seek the chair's testimony on the subject. The systematic denial of



slaves' humanity within the court system is a powerful reminder of the insidious nature of slavery. Slaves were not people, and were, therefore, not liable to be treated humanely.

Few slaves could share their experience without Whites filtering their stories. One notable exception is Frederick Douglass. Douglass grew up a slave before escaping to the North, and so his experiences provide an excellent window into the conditions many slaves faced. Douglass wrote of Colonel Lloyd's plantation in Maryland, where he lived for many years, that

Public opinion was, indeed, a measurable constraint upon the cruelty and barbarity of masters, overseers, and slave-drivers, whenever and wherever it could reach them; but there were certain secluded and out of the way places, even in the State of Maryland, fifty years ago, seldom visited by a single ray of healthy public sentiment, where slavery, wrapt in its own congenial darkness, could and did develop all of its malign and shocking characteristics, where it could be indecent without shame, cruel without shuddering, and murderous without apprehension or fear of exposure, or punishment.<sup>12</sup>

During the Antebellum Period, most members of White society believed that slavery in Maryland was not as bad as it was elsewhere due to the tempering influence of the nearby Free States.<sup>13</sup> Douglass acknowledges this belief, and even holds that it may be true where such tempering influences can be felt. However, he points out that on isolated plantations, such as the one on which he lived, slavery is just as brutal as it is elsewhere. Douglass shares many examples of masters' and overseers' cruelty and inhumane treatment of slaves. For instance, a slave came to their master complaining that her overseer was mistreating her. Rather than reprimanding the offending overseer, the master instead reprimanded the slave girl and ordered her to return to the cruel overseer.<sup>14</sup> "Thus the poor girl was compelled to return without redress, and perhaps to receive an additional flogging for daring to appeal to authority higher than that of the overseer."<sup>15</sup> Another incident that Douglass describes revolves around a young woman named Esther, a slave on the same plantation as Douglass. Another slave, Ned Roberts, was courting her. Douglass points out that while some slave holders would have been pleased with the match, their master, Captain Anthony, was not. He forbade the two from continuing to meet, but they disobeyed.<sup>16</sup> Captain Anthony, of course, was not tolerant of this disobedience.

I was ... awakened by the heart-rending shrieks and piteous cries of poor Esther. ... Esther's wrists were firmly tied, and the twisted rope was fastened to a strong iron staple in a heavy wooden beam above, near the fire-place. Here she stood on a bench, her arms tightly drawn above her head. Her back and shoulders were perfectly bare. Behind her stood old master, with cowhide in hand, pursuing his barbarous work .... He was cruelly deliberate, and protracted the torture as one who delighted with the agony of his victim. Again and again he drew the hateful scourge through his hand, adjusting it with a view of dealing the most pain-giving blow his strength and skill could inflict.<sup>17</sup>

Such deliberate torture clearly demonstrates the inhumane conditions that slaves regularly faced. One final example from Douglass's book is the murder of a slave by the name of Bill Denby. Whilst the overseer was flogging him, Denby broke away and dove into the nearby creek. Understandably, Denby refused to emerge even when the overseer ordered him to.<sup>18</sup> "[W]hereupon, for this refusal, Gore [the overseer] *shot him dead!*"<sup>19</sup> Both Captain Anthony, their direct master, and Colonel Lloyd, who owned the plantation, redressed Gore for killing Denby. However, Gore merely explained "that Denby had become unmanageable; that he set a dangerous example to the other slaves, and that unless some such prompt measure was resorted to there would be an end to all rule and order on the plantation."<sup>20</sup> Anthony and Lloyd found Gore's explanation satisfactory, and he returned to his job without repercussion.

Douglass mentions other occasions on which Whites killed slaves without consequence.<sup>21</sup> "One of the commonest sayings to which my ears became accustomed, was that it was 'worth but half a cent to kill a nigger, and half a cent to bury one.'"<sup>22</sup> This seems to conflict with the cost at which slaves were purchased ("'Prime male field hands' in the New Orleans market sold for about \$700 in 1846; their price had more than doubled by 1860 to upwards of \$1,700."<sup>23</sup>). But in a way, Douglass was nonetheless right. He points out that according to the law and public opinion, Whites were almost always justified in killing a slave.<sup>24</sup> The expense of a slave was not about the slave's life, but rather his labor. If the master, overseer, or another White deemed the slave to be unruly or dangerous and killed him, then said White was considered justified in his actions, and could often get off with little to no legal action, especially if the murdering party owned the slave. The blatant disregard for slaves' lives demonstrates, once again, the belief held by many Whites, that slaves were not human, or were less than fully human. It is for this reason that slaves were so harshly redressed for "misbehaving."

There were many punishments that slaves could face for displeasing their masters dependent on the severity of their transgression. At the harsh end of the spectrum was whipping, which looms large in the modern world as a symbol of slavery. For those who lived as slaves, whipping, whether it occurred frequently or not, remained a powerful reminder of who had authority. As John Boles stated, "The frequency of punishments like whipping has been hotly contested by historians, and the variables involved from planter to planter make any kind of numerical analysis futile. ... [But] in the minds of everyone involved, White and Black, the lash stood as an ever-present reminder of where authority lay."<sup>25</sup> Regardless of how often whipping actually occurred, it always remained a possibility. The threat of violent redress was there, which was itself a very effective tool for maintaining the status quo, regardless of how frequently masters and overseers actually whipped slaves.<sup>26</sup> Thus, slave parents taught their children from a young age "to fear the lash and taught them behavior that would avoid it, and the visible scars on many Black backs bore silent testimony to the pervasive reality of force."<sup>27</sup> The threat of whipping was so present in the minds of slaves that they would ensure that even their small children knew about it. As shown above, whipping was an ever-present part of Frederick Douglass's life, which backs

up Boles's assertion that regardless of frequency, whipping was a significant part of slavery. It is difficult to imagine the fear that slaves must have felt, unless one can visualize what a harsh whipping looked like.



“Whipped Slave,” photographer unknown, (Washington, D.C.: National Archives, c1863).

This photograph provides a moving image of what whipping could do to a person, and thus is one of the most infamous photographs concerning slavery. According to the original caption, the whipping was particularly harsh and left this man in bed, unable to work, for two months. As a result, the master fired the overseer who was responsible. However, one should note two things. The first is that the master likely did not punish the overseer because he felt the slave man had been treated unfairly, but rather he was likely angry at having lost the man's work for such an extended period. Second, even though this whipping represents the more extreme end of the punishment spectrum, it is still an important indicator of Whites' attitudes towards slaves. Put simply, if someone were to perpetrate such an act against someone the law considered a man, his punishment would have been worse. As it stood, since masters and the law regarded slaves as property and as inferior persons, the offending overseer's punishment was losing his job.

It is important note that the slaves had agency, which they used to improve their conditions and treatment.

Mules inexplicably let out of the barn lot, tools left in the rain, cotton plants accidentally plowed under, chores that required double the normal time to complete for mysterious reasons, sickness that struck down a large portion of the field hands – maladies too vague

to doctor but too “real” to ignore – such were the weapons “defenseless” slaves could bring to bear against rigid taskmasters.<sup>28</sup>

Masters’ mistreatment of slaves could lead to a variety of responses that would cut production of the plantation. Therefore, if masters wanted their plantation to be efficient, they had to assure a certain quality of living. “In clothing as in food, and, indeed, in their whole culture, slaves never simply accepted what the White man gave or left them . . . .”<sup>29</sup> Despite other people owning them, despite the conditions that they faced, slaves exercised a degree of control over their lives. Perhaps one of the most important examples of slaves’ agency had to do with food, “Food was if anything even more basic to the slaves’ well-being than clothing and shelter, and the quality and quantity of food available varied at least as widely.”<sup>30</sup> While slave-owners did provide enough food for slaves to maintain sufficient health, variety was lacking, and this is where slaves’ agency comes into play. Many slaves maintained their own gardens, and sometimes masters would buy some of the slaves’ produce. If slaves produced a surplus in their individual gardens, many of them would take their goods into town in order to sell them and earn some money.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, “[i]t was not uncommon for slaves to own pigs, cows, even horses, wagons, boats, and household utensils beyond those provided by the master.”<sup>32</sup> Slaves could accumulate some wealth for themselves (though obviously not much). Beyond their own small gardens, some slaves could even hunt, fish, and trap “and the result of these activities added nutritional value and much-wanted variety to their meals.”<sup>33</sup> By exercising their agency, slaves improved the food that masters allotted to them, and masters allowed it, either explicitly or implicitly. In this way, at least, slaves were more than just property. Property cannot, through its own work, improve its lot. People can. That slaves could exercise a degree of their own agency proves false the notion that they were somehow less than human and merely the property of their masters.

Nevertheless, the fact remains that Whites bought and sold slaves; they did not receive the freedoms associated with being a fully recognized person.

[The] critical question about slavery is the absence of freedom, not the presence of relative physical comforts. No recitation of survival rates, daily caloric intake, and quality and quantity of living space can negate the psychological effect of bondage. The possibility of being whipped or being separated forever from a loved one and the reality of having little control over most aspects of one’s life must have been ever-present burdens oppressing most slaves.<sup>34</sup>

Throughout the Antebellum Period, masters denied slaves the basic freedoms associated with being a full person. Yet even within the bounds of a system which defined them as property, slaves were able to exercise agency in order to improve their condition. Despite the horrible conditions that slaves faced, they survived, and as traditional histories would have it, achieved their freedom following the end of the Civil War. Neoslavery, however, paints a different picture.

## NEOSLAVERY IN THE POSTBELLUM PERIOD

Following the end of the American Civil War, slaves were suddenly free. White former slaveholders obviously did not welcome this change. William DeRosset, of North Carolina, “remained willing to sacrifice his right arm if it would help to ensure the ultimate triumph of the Lost Cause.”<sup>35</sup> The “Lost Cause” was slavery, or, more specifically, southern states’ attempt to establish independence in order to safeguard slavery. Whites resorted to several methods to maintain a social hierarchy that ultimately resembled slavery so much, that slavery never truly ended. Several states enacted legal structures or “Black Codes” that severely curtailed the freedom of the Freedmen. Perhaps worst among the Black Codes were provisions that created the convict leasing system, in which the state sold “criminals” (whose only real crime was their skin color) out to corporations and individuals as a work force.<sup>36</sup> Violence, of course, pervaded the entire system, but even outside of the aforementioned legal systems, Whites committed organized acts of violence against former slaves. The ultimate result of these actions was the practical continuation of slavery.

Despite the Union forcing southern states to officially acknowledge the end of slavery as a prerequisite for reentry into the country, southern states quickly enacted a series of laws designed to perpetuate the “Peculiar Institution” in all but name. These so-called Black Codes were similar across the region, and all had the same effect: the legal continuation of slavery. Black Codes even thrust those Blacks who had already been free before the Civil War into neoslavery due to what historians call the “one drop” rule. “[N]egroes and their issue, even where one ancestor in each succeeding generation to the fourth inclusive is White, shall be deemed persons of color.”<sup>37</sup> All Blacks, whether recently freed slaves, or men and women who had been free for years, were now subject to the same set of laws that systematically deprived them of their freedoms. The Black Codes took more than just their abstract rights, too. “[N]o freedman, free negro or mulatto ... shall keep or carry fire-arms of any kind, or any ammunition, dirk or bowie knife....”<sup>38</sup> If free Blacks possessed these items or any other pieces of property that the state felt was inappropriate for them to own, they would face legal charges. For all intents and purposes, Black Codes denied African Americans the right to private property. And this denial did not just extend to weapons. “[No] freedman, free negro or mulatto ... [can] rent or lease any lands or tenements except in incorporated cities or towns, in which places the corporate authorities shall control the same....”<sup>39</sup> For many Americans in the nineteenth century, the idea of freedom and the idea of owning land were closely tied. Thus, Whites took this possibility away from neoslaves, “except in incorporated cities or towns, in which places the corporate authorities shall control the same....” Which means that even in towns and cities, where the law technically allowed neoslaves to own land, the town’s authorities ultimately had control over the neoslaves’ property.

Furthermore, Black Codes curtailed neoslaves’ right to become skilled laborers.

No person of color shall pursue or practice the art, trade or business of an artisan, mechanic or shop-keeper, or any other trade, employment or business (besides that of husbandry, or that of a servant under a contract for service or labor,) on his own account and for his own benefit, or in partnership with a white person, or as agent or servant of any persons, until he shall have obtained a license therefore from the Judge of the District Court; which license shall be good for one year only.<sup>40</sup>

Once again, this dramatically changed the condition of Blacks who had been free for a long time. Beforehand, the law entitled them to any work they chose. After state legislatures wrote the Black Codes into law, the only job a long freed Black person could legally do was work for a White person (unless of course a judge decided to grant them a license, and even then the license was for one year only). However, more recently freed slaves also felt the effect of such stipulations. During slavery, there had been skilled slave workers on plantations. For instance, Frederick Douglass wrote that "'Uncle' Toney was the Blacksmith, 'Uncle' Harry the cartwright, and 'Uncle' Abel was the shoemaker, and these had assistants in their several departments."<sup>41</sup> These men were skilled workers, and these men were slaves. Clearly, then, the aforementioned clause affected more than just long-free Blacks.

And then there were the vagrancy laws. Here are just two examples.

Version 1, from Mississippi:

...That all rogues and vagabonds, idle and dissipated persons, beggars, jugglers, or persons practicing unlawful games or plays, runaways, common drunkards, common night-walkers, pilferers, lewd, wanton, or lascivious persons, in speech or behavior, common railers and brawlers, persons who neglect their calling or employment, misspend what they earn, or do not provide for the support of themselves or their families, or dependents, and all other idle and disorderly persons, including all who neglect all lawful business, habitually misspend their time by frequenting houses of ill-fame, gaming-houses, or tippling shops, shall be deemed and considered vagrants...<sup>42</sup>

Version 2, from South Carolina:

All persons who have not some fixed and known place of abode, and some lawful and respectable employment; ... those who are found wandering from place to place, vending, bartering or peddling any articles or commodities, without a license from the District Judge...; all common gamblers; persons who lead idle or disorderly lives ...; those who ... are able to work and do not work; those who ... do not provide a reasonable and proper maintenance for themselves and families; those who are engaged in representing publicly or privately ... without license, any ... entertainment ...; ... those who hunt game of any

description or fish on the land of others ... shall be deemed vagrants, and be liable to the punishment hereinafter prescribed.<sup>43</sup>

These two examples are almost identical; while the exact wording between the two versions may vary, both make almost all of the same things illegal. Under vagrancy laws, the police could arrest Blacks for a wide variety of crimes, but the basic effect was to make it illegal for former slaves to do much besides work. Vagrancy laws created the legal grounds for neoslavery more than any other Black Code. Not only did the laws force neoslaves to constantly prove suitable employment, but they also provided the convicts for the convict leasing system.

If any freedman, free negro, or mulatto, convicted of any of the misdemeanors provided against in this act, shall fail or refuse for the space of five days, after conviction, to pay the fine and costs imposed, such person shall be hired out by the sheriff or other officer, at public outcry, to any white person who will pay said fine and all costs, and take said convict for the shortest time.<sup>44</sup>

Men convicted of nothing more than being unable to provide proof of suitable employment could be sold back into slavery. Officially, Black Codes and their associated laws ended under Congressional Reconstruction, but they would return as Jim Crow laws only a decade later.

A discussion of convict leasing will necessarily focus on Mississippi. The aforementioned Black Code introducing the earliest version of convict leasing laws originally hails from Mississippi. Furthermore, convict leasing first took off in Mississippi, thanks to a man named Edmund Richardson.<sup>45</sup> Post-emancipation, White southerners' greatest fears had been realized – Black men were now free, and Whites believed that Black men were naturally criminals. “Southern whites had long viewed criminal behavior as natural to the Negro. They took his stealing for granted, as a biological flaw. An ‘honest darkey,’ most believed, was as rare as a Negro virgin of fifteen.”<sup>46</sup> As a result, former slaves were arrested in droves “for acts that in the past had been dealt with by the master alone.”<sup>47</sup> The policing of ex-slaves' behavior became the principal job of law enforcement. Southern prisons filled with Black prisoners. During the Antebellum and war years, prisons were for Whites. In the early years of the Postbellum Period, the reverse became true. “By 1866, the Natchez city jail held sixty-seven Black prisoners and just eleven whites. In Grenada ... there were seventeen Blacks and one white. In Columbus ... there were fifty-three Blacks and no whites. Almost overnight, the jailhouse had become a ‘negro preserve.’”<sup>48</sup>

The problem faced by southern states was that their prison systems were inadequate for such a sharp increase in prison populations, especially considering the Civil War had destroyed many of their prisons.<sup>49</sup> It is here that the aforementioned Edmund Richardson comes into play. Richardson needed labor, and the state needed a place to send ex-slaves. “The result was a contract that allowed Richardson to work these felons outside the prison walls.”<sup>50</sup> Richardson took the ex-slave convicts off of the state's hands, and the state paid Richardson \$18,000 a year. Convict

leasing had officially begun in Mississippi.<sup>51</sup> In the mid-1870s, convict leasing took off. The state legislature passed new laws, the sentences for minor crimes increased, and local courts began to destroy what protection neoslaves did have. From 1874 to 1877 the number of convicts quadrupled.<sup>52</sup> The state coupled these actions with an official leasing act, "All prisoners, it declared, may 'work outside the penitentiary in building railroads, levees or in any private labor or employment.' With the gates now officially open, Mississippi leased more than a thousand of its convicts in one fell swoop."<sup>53</sup> And of course, the law makers cleverly wrote the law so as to virtually exclude Whites from the leasing system.<sup>54</sup> The convict leasing system kept growing, and became exceptionally lucrative for rich Whites. "The exclusive right to lease state convicts quickly became Mississippi's most prized political contract, coveted by planters, businessmen, and speculators across the board."<sup>55</sup> Convict leasing had become a profitable enterprise, and everyone wanted the enormous wealth that they could gain from it.

In 1876, a man by the name of Jones Hamilton made a deal with the Mississippi state government, obtained the rights to all leased convicts, and began subleasing those convicts to others. He acted as something of a middle man between the state and the sublessees, making him rich in the process. Though the state paid Hamilton no money, he derived enormous profits through subleasing convicts out at nine dollars a month.<sup>56</sup> "From a business standpoint, the subleasing was ideal. It plugged the major weakness of the old system [slavery]: the high fixed cost of labor."<sup>57</sup>

In terms of human misery, however, this system could hardly have been worse. The convict now found himself laboring for the profits of three separate parties: the sublessee, the lessee, and the state. There was no one to protect him from savage beatings, endless workdays, and murderous neglect. 'It is to be supposed that sub-lessees [take] convicts for the purpose of making money out of them,' wrote a prison doctor, 'so naturally, the less food and clothing used and the more labor derived from their bodies, the more money in the pockets of the sub-lessee.' If a convict died or escaped, his employer lost nothing. Colonel Hamilton would profitably supply a replacement – at nine dollars per month.<sup>58</sup>

Here lay the major difference between convict leasing and slavery. Because slaves were expensive, and because the masters needed their labor, it made sense to make sure that the slaves were reasonably well-cared-for, even allowed a certain degree of freedom, as borne out in *Black Southerners*. Convicts, however, were cheap and by no means was leasing one a permanent agreement. Therefore, convicts became expendable commodities, and were treated as such. Their places of employment became veritable death camps, with the annual mortality rate reaching a staggering sixteen percent at points during the 1880s.<sup>59</sup> "In 1882 ... 126 of 735 Black state convicts perished, as opposed to 2 of 83 whites."<sup>60</sup>

Black men were not the only ones leased out under this system. Although Black women made up a relatively small portion of Mississippi's convict population, they, too, were leased out. Oftentimes they worked "as domestics and prostitutes for those in charge."<sup>61</sup> Perhaps worse still,



children were being leased out. "...[The Mississippi] penal code did not distinguish between adult and juvenile offenders."<sup>62</sup> Therefore, courts tried and punished Black children just as adults – and just as unfairly. Children convicts became a huge part of the convict leasing system. "By 1880, at least one convict in four was an adolescent or a child – a percentage that did not diminish with time."<sup>63</sup> Courts convicted children as young as six for minor crimes and threw them into this heinous system.<sup>64</sup>

Although the conditions faced by Black convicts in Mississippi were extreme, "Mississippi was hardly alone."<sup>65</sup> In Alabama, for instance, police arrested a Black man by the name of Green Cottenham for vagrancy and the prisons leased him out to a subsidiary of U.S. Steel. He was put to work in a mine called "Slope No. 12." Within a single year, sixty men at Slope 12 had died either of the physical torture inflicted upon them by their White taskmasters or to the disease that ran rampant through the mine's population.<sup>66</sup> Furthermore, it was not only large corporations that were guilty of renting convicts. "The judges and sheriffs who sold convicts to giant corporate prison mines also leased even larger numbers of African Americans to local farmers, and allowed their neighbors and political supporters to acquire still more Black laborers directly from their courtrooms."<sup>67</sup> Convict leasing had become such an important part of Southern life that the state government was using the system to garner political favors from rich Whites and wealthy corporations. Blackmon goes on to say that "[b]y 1900, the South's judicial system had been wholly reconfigured to make one of its primary purposes the coercion of African Americans to comply with the social customs and labor demands of Whites."<sup>68</sup> Furthermore, "[r]evenues from the neo-slavery poured the equivalent of tens of millions of dollars into the treasuries of Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Georgia, Florida, Texas, North Carolina, and South Carolina – where more than 75 percent of the Black population in the United States then lived."<sup>69</sup>

Simply taking convict leasing into account is enough to prove that slavery continued beyond the end of the Civil War. Southern courts and penitentiaries systematically convicted and leased out African Americans to the benefit of rich Whites. And while it is true that the legal abolition of slavery served to protect many men and women from being bought and sold, convict leasing provided wealthy Whites an excellent way to work around the legal abolition of slavery. Once again, Whites were buying and selling Black men and women as commodities, just as they had under slavery. In fact, in many ways, David Oshinsky's title was right. Convict leasing was worse than slavery. At least conditions under slavery were livable. They were not so under convict leasing. Unfortunately, Whites' violence against Blacks was not confined to convict leasing.

Convict leasing represented the perfect combination of violence and law. However, violence against Blacks was much more widespread than the confines of the convict leasing system. Freedman's Bureau reports are rife with reports of violence committed by Whites against the former slaves, which, more often than not, remained unpunished. For instance, one agent reported the case of *Floyd Adams vs. Madison Doom*, in which Doom, a White man, assaulted Adams. The court ruled in favor of Doom, allowing his actions to go unpunished. As the agent put it, "In my opinion the action of the Grand Jury in discharging Madison Doods from accountability

was an act of gross injustice and ... the jury [had] literally given the White man permission to knock the negro down without fear of molestation."<sup>70</sup> Despite gaining legal access to the courts, Blacks still found that Frederick Douglass's assertion that "it was 'worth but half a cent to kill a nigger,'" held true.<sup>71</sup> And of course, this was not an isolated incident. Crimes against Blacks were common, but courts almost never convicted Whites. In part, this was due to the difficulty of getting a case to trial.

Generally, the air is full of outrages on the Freedmen by the Whites ... but I understand you to mean violence, personal assaults, cruelty, of which very few cases have come to my knowledge, and then the facts were not clearly established, because the freedmen dare not testify through fear of yet greater violence.<sup>72</sup>

In many instances, Whites prevented Blacks from testifying against them by threatening violence. Even those cases that ended up in the courtroom rarely resulted in the authorities punishing the White party. "The trials have ... almost without exception where White persons have been parties the decisions have been in their favor - there have been several cases of assaults upon freedmen - in not one instance has any satisfaction been given the freedmen."<sup>73</sup> Despite Blacks' attempts to receive justice, Whites consistently avoided punishment for violence against freedmen. Violence went beyond merely beating or assaulting freedmen. Whites often killed freedmen, one of the most popular methods for doing so was lynching, as depicted below.



“Thomas Shipp Abram Smith Lynching,” Lawrence Henry Beitler, photographer (August 7, 1930).

The key feature is that it was a public event. People came out to watch these extralegal hangings, and the authorities sanctioned the activity. In order for an event to be public, it must be common knowledge. The fact is that the police did nothing to stop such brutal acts of violence, at least by the time that Lawrence Beitler took this photograph. Throughout the Postbellum Period and a large part of the twentieth century, lynching loomed as a threat to the lives of Black men, women, and children. While an initial reading might suggest that the aforementioned violence was random and disorganized – and perhaps some of it was – it was part of a broader effort to force former slaves back into slavery in a war that has mistakenly been called Reconstruction.<sup>74</sup>

The name historians have given to the first part of the Postbellum Period, Reconstruction, is a misnomer that represents an attempt to deny the extreme violence that permeated the period. Reconstruction was a time period that began immediately following the end of the Civil War and ended in 1877. Ostensibly, Reconstruction reunited the country and rebuilt the South. However, several historians have recently asserted that Reconstruction was actually a war, among them John Daly. Daly calls the period “the Southern Civil War.” He asserts that it was fought between Ex-Confederate Extremists on one side and a Biracial Coalition on the other. The former fought to destroy “the two local symbols of northern victory: the White unionist political organizations and the attempts by Blacks to live free.”<sup>75</sup> In short, they were fighting to preserve slavery. The extreme violence throughout the period was in no way random or disorganized, either. There were “dozens of battles and thousands of violent incidents in the South between 1865 and 1877.”<sup>76</sup> There was even a full scale pitched battle fought in the streets of New Orleans.

In a deliberate attack, as many as eight thousand White Leaguers, protesting the biracial government of Republican Governor Kellogg and intimidating voters in the upcoming election, devised barricades along Poydras Street and armed behind them. Ex-Confederate Extremists faced an Ex-Confederate Republican opponent, James Longstreet, Robert E. Lee's second in command during the American Civil War. Longstreet, led the combined forces of state government--the biracial militia of New Orleans and the biracial Metropolitan Police--against his former Confederate compatriots. The Biracial Coalition army, fighting for fair elections and civil rights and led by one of the most famous Confederate heroes, numbered perhaps two thousand and were well-equipped with Gatling guns and artillery pieces....<sup>77</sup>

The Ex-Confederates sought to destroy whatever freedoms that African Americans had obtained up to that point. They sought to restore slavery and reestablish themselves as the masters over the neoslaves. The violence was well-organized and coordinated. Reconstruction had all the trappings of a war, and the forces who aimed to reinstate slavery ultimately won. However, though they lost,

it is important to note, once again, that African Americans exercised their own agency. They fought alongside pro-freedom Whites to protect themselves. Just as in slavery, when slaves utilized what little agency they had to improve their conditions, so too did neoslaves utilize their greater agency to protect their freedom and their lives. Ultimately, this is perhaps why racist responses were so virulent; because slaves were free, they were a threat.

Both legally and violently, with convict leasing at the convergence of the two, Whites forced ex-slaves back into bondage. Thus, slavery was perpetuated, and even worsened in many practical ways. By no means do these represent the extent of the ways in which former masters sought to perpetuate slavery. One such example is sharecropping – a practice in which White plantation owners leased parcels of land and basic farming supplies to their former slaves in exchange for the neoslaves' profits – but sharecropping and other forms of economic oppression lie outside the scope of this paper. Despite Whites' attempts to curtail Blacks' freedom, former slaves remained determined to assert it. "No matter how each ex-slave chose to express [his or her freedom], many of them insisted that it be understood and acknowledged..."<sup>78</sup> However, former masters were ultimately successful and effectively established neoslavery.

## CONCLUSION

Frederick Douglass once wrote that "[u]nder the whole heavens there could be no relation more unfavorable to the development of honorable character than that sustained by the slaveholder to the slave."<sup>79</sup> Even people who, in the absence of slavery, would have been decent individuals were made indecent by the "Peculiar Institution." Douglass's assertion holds just as true to those who perpetuated slavery following the end of the American Civil War. The men who perpetuated slavery following the American Civil War were not decent or honorable. Slavery did not truly end in the United States until *much* later. Throughout the Postbellum Period and beyond, Whites forced former slaves and their families back into bondage. Legally, Blacks were deprived of their rights, and Whites violently rebuked or courts threw them into the appalling convict lease system when they attempted to assert a modicum of the rights they felt they were due as free people. Precisely for this reason, they were not free people. Slavery had ended only in name.

---

<sup>1</sup> John B. Boles, *Black Southerners 1619-1869*, (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1983), 104.

<sup>2</sup> Boles, *Black Southerners*, 91.

<sup>3</sup> Boles, *Black Southerners*, 75.

- <sup>4</sup> Ariela J. Gross, *Double Character: Slavery and Mastery in the Antebellum Southern Courtroom*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 23.
- <sup>5</sup> Gross, *Double Character*, 35.
- <sup>6</sup> Gross, *Double Character*, 38.
- <sup>7</sup> Gross, *Double Character*, 32.
- <sup>8</sup> Gross, *Double Character*, 32.
- <sup>9</sup> Gross, *Double Character*, 31-32.
- <sup>10</sup> Gross, *Double Character*, 32.
- <sup>11</sup> Gross, *Double Character*, 41.
- <sup>12</sup> Frederick Douglass, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*, (Secaucus, NJ: Citadel Press, 1983), 25.
- <sup>13</sup> Douglass, *Life and Times*, 25.
- <sup>14</sup> Douglass, *Life and Times*, 35-36.
- <sup>15</sup> Douglass, *Life and Times*, 36.
- <sup>16</sup> Douglass, *Life and Times*, 37.
- <sup>17</sup> Douglass, *Life and Times*, 38.
- <sup>18</sup> Douglass, *Life and Times*, 56-57.
- <sup>19</sup> Douglass, *Life and Times*, 57.
- <sup>20</sup> Douglass, *Life and Times*, 57.
- <sup>21</sup> Douglass, *Life and Times*, 58-59.
- <sup>22</sup> Douglass, *Life and Times*, 59.
- <sup>23</sup> Gross, *Double Character*, 31.
- <sup>24</sup> Douglass, *Life and Times*, 59.
- <sup>25</sup> Boles, *Black Southerners*, 81.
- <sup>26</sup> Boles, *Black Southerners*, 81.
- <sup>27</sup> Boles, *Black Southerners*, 81.
- <sup>28</sup> Boles, *Black Southerners*, 83.
- <sup>29</sup> Boles, *Black Southerners*, 87.
- <sup>30</sup> Boles, *Black Southerners*, 88.
- <sup>31</sup> Boles, *Black Southerners*, 89-90.
- <sup>32</sup> Boles, *Black Southerners*, 90.
- <sup>33</sup> Boles, *Black Southerners*, 91.
- <sup>34</sup> Boles, *Black Southerners*, 104.
- <sup>35</sup> Leon F. Litwack, *Been in the Storm So Long: The Aftermath of Slavery*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1980), 336.
- <sup>36</sup> Douglas A. Blackmon, *Slavery by Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II*, (New York: Anchor Books, 2008), 1.
- <sup>37</sup> The State of North Carolina, *The Public Laws of North Carolina, session of 1866*, (Raleigh: 1866).
- <sup>38</sup> The State of Mississippi, *Laws of Mississippi*, (Jackson: 1865).
- <sup>39</sup> *Laws of Mississippi*.
- <sup>40</sup> The State of South Carolina, *Acts of the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina Passed at the Sessions of 1864-65*, (Columbia: 1865).
- <sup>41</sup> Douglass, *Life and Times*, 30.
- <sup>42</sup> *Laws of Mississippi*.
- <sup>43</sup> *Acts of the General Assembly of South Carolina*.
- <sup>44</sup> *Laws of Mississippi*.
- <sup>45</sup> David M. Oshinsky, “Worse than Slavery”: *Parchman Farm and the Ordeal of Jim Crow Justice*, (New York: The Free Press, 1996), 35.
- <sup>46</sup> Oshinsky, *Worse than Slavery*, 32.
- <sup>47</sup> Oshinsky, *Worse than Slavery*, 32.
- <sup>48</sup> Oshinsky, *Worse than Slavery*, 34.
- <sup>49</sup> Oshinsky, *Worse than Slavery*, 34.

- 
- <sup>50</sup> Oshinsky, *Worse than Slavery*, 35.
- <sup>51</sup> Oshinsky, *Worse than Slavery*, 35.
- <sup>52</sup> Oshinsky, *Worse than Slavery*, 40.
- <sup>53</sup> Oshinsky, *Worse than Slavery*, 41.
- <sup>54</sup> Oshinsky, *Worse than Slavery*, 41.
- <sup>55</sup> Oshinsky, *Worse than Slavery*, 43.
- <sup>56</sup> Oshinsky, *Worse than Slavery*, 43-44.
- <sup>57</sup> Oshinsky, *Worse than Slavery*, 44.
- <sup>58</sup> Oshinsky, *Worse than Slavery*, 44.
- <sup>59</sup> Oshinsky, *Worse than Slavery*, 46.
- <sup>60</sup> Oshinsky, *Worse than Slavery*, 46.
- <sup>61</sup> Oshinsky, *Worse than Slavery*, 169-70.
- <sup>62</sup> Oshinsky, *Worse than Slavery*, 46.
- <sup>63</sup> Oshinsky, *Worse than Slavery*, 46-47.
- <sup>64</sup> Oshinsky, *Worse than Slavery*, 47.
- <sup>65</sup> Oshinsky, *Worse than Slavery*, 53.
- <sup>66</sup> Blackmon, *Slavery by Another Name*, 2.
- <sup>67</sup> Blackmon, *Slavery by Another Name*, 6.
- <sup>68</sup> Blackmon, *Slavery by Another Name*, 7. Convict leasing carried on for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but that is beyond the scope of my thesis.
- <sup>69</sup> Blackmon, *Slavery by Another Name*, 7-8.
- <sup>70</sup> Freedman's Bureau, "[Letter from T. Cook to R.S. Lacey, July 6<sup>th</sup>, 1866]," (Staunton, VA, 1866).
- <sup>71</sup> Douglass, *Life and Times*, 59.
- <sup>72</sup> Freedman's Bureau, "[Letter from W. Storer How to O. Brown, January 8<sup>th</sup>, 1866]," (Winchester, VA, 1866).
- <sup>73</sup> Freedman's Bureau, "[Letter from T. Cook to R.S. Lacey, July 31<sup>st</sup>, 1866]," (Staunton, VA, 1866).
- <sup>74</sup> Daly, *Southern Civil War*, 2-3.
- <sup>75</sup> Daly, *Southern Civil War*, 3.
- <sup>76</sup> Daly, *Southern Civil War*, 2.
- <sup>77</sup> Daly, *Southern Civil War*, 1-2.
- <sup>78</sup> Litwack, *Been in the Storm*, 339.
- <sup>79</sup> Douglass, *Life and Times*, 34.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Beitler, Lawrence Henry, photographer. "Thomas Shipp Abram Smith Lynching," photograph. August 7, 1930.
- Blackmon, Douglas A. *Slavery by Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II*. New York: Anchor Books, 2008.
- Boles, John B. *Black Southerners 1619-1869*. Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1983.

- Daly, John. *The Southern Civil War: The New History of Reconstruction, 1865-1877*. N.p.: n.p., 2015.
- Freedman's Bureau. "Letter from W. Storer How to O. Brown, January 8th, 1866." Winchester, VA, 1866.
- . "Letter from T. Cook to R.S. Lacey, July 6th, 1866." Staunton, VA, 1866.
- . "Letter from T. Cook to R.S. Lacey, July 31st, 1866." Staunton, VA, 1866.
- Douglass, Frederick. *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*. Secaucus, NJ: Citadel Press, 1983.
- Gross, Ariela J. *Double Character: Slavery and Mastery in the Antebellum Southern Courtroom*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000.
- Litwack, Leon F. *Been in the Storm So Long: The Aftermath of Slavery*. New York: Vintage Books, 1980.
- Oshinsky, David M. *"Worse than Slavery": Parchman Farm and the Ordeal of Jim Crow Justice*. New York: The Free Press, 1996.
- The State of Mississippi. *Laws of Mississippi*. Jackson: 1865.
- The State of North Carolina. *The Public Laws of North Carolina, session of 1866*. Raleigh: 1866.
- The State of South Carolina. *Acts of the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina Passed at the Sessions of 1864-65*. Columbia: 1865.
- Unknown photographer. "Whipped Slave," photograph. Washington, D.C.: National Archives, c1863.

## THE SEXUAL REVOLUTION OF THE “ROARING TWENTIES”: PRACTICE OR PERCEPTION?

Shellie Clark, The College at Brockport

### Abstract

Even after the passage of over 80 years, the perceived radical shift in morality in the 1920's defies concrete definition. Many popular images seem to offer evidence that indicate a change in sexual propriety, with portrayals of scantily dressed flappers swigging illicit liquor from flasks, and racy advertisements for silk stockings showing off women's legs, so soon after a time when women were covered from the neck to the ankle even at the beach. Religious and conservative leaders alluded to a total collapse of morality and blamed popular entertainment for degrading America's youth. This paper analyzes primary sources from the 1920s in an effort to determine the attitudes of the people who experienced, and often shaped, the era. These sources suggest a wide variety of opinion among Americans and the existence of a fully developed sexual awareness lurking beneath the veneer of polite society long before the “roaring twenties.” Although it is not possible to prove or disprove a true “revolution” in sexual morality, this paper contributes to the ongoing discussion of the values which changed and those which were simply exposed by the light of a more tolerant time. [Keywords: United States, 1920s, sexuality, sexual mores, morality, fashion, flappers]

The 1920s were a time of monumental change in nearly every aspect of American life, but perhaps none more conspicuous than sexuality. Since the arrival of the Puritans, polite society in America gave the impression that human sexuality was acceptable only within the bounds of marriage, and only as a slightly distasteful means of procreation. There was doubt about the propriety of sexual education even when limited to informing young brides and grooms about what to expect on their wedding night, and it was not unusual for new brides to be shocked and disgusted when they discovered what was expected of them. Birth control was condemned by the church and the media, who could not justify preventing conception within marriage and certainly would not condone sexual activity outside of marriage.

As new forms of entertainment and communication contributed to an evolving popular culture, however, an interesting phenomenon became clear - people were interested in sexual behavior. In fact, they would pay to see it. Motion pictures, plays, songs, novels, and advertising all reflected the market for sexually-themed entertainment. Vice police, media, churches, and reform groups tried desperately to reign in the production and consumption of material they deemed to be obscene, but their efforts were met with limited success. Their dire warnings about the degeneration of America's youth not only went unheeded but were met with increasing instances of the establishment defending the younger generation. Through an examination of primary documents including books, magazine and newspaper articles, and social hygiene reports,



this paper will show that sexuality in the 1920's underwent a more radical change in perception than in reality, while noting some real shifts in behavior among the younger generation.

To understand the shift in perception, we must first understand how sexuality was viewed prior to the 1920's. American culture was heavily influenced by Protestant values, which included chastity, modesty, and the link between sexuality and original sin.<sup>1</sup> In spite of the constant presence of prostitution, pregnancy outside of marriage, pornography, homosexuality, and other examples of "deviant" behavior, it appeared that the majority of society had overwhelmingly accepted the idea that sex was a private matter between a married man and woman, and not a source of recreation but a necessary evil for the serious business of procreation. Yet an eye-opening survey by Dr. Clelia Mosher, conducted between 1892 and 1920, reveals that a surprising number of educated Victorian women who participated in the survey had at least some knowledge about sex and reproduction prior to their marriages, and that many of them were enthusiastic wives who enjoyed healthy sexual relationships with their husbands.<sup>2</sup> Many women, when questioned about the purpose of intercourse, listed pleasure along with reproduction and increased marital affection, chipping away at the notion that publicized values of the era were homogenously accepted.<sup>3</sup>

The epidemic of venereal disease among American soldiers during World War I led to a crisis in values regarding prophylaxis and shed light on some realities of sexual behavior. An estimated 96% of cases of venereal disease were contracted prior to a soldier's entrance into the service, illustrating the prevalence of sexual activity even before reaching the brothels of Europe, in spite of mainstream America's reluctance to acknowledge it.<sup>4</sup> As men with sexually transmitted diseases such as syphilis and gonorrhea began filling infirmaries and seriously affecting the military's available manpower, the reality became impossible to ignore.<sup>5</sup> Distribution of the "male sheath" and sexual education for soldiers became a necessity of war for many nations, and just one of many dirty secrets of military service not to be discussed in polite company. As the war ended, however, the national discussion about prophylactics and birth control was just heating up.

Condoms and diaphragms were fiercely opposed by religious groups. Kathleen Tobin explained, "The nation's churches would react to new notions of sexuality, the more conservative ones formulating close links between female immorality and contraceptives."<sup>6</sup> The federal government upheld that belief with the passage of the Comstock laws in 1873, defining contraception as obscene and making contraceptive distribution or discussion through the mail or across state lines a federal offense.<sup>7</sup> Advocating the right of women to limit their pregnancies or prevent them altogether, Margaret Sanger countered, "I do not believe that a universal knowledge of contraceptives would lead to immorality."<sup>8</sup> Sanger defiantly opposed the position of the Catholic Church and the Comstock laws by publishing her opinions in her magazine, *The Woman Rebel*, and with a manual named *Family Limitation*, describing how to prevent pregnancy using contraceptives.<sup>9</sup> The emerging ability to control pregnancy effectively contributed not only to smaller family sizes, but also enabled unmarried couples to engage in sexual relations without fear of unwanted pregnancy and reduced the spread of sexually transmitted diseases.

Sexual relationships outside of traditional marriage have been present throughout human history. They were usually regarded as immoral and unspeakable, and society generally faulted the woman involved, as she was considered the guardian of morality. The young women of the 1920's, with the increased economic independence many found during and after the war, were less inclined to capitulate to the double standards of Victorian society. Pioneering feminist and psychoanalyst Beatrice Hinkle wrote, "a sex morality imposed by repression and the power of custom creates artificial conceptions and will eventually break down."<sup>10</sup> Hinkle articulated the issue of the age-repression and custom were manufactured and maintained by society. As women broke some of the powers of repression, they could begin to dictate custom anew. Hinkle explained, "I do not mean to imply that traditional moral standards controlling women's sexual conduct have never been transgressed...the great difference today lies in the open defiance of these customs with feelings of entire justification."<sup>11</sup> Hinkle's statement here clearly defines the difference between the existence of women's sexuality and the unapologetic, open acknowledgement of it.

Not only did these young women embrace their sexuality, they often publicly displayed it. An explosion in the use of cosmetics and dramatic changes in fashion gave external expression to their acceptance of their sexuality, and a whole new breed of woman, the flapper, was born.<sup>12</sup> As Family Court Justice Benjamin Barr Lindsay explained, "Excesses of all sorts are usually a rebound from an excess of forced conformity."<sup>13</sup> Women in the twenties were emerging from an era of corsets and ankle-length bathing suits, and many pushed back hard against a society which could have them arrested for showing too much skin, enforced by vice police bearing rulers. An unknown contributor to *Flapper* magazine commenting on the advertised fashion trends of the early twenties wrote, "Why in the name of common sense do the manufacturers of ladies clothing insist upon girls wearing long skirts, when we simply don't want them? What do they think we are, a bunch of jellyfish with no minds of our own?"<sup>14</sup>

This new attitude among young women sparked panic and recriminations from defenders of conventional morality. Journalist Frederick Allen quoted President Murphy of the University of Florida as saying, "The low-cut gowns, the rolled hose and short skirts are born of the devil and his angels, and are carrying the present and future generations to chaos and destruction."<sup>15</sup> Religious groups promoted the idea of a "moral gown," which would be loose enough to obscure the lines of a woman's figure and cover her from the neck to the wrist and ankle, and some states went so far as to promote laws requiring such standards.<sup>16</sup> Author Steven Byington referred to "the day when the foremost civilized nations agreed that covering the skin of most of the body and disguising the principal contours of the person for at least one sex were absolutely essential to morality."<sup>17</sup> Byington clearly made reference to the standard women were held to as the keepers of morality, responsible for keeping themselves and the men of the world in check. By the time his article appeared in 1925, however, a revolution had taken place. Beatrice Hinkle commented, "It can be said that in the general disintegration of old standards, women are the active agents in the field of sexual morality and men the passive, almost bewildered accessories to the overthrow of their long and firmly organized control of women's conduct."<sup>18</sup>

Motion pictures were a clear example of changing morality in both practice and perception. The presence of sexually-charged motion pictures in the twenties certainly influenced the culture which watched them. Some found them instructional, such as the young man quoted by historian David Kyvig as saying, “It was directly through the movies that I learned to kiss a girl on her ears, neck, and cheeks, as well as on the mouth.”<sup>19</sup> The greater fear of the opposition was that movies would promote sexual activity among the young, a concern which also had some basis in reality. Kyvig quotes a sixteen-year-old high school girl who said, “I know love pictures have made me more receptive to love-making...I always thought it rather silly until these pictures, where there is always so much love and everything turns out all right in the end, and I kiss and pet much more than I would otherwise.”<sup>20</sup>

Yet that same culture also produced and formed a willing market for these films, proving that the movies were not solely responsible for the major shift in the perceived degradation of morality. More than anything, the success of racy movies exposed an interest which already existed. Author Gordon Craig prophesized, “In time there will be found a much lower stratum of our sentimentality and rubbish to which it will be possible to appeal...but already it is doing its best and appeals to the very lowest that can be found in us.”<sup>21</sup>

Motion pictures were attacked by numerous groups hoping to protect traditional ideas of morality. The American Social Hygiene Association wrote, “There is still too much playing up of sexual immorality because ‘sex’ in a title or on a billboard spells dollars to the commercialists of filmdom.”<sup>22</sup> Indeed, filmmakers did find these films profitable, and would often change original, “clean” titles of adapted stories to more suggestive sounding titles. In a survey of theater owners in 1922, “twenty-two of the respondents claimed that their audiences were larger when ‘sex-pictures’ were being shown.”<sup>23</sup> Theater owners described the demand and tolerance level for these movies, and how it differed between audiences from “the city” and the “neighborhood,” and the survey concluded, “the industry is trying to give its customers what they want, even though they may want questionable products.”<sup>24</sup> There is no doubt that many people wanted their products, or that motion pictures had an influence on some people’s behavior, particularly the young. The pressure of reform groups and religious leaders combined with public sex scandals involving film star Fatty Arbuckle and others in the twenties finally led to the formation of the Motion Pictures Producers and Distributors of America in 1922. Led by Harding crony William Hays, the association was formed to “self-regulate” the content of movies without the interference of the Federal government. The MPPDA was greeted warmly by defenders of “traditional” values and provided for some limitations on content. However, Hays worked *for* the motion picture industry, and his interests lay in its success. He admitted, “the motion picture industry today is the greatest sales force in the world,”<sup>25</sup> and that industry would continue to both shape and reflect American values.

Motion pictures weren’t the only form of entertainment to raise eyebrows in the twenties. Novels and plays challenged Victorian morals as well and drew as much criticism as motion pictures. Authors such as Aldous Huxley, D.H. Lawrence, Wallace Thurman, and James Joyce

wrote more boldly on sexual themes than conservative and religious groups were comfortable with, and the success of the sex novel and play was disturbing to Victorian ideals. The connection between these forms of entertainment and real-life consequences was clear to reform groups like the American Social Hygiene Association.

In the novel and the drama sex relations are discussed with an abandonment of reserve that is morally pernicious. The idea of restraint and temperance is rejected and without yielding to the spirit of panic we must admit that venereal disease is on an increase and that this plague is being brought into homes where under normal conditions it would have been unlikely to enter.<sup>26</sup>

The author definitively links the consumption of “morally pernicious” entertainment with the spread of venereal disease and a rejection of self-control. Not everyone was prepared to accept this thesis, however, and a variety of people offered different points of view. Marshall Beuick, an editor at the *People’s Home Journal* explains, “the young people of America have a strangely limited knowledge of their sexual life. Thus, they seek reading that will make up for their deficiency in education.”<sup>27</sup> Throughout the twenties, public opinion increasingly defended natural human interest and curiosity regarding sex and separated it from the concept of sin and morality. “It is clearly ridiculous to criticize fiction for dealing with sex, or to talk about sex dramas and sex novels as if the presence of such an interest made them evil,” Henry Canby wrote in an effort to lend perspective to the issue.<sup>28</sup>

The presence of natural interest expressed by Canby and curiosity elicited by ignorance as described by Beuick highlighted the necessity of sexual education. As Dr. Mosher’s survey illustrates, American children had no consistent, accurate source of information regarding sex and reproduction, and some were completely ignorant about their own bodies and development.<sup>29</sup> When asked what her knowledge of sexual physiology was before marriage, one respondent replied, “None to speak of... So innocent of the matter that until I was eighteen I did not know the origin of babies.”<sup>30</sup> There were vast differences in the way individual children were educated, or kept ignorant, of sexual and reproductive matters, and natural curiosity helped to feed the popularity of sexually-themed entertainment. Dr. Frank Crane, reluctant to condemn entertainment for addressing sexuality, yet advocating a solid education offered by more appropriate sources, wrote “Apostles of the hush school take their stand... that literature should recognize nothing in a human being between the ankles and the chin... Sex relations... should be explained. But the person to teach these subjects is the physician, the parent, or the teacher, and not the novelist, or the poet, or the preacher,”<sup>31</sup> Opposition to sex education was fierce, however, and went so far as to convict Brooklyn grandmother Mary Ware Dennett of obscenity for writing a sexual education pamphlet which was widely circulated for over ten years before her conviction.<sup>32</sup>

Throughout the 1920s debate on sexuality, the question of the younger generation’s moral standing arose. Conservative and religious groups warned of the dire consequences of “immoral”

entertainment and activities. Author David Young, describing the ultimate fears of the Victorian generation, wrote “The consensus of opinion was that the children became too precocious about sex matters, that there was a general demoralizing effect on modesty and purity, that a disregard of marriage ties was fostered, and that the authority of teachers and parents was materially lessened.”<sup>33</sup>

While the conservatives concerned themselves with virtue, another large segment of society looked to the effects of unrestrained sexuality on social refinement. Professor and critic Henry Seidel Canby wrote, “The youth who discusses coldly topics upon which age is warmly reticent has become a commonplace of satire.”<sup>34</sup> Although not necessarily offended by sexual content, its overexposure began to be viewed as crass and tasteless by many. Judge Lindsay wrote, “During a recent trip to New York...I went to a notorious play...It was composed of a raw title, raw sex situations, and mediocre acting. It served no valid artistic end,” objecting not to the sexual content of the play but the lack of redeeming artistic qualities.<sup>35</sup> *Time Magazine* also noted the waning public interest in overtly sexual material in its 1928 article “Diluted Sex,” detailing the decline of sexual content in magazines such as *True Story*.<sup>36</sup>

The young generation of the twenties had its defenders. Many authors of the time noted with amusement the similarity of the moral charges brought against the young to those of nearly every previous generation. Educators who were regularly exposed to teens and college age students often argued in favor of their values and behavior. H. Thomas Bates, a superintendent of schools, stated “My conclusion is that despite the fact that sex is unduly emphasized by fashions and the dance hall, we hear and know of no more immorality than at previous periods in the history of society.”<sup>37</sup> Some quickly pointed out the generation’s role as consumers, not originators, of sexually charged materials. Thyosa Amos, Dean of Women at the University of Pittsburgh, explained “the social curriculum is being attacked because of social standards...the attack is unwarranted...no student wrote the sex play, no student wrote the present vulgar obscene songs; no student photographed the immoral film...all those are the gracious gifts of a commercialized society.”<sup>38</sup> Overall, defenders of youth in the twenties did not view the sexual expressions of the era as a sign of immorality and degraded values. Instead, they saw the age-old fear of an older generation in conflict with changing times. Judge Lindsay wrote, “At present, the opposition Youth meets from the Older Generation constitutes a malign suggestion that what youth is doing is wholly futile and wrong.”<sup>39</sup>

It is obvious that sexuality in America was embraced and enjoyed far more than earlier public discourse allowed, yet the twenties did have an impact on some people’s behavior that could be considered revolutionary. The generation which fought World War One was disillusioned by the senseless violence it had witnessed, and many young men and women began to question the conventional values they were brought up with. “Trial marriages” were spoken of as viable options for the practice of sexuality by a significant number of people, where just a few years earlier the concept may have shocked and appalled even the most liberal of minds. The concept of “open marriages,” or permissible adultery, was discussed and experimented with by some couples, testing

the limits of sexual progressivism in relationships.<sup>40</sup> The promotion of “companionate marriage,” as opposed to permanent “procreative marriage,” by such prominent figures as Judge Benjamin Barr Lindsay revealed the increasing mainstream acceptance of sexual relationships not intended to produce children, and an openness to dissolve those marriages when desired if they remained childless.<sup>41</sup> However, Judge Lindsay also cautioned “The younger generation is able, without psychic strain, to adopt new sex conventions and standards which are often devastating in their effects on adults who attempt to adopt them suddenly.”<sup>42</sup> He warned that these evolving forms of sexual relationships were not necessarily appropriate for the older generation, and related the personal stories of some couples for whom sexual experimentations had unexpected negative effects.<sup>43</sup>

Without much in the way of reliable statistics, it is impossible to prove the concrete effects of the “sexual revolution” of the 1920’s on sexual activity, adultery, prostitution, and declining morality. The nation’s birth rate did decline from an average of 3.5 children in 1900 to 2.3 children in 1933, with the combined effects of contraception and a more thorough understanding of ovulation by the medical community.<sup>44</sup> The divorce rate, which nearly doubled between 1910 and 1930, is another indicator of change in attitudes, illustrating the increasing refusal of society to suffer unhappy conditions to satisfy social convention.<sup>45</sup>

Historians have been challenged by how to interpret the remaining causes and effects. Writing just a few years after the end of the decade, journalist Frederick Allen describes the twenties as an “uneasy time,” when the initial breakdown of sexual taboos led to complete sexual obsession for a time, followed by the realization that some limits and restrictions may not be a bad idea.<sup>46</sup> His ideas were borne out over the following years, when a general public backlash led to a reigning in of overt sexuality in motion pictures and other forms of entertainment. Those segments of society which were not offended by blatant sexual themes simply became bored by them. As the younger generation matured, they retained some of the changes ushered in during the “roaring twenties,” no longer connecting women smoking or drinking with men with moral decline, or considering the use of cosmetics a sure sign of prostitution. Men were generally more tolerant of the idea of “experienced” women, and marrying a young lady who was not a virgin was no longer an outrageous concept. Professor Paula Foss described the phenomenon of “petting parties,” where “young people did quite a lot of erotic exploration — kissing and fondling,” but explained, “These parties always stopped before intercourse. In that sense they had imposed limitations created by the group presence.”<sup>47</sup>

The increasing acceptance of contraceptive use likely began before the twenties, but open discussion and the campaign led by Margaret Sanger to remove legal barriers and provide education began shrinking family size, and almost certainly lowered the rate of illegitimate births in unmarried relationships. It is impossible to determine whether the availability of contraceptives increased the rate of premarital sexual relationships, so historians can only speculate that the sexually charged atmosphere, combined with an acknowledged prevalence of “petting parties” and the decreased risk of pregnancy, probably led to increased sexual behavior.

Yet as they left the decade behind, a new embrace of some traditional values occurred. Hemlines went back down, and the above-the-knee skirt of the flapper ceded to the floor-length gown of the thirties. Some couples found the aftermath of sexual experimentation and open relationships more difficult to bear than they had anticipated, and returned to the more conservative marital roles they had been raised under. The decades to follow would demonstrate occasional shifts in marriage, divorce, and birth rates, and varying acceptance of sexual themes in advertising and entertainment, but none as dramatic as those seen in the 1920s. Not until the 1960's would America again witness such a challenge to the established idea of sexual morality and expression among its youth, when against the backdrop of another war, an entire generation questioned their parent's values and rewrote the conversation on sexuality.

---

<sup>1</sup> Merry E. Weisner-Hanks, *Christianity and Sexuality in the Modern World: Regulating Desire, Reforming Practice*, (Routledge, New York, 2000), 64.

<sup>2</sup> Clelia Duel Mosher, *The Mosher Survey-Sexual Attitudes of 45 Victorian Women*, (Arno Press, New York, 1980.), 9, 21, 99, 273.

<sup>3</sup> Mosher, 23, 43, 90, 112.

<sup>4</sup> Leonard Ayres, *The War With Germany: A Statistical Summary*, (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1919), 127.

<sup>5</sup> Stephen Fidler, "100 Years 100 Legacies- The Lasting Impact of World War I," *Wall Street Journal*, <http://online.wsj.com/ww1/contraception>, Accessed 4/11/16.

<sup>6</sup> Kathleen Tobin, *The American Religious Debate Over Birth Control, 1907-1937*, (McFarland Publishing, North Carolina, 2001), 6.

<sup>7</sup> "The Pill," American Experience, PBS. Chana Gazit. 2003.

[http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/pill/peoplevents/e\\_comstock.html](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/pill/peoplevents/e_comstock.html)

<sup>8</sup> Margaret Sanger, "How Shall We Change the Law," *Birth Control Review* 3 (July 1919): 8-9.

<sup>9</sup> Tobin, 4.

<sup>10</sup> Beatrice Hinkle, "New Morals for Old Women and the New Morality," *The Nation*, Vol.119, No.3098, (Nov.19, 1924) : 541.

<sup>11</sup> Hinkle, 541.

<sup>12</sup> Julie Willet, *The American Beauty Industry Encyclopedia*, (ABC-CLIO, Santa Barbara, 2010), 72.

<sup>13</sup> Benjamin Barr Lindsay, *The Companionate Marriage*, (Wesleyan University Library, 1927) reprinted (Arno Press 1972), 16.

<sup>14</sup> *Flapper Magazine*, (November 1922): 2.

<sup>15</sup> Frederick Lewis Allen, *Only Yesterday: An Informal History of the 1920's*, (Harper and Row, New York, 1931): 80.

<sup>16</sup> Allen, 80.

<sup>17</sup> Steven T. Byington, "Clothes," *The Nation*, Vol.121 Issue 3132 (July 15, 1925), 89.

<sup>18</sup> Hinkle, 541.

<sup>19</sup> David Kyvig, *Daily Life in the United States, 1920-1940*, (Ivan R. Dee Publishing, Chicago, 2004): 96.

<sup>20</sup> Kyvig, 96.

<sup>21</sup> Gordon Craig, "The Cinema and its Drama", *The English Review*, (February 1922.): 1.

<sup>22</sup> American Social Hygiene Association, "A Good Start", *The Social Hygiene Bulletin*, Vol.9, (June 1922), 4.

<sup>23</sup> Donald Ramsey Young, *Motion Pictures: A Study in Social Legislation*, (Westbrook Publishing, Philadelphia, PA, 1922), 31.

<sup>24</sup> Young, 11.

<sup>25</sup> *Daily Illini*, University of Illinois, (June 6, 1928)

<sup>26</sup> American Social Hygiene Association, "Conference to Reaffirm the World's Moral Idea", *The Social Hygiene Bulletin*, Vol.9, No.7,( July 1922): 1.

- <sup>27</sup> American Social Hygiene Association, "Today's Sex Novels", *The Social Hygiene Bulletin*, Vol.9 (September 1922): 2.
- <sup>28</sup> Henry Seidel Canby, "Sex in Fiction", *The Century Illustrated*, Vol.105, (November 1922): 98.
- <sup>29</sup> Mosier, 5, 47, 87, 111, 382.
- <sup>30</sup> Mosier, 123.
- <sup>31</sup> American Social Hygiene Association, "Today's Sex Novels", *The Social Hygiene Bulletin*, Vol.9 (Sept. 1922) : 2, quoting Dr. Frank Crane, "Literature's Province," *NY Globe*, (Aug. 1921)
- <sup>32</sup> "The Sex Side of Life," *Time Magazine*, Vol.13, Issue 18 (May 6, 1929): 18.
- <sup>33</sup> Young, 40.
- <sup>34</sup> Canby, 98.
- <sup>35</sup> Lindsay, 3.
- <sup>36</sup> "Diluted Sex," *Time Magazine*, Vol.11, Issue 9, (Feb.27, 1928): 25.
- <sup>37</sup> "In Favor of the Young Folks", *The Literary Digest*, (June 24, 1922): 38.
- <sup>38</sup> "In Favor of the Young Folks", *The Literary Digest*, (June 24, 1922): 38.
- <sup>39</sup> Lindsay, 18,
- <sup>40</sup> Lindsay, 27.
- <sup>41</sup> Lindsay, 223.
- <sup>42</sup> Lindsay, 35.
- <sup>43</sup> Lindsay, p.39
- <sup>44</sup> *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, (Dec. 3, 1999,) Centers for Disease Control. 48 (47): 1073-1080.
- <sup>45</sup> Allen, 100.
- <sup>46</sup> Allen, 102.
- <sup>47</sup> Linton Weeks "When Petting Parties Scandalized the Nation," *NPR History Dept.*, (May 26, 2015.)

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- American Social Hygiene Association. "Conference to Reaffirm the World's Moral Idea," *The Social Hygiene Bulletin*, v.9, No.7, (July 1922): 1
- American Social Hygiene Association. "A Good Start", *The Social Hygiene Bulletin*, v. 9, (June 1922): 4
- American Social Hygiene Association. "Today's Sex Novels," *The Social Hygiene Bulletin*, v. 9 (September 1922): 2
- American Social Hygiene Association. "Today's Sex Novels," quoting Dr. Frank Crane, "Literature's Province," *NY Globe*, (Aug. 1921)
- Allen, Frederick Lewis. *Only Yesterday: An Informal History of the 1920's*. New York: Harper and Row, 1931.
- Ayres, Leonard P. *The War with Germany, A Statistical Summary*. Washington: Government Printing Office, August 1, 1919
- Byington, Steven T. "Clothes," *The Nation*, v.121 n. 3132 (July 15, 1925): 89-91
- Canby, Henry Seidel. "Sex in Fiction", *The Century Illustrated*, v. 105, (November 1922): 98-104
- Center for Disease Control, *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, (December 3, 1999): 48 (47): 1073-1080
- Craig, Gordon. "The Cinema and its Drama," *The English Review*, (February 1922): 1-4
- Daily Illini*, University of Illinois, (June 6, 1928)



- “Diluted Sex,” *Time Magazine*, v. 11, n. 9, (Feb.27, 1928): 25
- Flapper Magazine*, (November 1922): 2
- Fidler, Stephen. “100 Years, 100 Legacies- The Lasting Impact of World War I,” *Wall Street Journal*. <http://online.wsj.com/ww1/contraception>.
- Hinkle, Beatrice. “New Morals for Old Women and the New Morality,” *The Nation*, v. 119, n. 3098 (Nov.19, 1924): 541-543
- “In Favor of the Young Folks”, *The Literary Digest*, (June 24, 1922): 38
- Kyvig, David. *Daily Life in the United States, 1920-1940*. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee Publishing, 2004.
- Lindsay, Benjamin Barr. *The Companionate Marriage*. Wesleyan University Library, 1927. Reprinted by Arno Press, 1972.
- Mosier, Clelia Duel. *The Mosier Survey- Sexual Attitudes of 45 Victorian Women*. New York: Arno Press, 1980.
- “The Pill,” *American Experience*, PBS. Chana Gazit. 2003.  
[http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/pill/peoplevents/e\\_comstock.html](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/pill/peoplevents/e_comstock.html)
- Sanger, Margaret. "How Shall We Change the Law," *Birth Control Review* 3 (July 1919): 8-9
- “The Sex Side of Life,” *Time Magazine*, v. 13, n. 18, (May 6, 1929): 18
- Tobin, Kathleen. *The American Religious Debate Over Birth Control, 1907-1937*. North Carolina: McFarland Publishing, 2001.
- Weeks, Linton. “When ‘Petting Parties’ Scandalized the Nation,” *NPR History Dept.*, (May 26, 2015).
- Weisner-Hanks, Mary E. *Christianity and Sexuality in the Modern World: Regulating Desire, Reforming Practice*. New York: Routledge, 2000.
- Willet, Julie. *The American Beauty Industry Encyclopedia*. Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2010
- Young, Donald Ramsey. *Motion Pictures: A Study in Social Legislation*. Philadelphia, PA: Westbrook Publishing, 1922.