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SCOPE AND PURPOSE

In response to the increasing interest in the “global” as a field of inquiry, a perspective, and an approach, *Global Histories: A Student Journal* aims to offer a platform for debate, discussion, and intellectual exchange for a new generation of scholars with diverse research interests. Global history can provide an opportunity to move beyond disciplinary boundaries and methodological centrisms, both in time and space. As students of global history at Freie Universität Berlin and Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, our interest lies not in prescribing what global history is and what it is not, but in encouraging collaboration, cooperation, and discourse among students seeking to explore new intellectual frontiers.

PUBLICATION FREQUENCY

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Dear readers,

Winter is here, and 2024 is coming to an end. With the outcome of the American election, a world order reshuffle is inevitable, and no one can tell if 2025 will bring better or worse. At a time like this, the latest issue of *Global Histories* wishes to bring faith to our readers by featuring student research that sheds light on injustices of the past and those who fought against them.

Themed on justice and activism, the second issue of the ninth volume of *Global Histories* showcases students' efforts to reveal and reflect on overlooked racial and sexual injustice in history. The first of four original research articles, Lutz Wahnschaffe's piece sets the tone for our latest edition by unveiling prejudice in British imperial sedition laws across colonial India, Ireland and Great Britain. Echoing such systemic inequity is Alex Loftus's work on the lynchings of Mexicans by the Texas Rangers in the 1910s, which highlights the racism in American print media's portrayals of Mexicans and Texas Rangers. Matevž Rezman Tasič demonstrates another side of print media's influence through a case study on African Americans' reactions to the Italo-Ethiopian War, showing how the print media facilitated the construction of solidarity between African descendants across the Atlantic. Finally, Lola Dickinson presents another example of transatlantic solidarity in the formation of activist networks among sex workers to combat the systemic discrimination and criminalisation they faced in the 1970s and 1980s.

Sharing this issue's theme of deliberating on racial and sexual injustice are two book reviews by Oliver Jung and Isabel Bedoya Palop. Oliver critically reviews a recently published monograph about Jewish German sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld, whose model of homosexuality is argued to be constructed on an anti-imperial, yet racist framework. Isabel reviews a recent publication on property rights in nineteenth-century Brazil, which showcases how the enslaved population fought for their rights and contributed to a fair legal formation.

Wrapping up this issue is a review of our Seventh Global History Student Conference held in 2023 by conference team members Somer Mengqing Zhang and Monalisha Mallik. We are also delighted to announce the successful completion of another Global History Student Conference, where 28 students gathered in Berlin, from June 7 to 9, 2024, to present their latest research projects and share their visions for the development of global history. This year, we were especially happy to host another student salon, providing our international guests a space to discuss student resistance within academia.

Lastly, this issue is my final publication as editor in chief of *Global Histories*. It has been a fruitful learning experience to lead this team and witness our growth in the last two years. I am grateful for all the love and support from team members, faculty members, journal authors, and conference participants. Both the journal and conference would never have been successful without any of you. I am optimistic that *Global Histories* will continue its outstanding work under the leadership of Evan Liddle, who joined our team in 2022. On behalf of the *Global Histories* team, we wish everyone a happy holiday, and please enjoy reading our latest issue. *Ciao!*

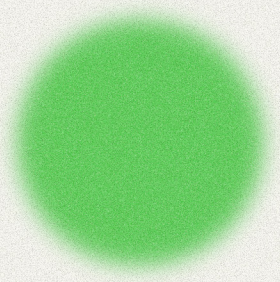
With a heart full of love and gratitude and best regards,
Phoebe Ka Laam Ng
Editor in Chief

Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge the interest and work of all students who submitted an article, essay, or review during the last call for papers. We are incredibly grateful to the authors published in this issue for their fruitful contributions and efforts in revision. These authors include Lutz Wahnschaffe, Alex Loftus, Matevž Rezman Tasič, Lola Dickinson, Oliver Jung, Isabel Bedoya Palop, Somer Mengqing Zhang, and Monalisha Mallik. Their work throughout the months was intensive, and it paid off in their excellent contributions to this issue. We are also grateful for their patience with our delays, as it was particularly challenging for us to put together this issue while also working hard in organising the Global History Student Conference.

In addition, we would like to extend our immense gratitude to the students on the *Global Histories* journal team and students in our Global History MA program, particularly those who devoted extensive time and effort to reviewing and editing the published pieces. These members include Baillie Bell, Cecilia Burgos Cuevas, Miguel Cadórniga Martínez, Seth Crosland, Jack Drummond, Kieran Isaacs, Lukas Jung, Oliver Jung, Piotr Kardynal, Gunther Kietzer, Zoë Klos, Evan Liddle, Monalisha Mallik, Anna Nesterova, Oliver Ryan, Imogen Sadler, Lennart Vincent Schmidt, Margaret Slevin, and Sarah Wulbrecht. The attention and dedication these members provided towards the pieces they worked on during the arrival of another semester ensured this issue's high quality. Thanks to You Wu, our team's new graphic designer, and her incredible work in the layout and design of our journal, we could deliver another visually appealing issue.

Finally, we are grateful for the continued support and assistance for this project by the Freie Universität Berlin, particularly the Global History faculty, chaired by Prof. Dr. Sebastian Conrad, and the Online Journal Systems team at CeDiS.



I.
RESEARCH
ARTICLES



Liberal Universalism, Colonial Difference, and the Prosecution of “Sedition” across the British Empire

ABSTRACT

Throughout its history, the British imperial project was justified through the expansion of English law across the world. This justification led the colonial publics to investigate and compare the application of Britain’s law and governance across the Empire and to critique disparities between the imperial metropole and its colonies. Supporters of the British Empire, on the other hand, pointed to supposed characteristics of “native” societies that required legislation which differed from that applied in Great Britain. This notion of “colonial difference” came to define colonial jurisprudence. This paper investigates charges of sedition, meaning the incitement to resistance against the established colonial order across the British Empire. I find that in interpreting sedition laws, colonial courtrooms placed great emphasis on the supposed “state” of the population and were unwilling to allow colonized subjects the right to criticize British rule as they would have in Britain. Instead, colonial courts came to meticulously examine supposed differences and tied their rulings closely to their assessments of the nature of colonized populations and their lands.

BY

Lutz Wahnschaffe

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lutz Wahnschaffe is currently a visiting student at the University of Cambridge. He is completing his M.A. in Global History at Heidelberg University. His research interests include global history, intellectual history, and the history of international order and international law in the long nineteenth century.

Introduction

Our law is in fact the sum and substance of what we have to teach them. It is, so to speak, the gospel of the English, and it is a compulsory gospel which admits of no dissent and no disobedience.¹

Throughout the history of the British Empire, its rule was often tied to, and justified through the application of British colonial law. The creation and administration of the English “rule of law,” liberal supporters of the Empire argued, improved the lives of the colonized and provided a mandate for British colonial power.² Liberal notions of colonial rule relied on assumptions about the nature of law that were, in principle, universal. The colonial subject, while described as inferior in development, was still assumed to be capable of eventually rising to the status of the British and endowed with the right to property, to due process, and to good governance. Britain’s role, in this view, was to extend its law, political economy and administration across the globe to the alleged benefit of the colonized.³ In India, prominent liberal legislators like Thomas Macaulay, Henry Maine, and James Fitzjames Stephen nevertheless emphasized the alleged particularities of “native” custom and society, which they claimed, complicated the application of English legal norms, and necessitated a deviation from the system of parliamentary representation that crown subjects enjoyed in Great Britain.⁴ Liberal supporters of imperial expansion were keenly aware of the fact that sovereign power in the colonies was not subject to the consent of the governed and remained largely free from the limits that had been imposed on it in the metropole.⁵ It was this “enlightened and paternal despotism,” then-member of parliament Thomas Macaulay argued in 1833, that enabled Britain to further colonial “rule of law,” and thus the colonial project in India altogether.⁶

1 James Fitzjames Stephen, “Legislation under Lord Mayo,” in *The Life of the Earl of Mayo*, ed. William Wilson Hunter (London: Smith, Elder & Co, 1876), 169. See Sandra Den Otter, “Law, Authority, and Colonial Rule,” in *India and the British Empire*, ed. Douglas M. Peers and Nandini Gooptu, *The Oxford History of the British Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 185.

2 Elizabeth Kolsky, “Codification and the Rule of Colonial Difference: Criminal Procedure in British India,” *Law and History Review* 23, no. 3 (2005): 631.

3 Duncan Bell, *Reordering the World: Essays on Liberalism and Empire* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016), 56.

4 Karuna Mantena, *Alibis of Empire: Henry Maine and the Ends of Liberal Imperialism* (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2010), 30–38.

5 For the development of liberal thoughts on empire, see Jennifer Pitts, *A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005); Thomas Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*, *The New Cambridge History of India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Mantena, *Alibis*.

6 Thomas Macaulay, “Government of India,” 10 July 1833, 19 Parl. Deb. H.C. (3rd ser.) (1833).

An “absolute government” could raise India to adopt “our arts and our morals, our literature and our laws” until “having become instructed in European knowledge, they may, in some future age, demand European institutions.”⁷ Liberal rule in the colonies required the justification of authoritarian practices, like the suspension of due process or freedom of the press, within a framework of liberalism. Partha Chatterjee has described these justifications, which rejected the universality of liberal ideals and insisted that alleged historical, cultural, or racial characteristics made it impossible or impractical to extend some liberal practices and rights to the colonized, as the “rule of colonial difference.”⁸ One battleground for such discourses was the crime of “sedition,” which described illegal incitement against the established order. Initially created to punish those that criticized the English king, by the late 18th century, its grip on public opinion in Great Britain had been drastically weakened.⁹ Outside of Great Britain, however, the authoritarian character of the law lived on. In India, sedition first entered the Penal Code in 1870 as section 124A. After its first use in court in 1891, the definition of sedition was continuously broadened, both in court and through legislation.¹⁰

At the same time, prosecutions under the charge of sedition continued elsewhere. Rare trials in Ireland and Britain furnished judges, defendants, and observers with the ability to compare the treatment of sedition across the Empire. In negotiating the measures the colonial government took against alleged sedition, critics pointed to the contradictions between the Empire’s legal norms at home and its rule in the colonies.¹¹ Sunny Kumar has argued that, while colonial legislation was shaped by “difference,” its ideological roots were not confined to the colonial sphere but also present in the imperial metropole.¹² This paper seeks to examine and expand upon this theory by surveying discourses around the 1870 enactment of the sedition law in the British Raj and the application of sedition laws in colonial India, Ireland, and Great Britain. I argue that universalist narratives of imperial justice were a key strategy in the construction of sedition. Nevertheless, colonial difference came to define arguments around sedition in legislative proceedings as well as the courtroom through the deep-rooted link between sedition and colonial

7 Macaulay, “Government of India.”

8 Partha Chatterjee, “The Colonial State,” in *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993), 18.

9 Sunny Kumar, “Is Indian sedition law colonial? J.F. Stephen and the jurisprudence on free speech,” *The Indian Economic & Social History Review* 58, no. 4 (2021): 488.

10 Stephen Morton, “Terrorism, Literature, and Sedition in Colonial India,” in *Terror and the Postcolonial*, ed. Elleke Boehmer and Stephen Morton, Blackwell Concise Companions to Literature and Culture (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2010), 203.

11 Giorgio Shani, “Empire, Liberalism and the Rule of Colonial Difference: Colonial Governmentality in South Asia,” *Ritsumeikan Annual Review of International Studies* 5 (2006): 21.

12 Kumar, “Indian sedition law,” 488.

anxiety. I further argue that trials across the Empire influenced one another and shaped the perception of rule and law in the “imperial public sphere.”¹³ To follow sedition across the Empire, I first study its implementation in India in 1869–1870 and turn to Ireland, where the 1868 trial of newspaper editors Sullivan and Pigott provides a crucial point of reference for the relation between colonial security anxieties and sedition. I then consider the 1886 trial of John Burns, accused of seditiously agitating crowds in London, and finally return to India, where the first Indian trials under section 124A in 1891 and 1897 are examined.

Making sedition

The term sedition first entered English law with the Seditious Libel Act of 1661, which made it a crime to “imagine, invent, devise or intend” ill towards the king or his rule.¹⁴ This also included, as stated in 1704 by English Lord Chief Justice John Holt, merely “possessing an ill opinion of the government.”¹⁵ This interpretation of sedition did not last in Great Britain however, and by the end of the 18th century, conviction of a defendant who had not explicitly called for insurrection, had become exceedingly unlikely.¹⁶ In India, sedition was initially mentioned in Thomas Macaulay’s 1837 draft for an Indian Penal Code, but was omitted from the final code when it came into force in 1860.¹⁷ Section 113 of the draft would have criminalized “attempts to excite feelings of disaffection to the Government” with banishment, fine, and or imprisonment.¹⁸ Nevertheless, criticism of colonial rule and governance in the press remained relatively free from legal persecution between 1835 and 1857,¹⁹ when a widespread rebellion caught the British completely by surprise

13 Tanya Agathocleous, “Criticism on Trial: Colonizing Affect in the Late-Victorian Empire,” *Victorian Studies* 60, no. 3 (2018): 436.

14 “Charles II, 1661: An Act for Safety and Preservation of His Majesties Person and Government against Treasonable and Seditious practices and attempts,” in *Statutes of the Realm: Volume 5, 1628–80*, ed. John Raithby (s.l.: Great Britain Record Commission, 1819), 304–306. In English common law, seditious libel was first introduced in 1606 in *De Libellis Famosis*.

15 *R v. Tutchin*, [1704] 424 Holt, 90 Eng. Rep. 1133. See Gautam Bhatia, *Offend, Shock, or Disturb: Free Speech under the Indian Constitution* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2016), 84.

16 Walter Russell Donogh, *A Treatise on the Law of Seditious Libel and Cognate Offences in British India: Penal and Preventive, With an Excerpt of the Acts in Force Relating to the Press the Stage and Public Meeting* (Calcutta: Thacker Spink, 1911), 14–15.

17 Aravind Ganachari, *Nationalism and Social Reform in the Colonial Situation* (New Delhi: Kalpaz Publications, 2005), 55.

18 C. H. Cameron and D. Elliot, eds., *The Indian penal code, as originally framed in 1837, with notes by T.B. Macaulay ... [and others] and the first and second reports there-on dated 23rd July 1846 and 24th June 1847* (Madras: Higginbotham, 1888), 22.

19 Ganachari, *Nationalism and Social Reform*, 54.

and shaped a new state of colonial anxiety.²⁰

The failure to foresee a violent uprising against it caused the colonial government to rethink its instruments of control. Travellers, preachers, publishers, and others who might influence the colonized population were increasingly placed under suspicion and sometimes punished.²¹ In the wake of the rebellion against British rule, the 1857 Act to Regulate the Establishment of Printing Presses (Act XV) introduced restrictions on the Indian press for the duration of one year.²² The new act allowed the government to exercise, as Governor-General Lord Canning stated, “a more absolute and summary control of the press,” which had been made necessary by “the extent to which sedition has been poured into the hearts of the native population in India.”²³ In 1867, the Press and Registration of Books Act made the temporary restrictions passed in 1857 permanent.²⁴ It also required the registration of Indian books and publishers, as colonial officials produced an unprecedented vast collection of catalogued, translated, and commented Indian literature.²⁵

While sedition and incitement to sedition were evidently of chief importance for colonial officials, the crime of sedition did not receive its own section in the Indian Penal Code until 1870, after news of an alleged anti-British conspiracy gripped India. Throughout the 1860s, the colonial state had imprisoned and banished numerous alleged members of an Islamic anti-colonial movement, referred to by colonial officials as the *Wahhabis* or the “Great Wahhabi Conspiracy.”²⁶ The ostensible threat of radicals preaching

20 See Kim Wagner, “‘Treading Upon Fires’: The ‘Mutiny’-Motif and Colonial Anxieties in British India,” *Past & present* 218, no. 1 (2013). Of course, it can also be argued that such a state existed well before 1857 and was, in fact, endemic to British rule. See Mark Condos, “Colonial Insecurity in Early British India, 1757–1857,” in *The Insecurity State: Punjab and the Making of Colonial Power in British India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 25–66; Jon Wilson, *India Conquered: Britain’s Raj and the Chaos of Empire* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2016). Nevertheless, the “mutiny” of 1857 represented a milestone in imperial anxieties.

21 For the colonial fear of itinerancy, see Chandra Mallampalli, *A Muslim Conspiracy in British India?: Politics and Paranoia in the Early Nineteenth-Century Deccan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

22 William Theobald, *The Acts of the Legislative Council of India in 1857* (Calcutta: D’Rozario, 1858), Act XV, 95.

23 “Speech of the Governor-General in the Legislative Council, regarding the Press Act,” 13 June 1857, *Accounts and Papers of the House of Commons*, vol. 43 (London: House of Commons, 1858), 103–104.

24 The Act required the registration of all newspapers and printing presses with the government and made it mandatory to print the names of the editors on every issue of a newspaper. See The Press and Registration of Books Act of 1867, Part II (UK); Donogh, *A Treatise*, 183; Ganachari, *Nationalism and Social Reform*, 76.

25 Robert Darnton, “Books in the British Raj: The Contradictions of Liberal Imperialism,” in *Gutenberg-Jahrbuch*, ed. Stefan Füßel (Mainz: Gutenberg-Gesellschaft, 2001), 140.

26 *Wahhabism*, a Sunni reform movement based on the teachings of Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (1703–1792), emerged in the 18th century in the Arabian Peninsula. In the early 19th century, the term became a derogatory label for heterodox believers among South Asian

insurgency to India's Muslim population, which was understood to be particularly vulnerable to incitement, was interpreted by colonial officials as a fundamental threat to colonial stability. To fight the "conspiracy," the British colonial government relied on a draconian mixture of torture, banishment, and detention that was often at the very edge of colonial law or in clear violation of it.²⁷ British and Indian critics of these measures pointed out the stark contradiction between the rule of law that liberal officials purported to establish in India and the actions of the government.²⁸ In the case against Amir and Hashmadad Khan, two merchants from Delhi who had been accused of financing insurgent fighters, the defendants were imprisoned without charge throughout 1869 and 1870.²⁹ They were held under the Bengal State Prisoners Regulation III of 1818, which allowed the state to detain individuals suspected of intending to commit a crime in the future indefinitely without trial. The Khan brothers' legal counsel, Thomas Anstey, claimed that the law amounted to a permanent suspension of Habeas Corpus, an alleged violation of the Magna Carta,³⁰ and could never be upheld in England, where only a temporary suspension of the principle could be enacted in times of crisis.³¹ Thus, Anstey argued, the detention of his clients under Regulation III should be considered unconstitutional. The Calcutta High Court rejected the claim. In his ruling, Chief Justice Norman argued that "if the danger to be apprehended from the conspiracies [. . .] is not temporary, but from the condition of the country must be permanent," the possibility of a temporary suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act in England could justify its permanent suspension in India.³² In rejecting Anstey's plea towards extending Habeas Corpus to Britain's colonial subjects, Norman embraced a narrative of difference and rejected the extension of English legal norms to India, ostensibly one of the core aims of

Muslims. At this point, colonial authorities drew on the term to describe itinerant preachers believed to spread rebellious thoughts. After the Indian Rebellion of 1857, *Wahhabi* became a catch-all term for Muslim anti-colonial conspirators. See Mallampalli, *A Muslim Conspiracy*; Rishad Choudhury, "Wahhabis without Religion; or, A Genealogy of Jihadis in Colonial Law, 1818 to 1857," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 42, no. 2 (2022): 404–419; Julia Stephens, "The Phantom Wahhabi: Liberalism and the Muslim fanatic in mid-Victorian India," *Modern Asian Studies* 47, no. 1 (2013): 22–52.

27 Qeyamuddin Ahmad, *The Wahhabi Movement in India*, 2nd ed. (New Delhi: Manohar, 1994), 200.

28 Stephens, "The Phantom Wahhabi," 52.

29 Stephens, "The Phantom Wahhabi," 32.

30 The Magna Carta of 1215 stated, "No freeman shall be taken or imprisoned [. . .] except upon the lawful judgement of his peers or the law of the land." Starting in the 17th Century, this was understood to be the foundation of the principle of Habeas Corpus, which guaranteed prisoners the right to challenge the legality of their detention before a court. See Ralph V. Turner, *Magna Carta Through the Ages* (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2003), 156.

31 Nasser Hussain, *The Jurisprudence of Emergency: Colonialism and the Rule of Law* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003), 89.

32 *A full and complete Report of the Proceedings and debates in the matters of Ameer Khan and Hashmadad Khan, in the Crown Side of the High Court of Judicature at Fort William in Bengal, in the year 1870, A.D.* (Calcutta: R. Cambray, 1899), 153.

liberal imperialism.³³

In March of 1869, shortly before the Khan brothers were arrested, the Home Department in London suggested the “necessity of amending law with the object of enabling the government to deal more satisfactorily with seditious proceedings.”³⁴ In the Legislative Council session on November 25, Stephen remarked about the “Wahhabi Conspiracy,” that “if anyone thought that there was absolutely no occasion for any law of this kind [against sedition], he ought to look back to [these] incidents.”³⁵ On August 2, 1870, Stephen petitioned the Legislative Council to introduce legislation that would reinstate draft section 113, which had been left out of the Penal Code when it passed in 1860.³⁶ He claimed that the section had only been left out by accident and moved to rectify this “mistake” by re-submitting the draft section for consideration as section 124A of the Indian Penal Code.³⁷ It remains unclear why section 113 was originally omitted, but Stephen’s insistence that the new law had been reinstated out of due diligence and did not represent any desire to counter recent developments is certainly notable.³⁸

In introducing the section, Stephen denied any desire “to check, in the least degree, any criticism of [government] measures, however severe and hostile,” but cautioned that “persons seditiously disposed” could not avoid prosecution by “confining themselves to what, under other circumstances and in other persons, might be genuine criticism.”³⁹ To test whether criticism of the government was seditious, Stephen proposed to distinguish between disaffection and disapprobation, as section 113 in the original draft would have done. “Disapprobation” would represent criticism of government regulations or persons that did not call into question colonial rule, while “disaffection” was the criminal withholding, or incitement to withhold, of the allegiance that the subject owed to its sovereign.⁴⁰ Disaffection as a concept originated from the same theory of rule as the concept of sedition. In an absolutist monarchy, the king commanded the love and fealty of his subjects, and to disprove of him, in public or in private, was a great crime.⁴¹ Trials under the common law offence of seditious libel in Great Britain, Ireland and the 13 colonies had

33 Hussain, *Jurisprudence of Emergency*, 92–95.

34 Quoted in Ganachari, *Nationalism and Social Reform*, 56.

35 Imperial Legislative Council of India, *Abstract of the proceedings of the Council of the Governor-General of India, assembled for the purpose of making laws and regulations* 9 (1870): 451–452.

36 *Abstract of proceedings*, 9, 371.

37 *Abstract of proceedings*, 9, 371.

38 Ganachari, *Nationalism and Social Reform*, 55.

39 *Abstract of proceedings*, 9, 374.

40 *Abstract of proceedings*, 9, 374.

41 Donogh, *A Treatise*, 11.

seen the term used by judges and prosecutors, often interchangeably with “dissatisfaction.”⁴² On August 16, 1870, the bill was formally introduced to the Legislative Council by Stephen and referred to a select committee for further consideration.⁴³ It immediately met with public criticism. On August 24, the *Times of India* reprinted an article, originally published in *Native Opinion* that criticized the proposed amendment.⁴⁴ The article quoted Stephen’s claim in the Legislative Council session of August 2, 1870, that the Indian Code was “a far better [. . .] system of criminal law [than] any of the systems in force in England, France or America.” Why then, the author questioned, should such a refined code of laws undergo “a change of such vital importance?”

Further criticism of the proposed sedition law came from the British Indian Association. The association had been founded in 1851 by conservative Hindu scholar Radhakanta Deb and frequently petitioned British authorities to reform their rule over the subcontinent.⁴⁵ In the summer of 1870, the committee of the association, noting that “the whole of the Indian Press protested vehemently against the clause,” warned that the proposed section “would seriously interfere with the liberty of speech and writing of the public.”⁴⁶ The statement appealed to Stephen and others “nurtured under the free institutions of their native land” to embrace freedom of the press in India and cautioned that the law was “liable to great abuses in times of political ferment.” The British Indian Association’s statement also criticized a “point of difference” between English and Indian law. The English law, the statement insisted, punished an overt act, whereas the Indian law would punish even an “intention” to do such an act: “The experiences of England have always been a guide in matters of legislation in India and it may fairly be asked whether there is any law in force in that country analogous to the one proposed for India? The Committee are aware of none.” The association further argued that even in Ireland, which was in a “similar political relation to England” as India, no comparable sedition law existed.⁴⁷

42 Donogh, *A Treatise*, 12–32.

43 *Abstract of proceedings*, 9, 370.

44 “Penal Code Amendments,” *Times of India*, August 24, 1870, The British Newspaper Archive, <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0002850/18700824/101/0003>. The original publication of the article in *Native Opinion* is no longer available.

45 See British Indian Association, *Petition of the British Indian Association to the House of Commons: On various subjects connected with Indian administration* (Calcutta: C.H. Manuel, 1860).

46 P. N. Singh Roy, ed., *Chronicle of the British Indian Association, 1851–1952* (Calcutta: British Indian Association, 1965), 60. The exact date of the committee’s statement has not been recorded. It must have been published between August 2 and November 25, 1870. Further sections of the original statement are documented in the Council’s proceedings. See *Abstract of proceedings*, 9, 437–453.

47 *Abstract of proceedings*, 9, 449.

The British Indian Association's critique of the sedition law sought to expose the inconsistencies in liberal imperialism. The association praised the "free institutions" of Great Britain and questioned why its liberal practices might be outlawed in India by those who themselves had lived under them, thus highlighting the idea of "difference" that shaped the colonial rule around the globe. In comparing India to Ireland, which also found itself under British colonial rule, the association sought to further question sedition legislation within the imperial framework, by highlighting the unequal treatment of sedition across the British Empire.

Sedition across the Empire

As claimed by the British Indian Association, the English Treason Acts of 1661 and 1848 indeed punished acts rather than mere intent, but across the British Empire, "seditious libel" could be prosecuted under common law. Seditious libel, or, if spoken, "seditious words," described any speech, spoken or published, "with seditious intention," the exact definition of which could vary depending on the case and the presiding judge.⁴⁸ In 1868, the Attorney-General for Ireland charged two Irish publishers, Sullivan and Pigott, editors of the Dublin-based weekly newspapers *The Irishman* and *Weekly News*, with seditious libel.⁴⁹ The two papers had published a series of articles and woodcuts that, in the eyes of the prosecution, "represent[ed] Hibernia cast upon the ground, held down by the violent hand of England."⁵⁰ The case in Ireland provides an important point of comparison to India, then as it does now, in the globe-spanning justice system of the British Empire, in which legislation and case law would be tracked, compared, and cited across the Empire by judges, lawyers, and officials alike. The trial of the two publishers was presided over by John David Fitzgerald and decided by a Grand Jury for the County of Dublin. Fitzgerald began his statement to the jury by pointing out the extreme rarity of any prosecution of seditious libel and recounted the tradition of "complete liberty of the Press in Great Britain and Ireland."⁵¹ "If the law of libel was carried out in the full strictness of its letter," he noted, "it would materially interfere with the freedom of the press."⁵² He also pointed out a core flaw in the division of legitimate and illegal criticism: "It is open to the community and to the Press to complain of a grievance. Well, the mere assertion of a grievance tends to create a discontent, which, in a sense, may

48 Donogh, *A Treatise*, 10.

49 R v. Sullivan, [1868] 11 Cox 44; R v. Pigott, [1868] 11 Cox 60.

50 Donogh, *A Treatise*, 18.

51 Donogh, *A Treatise*, 13–14.

52 Donogh, *A Treatise*, 18.

be said to be seditious.”⁵³

This issue had also been raised by James Fitzjames Stephen in the Legislative Council, who had pointed out that disaffection, in the broad definition of the colonial state, could be incited without any intention to do so.⁵⁴ After all, a pure statement of fact could make a group of subjects angry at their government and thus create disaffection. Stephen and Fitzgerald both believed, however, that sedition, no matter how undefinable in theory, would be apparent to any jury.⁵⁵ Stephen further argued that material that might represent legitimate criticism in calm times could, in times of turmoil, be considered seditious.⁵⁶ Similarly, Fitzgerald drew upon the recent Fenian Rising of 1867 when he urged the jury to consider that:

If the country was free from political excitement and disaffection, such articles [. . .] might be free from danger and comparatively innocent, but in a time of political trouble and commotion, when the country [is] overrun by the emissaries of a treasonable conspiracy [. . .] publication of articles advocating the views and objects of that conspiracy seems to admit but of one interpretation.⁵⁷

Sedition, in the understanding of Stephen and Fitzgerald, was a fluid crime that was defined by colonial security concerns and the perceptions of government, prosecution, judge and jury. In this understanding, the freedom to criticise the government was not an inherent right but might be granted by the state under the right circumstances. Both defendants were found guilty.

The next charge of sedition under common law occurred in 1886, 16 years after the passing of section 124A in India and 18 years after the cases in Ireland. Socialist orator John Burns, later MP and member of the Privy Council, was accused, among others, of having delivered a seditious speech to a group of unemployed workers, who then proceeded to riot and cause material damages in London’s West End.⁵⁸ The prosecution argued that while the defendants did not “directly incite the crowd to cause such disturbances [. . .] they must have been aware of, and were answerable for, the natural results of the language they used.”⁵⁹ The presiding judge, Justice Cave, explained the legal precedent around sedition and attempted to define the

53 Donogh, *A Treatise*, 18.

54 *Abstract of proceedings*, 9, 442.

55 Donogh, *A Treatise*, 18.

56 *Abstract of proceedings*, 9, 374.

57 Donogh, *A Treatise*, 15–16.

58 *R v. Burns*, [1886] 16 Cox 355.

59 Donogh, *A Treatise*, 22.

relation between intention and effect in the case of sedition. The incitement of disaffection was separated from its success or failure, so any attempt to cause sedition was criminal, but the question of what should happen when there was disaffection, but not necessarily intent, remained. Lacking a clear answer under English common law, Cave turned to Stephen. Citing Stephen's *History of the Criminal Law of England*,⁶⁰ Cave argued that seditious intent could not just be derived from the occurrence of "disaffection" or disturbances: "It is one thing to speak with the distinct intention to produce disturbances, and another thing to speak recklessly and violently of what is likely to produce disturbances."⁶¹

It is worthy of note here, that Cave's description of Stephen's views on seditious intent are at odds with the views expressed by Stephen to the Legislative Council. In his defence of the proposed legislation on November 25, 1870, Stephen had claimed that intent should be easy to infer in most cases and that, when it came to the risk of unfair punishment of journalists who had expressed criticism without seditious intent, "men must be content to take the risks incidental to their profession."⁶² While Stephen's interpretation of sedition in his *History of the Criminal Law of England*, which Cave followed, allowed for the unintended outcomes of government criticism, his interpretation delivered to the Legislative Council did not. To Stephen, a suspect might accidentally contribute to unrest through his words in Britain without intending to do so. In India, such an intention could simply be assumed wherever "disaffection" had occurred. Having agreed on the "legitimate" nature of the criticisms uttered by the orators in the case against Burns and noting the lack of clear intent to incite disturbances, the jury found Burns and his fellow defendants not guilty.

Stephen had been partially correct, when he claimed in 1870 that his proposal "improved and condensed the existing English law on the subject."⁶³ The provisions of 124A encapsulated the application of sedition under common law, where judges were required to furnish their own definition of sedition and juries could freely decide to what extent criticism of the government ought to be allowed. As Fitzgerald claimed in the Irish case of 1868, in sedition trials "the law casts upon the jury the determination of both law and fact."⁶⁴ In this sense, section 124A merely codified existing English case-law. As the trial of John Burns shows however, judges and juries could, where colonial insecurities were not concerned, also emphasize the right

60 James Fitzjames Stephen, *A History of the Criminal Law of England* (London: Macmillan, 1883).

61 Donogh, *A Treatise*, 27.

62 *Abstract of proceedings*, 9, 450.

63 *Abstract of proceedings*, 9, 438.

64 Donogh, *A Treatise*, 14.

to criticize the Crown, even when such criticism might support instances of disaffection or disturbances. Naturally, jury selection also mattered. The members of Irish Grand Juries, like the Grand Jury for the County of Dublin, which ruled in the case of 1868, were chosen among wealthy landowners. In India, juries disproportionately included white jurors who tended to vote along colour lines.

In Britain, the idea of sedition had been gradually weakened, as freedom of expression for English men came to be recognized as a core value of English law over the course of the 18th century,⁶⁵ a transformation that was, once again, affirmed in court in the case against Burns. While this tradition was acknowledged in Ireland, considerations of colonial rule weakened concerns for the freedom of the press. In India, the change in sedition rulings found only symbolic consideration. In his defence of section 124A, Stephen refused to acknowledge this transformation, but rather sought to negate the difference between the English and the colonial spheres.⁶⁶ Why should the Indian press fear the sedition law, Stephen asked, when the “English papers in this country” were happy to publish about “every man, every measure, every principle which they thought it right to discuss” under the same law?⁶⁷ Moreover, he claimed, undue press censorship would be “altogether repugnant [. . .] to the habits in which English public men were trained up.”⁶⁸ Instead of emphasizing colonial “difference,” as Justice Norman had done in the case against Amir and Hashmadad Khan, two alleged supporters of the “Wahhabi Conspiracy,” Stephen sought to obfuscate the hierarchy of colonizers and colonized. By insisting that the law of the British Empire was one and the same, anywhere and for anyone, the authoritarian character of colonial rule and colonial anti-sedition legislation could be reconciled with liberal visions of imperial justice. In Stephen’s narrative, 124A was introduced as a matter of due diligence, a simplified and improved version of what should already have been in place. The Indian press, having witnessed the brutal reprisals following the rebellion of 1857 or the attempts by colonial officials to suppress alleged “Wahhabi Conspiracies,” rejected these claims. Like in the cases against the Wahhabi “conspirators,” protests invoked a liberal critique of colonial rule that sought to demonstrate the different shapes the law would take for colonizer and colonized.⁶⁹

65 Kumar, “Indian sedition law,” 488–489.

66 *Abstract of proceedings*, 9, 450.

67 *Abstract of proceedings*, 9, 451.

68 *Abstract of proceedings*, 9, 451.

69 For the protests in the “Great Wahhabi case,” see Stephens, “The Phantom Wahhabi.” A similar critique was voiced when the Vernacular Press Act of 1878 curtailed criticism of the government in Indian-language newspapers, except English papers. The Act was repealed in 1881 by the liberal viceroy, Lord Ripon. See Chatterjee, *Nation and Fragments*, 24–26.

Section 124A on trial

It would take 31 years for section 124A to be used in a trial, perhaps an indication of the extreme unpopularity of the law. The colonial government, aware of its controversial nature, may have chosen to avoid the use of the law. Finally, in 1891, Jogendra Chunder Bose was indicted along with three fellow staffers of the Bengali weekly newspaper *Bangavasi* for the publication of several articles that had criticised the passing of the Age of Consent Act (1891) and British rule in general.⁷⁰ “The English ruler is our Lord and Master,” one of the articles claimed, “[. . .] he has the rifle and bayonet and slanders the Hindu from the might of the gun.”⁷¹ The articles depicted colonial rule to be fundamentally authoritarian and subversive to Hindu values. At the same time however, they did not call for resistance against the British and explicitly rejected rebellion.⁷² Nevertheless, the prosecution insisted that the articles did not amount to reasonable criticism, but rather attempted to incite disaffection.⁷³ The Counsel for the Defence quoted Fitzgerald’s opinion that, in seditious cases, the jury decided both law and fact. He reminded the jury of the statements made by Stephen in the Legislative Council and argued that the freedom of the “native press” had been affirmed by the government repeatedly. In contradiction to Stephen, the defence attacked the concept of disaffection and disapprobation, arguing that the two words were effectively synonymous.⁷⁴ Criticism could not simply be rated along a scale, where one end was legitimate disapprobation of government measures and the other seditious disaffection. Instead, a “direct incitement to rebellion” should be required to convict.⁷⁵ The Crown, on the other hand, argued that:

The intention of the articles in referring to famines and high prices and charging the Government with persecuting the Hindu religion was to make the people discontented and dissatisfied. [It is] always dangerous to excite the religious feelings of people [. . .] surely the public peace is imperilled.⁷⁶

The presiding judge, Justice Petheram, rejected the claims made by the defence on the definition of disaffection and disapprobation: “Disaffection means a feeling contrary to affection, in other words dislike or hatred. It is sufficient [. . .] to excite feelings of ill-will towards the Government and to hold

⁷⁰ Queen-Empress v. Jogendra Chunder Bose and Others, (1892) ILR 19 Cal 35.

⁷¹ Donogh, *A Treatise*, 38. All quotes from the vernacular newspapers *Bangavasi* and *Kesari* are taken from court-ordered translations into English by unknown translators.

⁷² Queen-Empress v. Jogendra Chunder Bose and Others, (1892) ILR 19 Cal 35.

⁷³ Donogh, *A Treatise*, 39.

⁷⁴ Queen-Empress v. Jogendra Chunder Bose and Others, (1892) ILR 19 Cal 35.

⁷⁵ Donogh, *A Treatise*, 39.

⁷⁶ Donogh, *A Treatise*, 39.

it up to the hatred and contempt of the people.”⁷⁷ Here Petheram followed traditional phrasing in older English case-law and ignored the definition that Stephen had suggested. Petheram also weakened the role of seditious intent, when he addressed the jury, stating:

You will have to consider not only the intent of the person who wrote and disseminated the articles [. . .] but the probable effect of the language indulged in. Then you will have to consider the relations between the Government and the people, and having considered the peculiar position of the Government and the consequence to it of any well-organized disaffection, you will have to decide whether there is an attempt [. . .] of exciting the feelings of the people till they become disaffected.⁷⁸

This definition removed the need to prove intent or the ability to demonstrate lack of intent, as was done in the case against Burns and replaced these considerations with the “probable effect” of criticism, which, in the context of colonial anxieties, could always be construed to be disaffection.⁷⁹ The “peculiar position” of the colonial government, the supposedly catastrophic consequences of sedition, and the “excitable religious nature” of the colonized population, could be used to argue that disaffection was the probable result of virtually any form of government criticism. This interpretation seems to echo Fitzgerald’s warning that if seditious libel were interpreted strictly, the “mere assertion of a grievance tends to create a discontent, which, in a sense, may be said to be seditious.”⁸⁰ The emphasis on feared religious backlash exposed a key point of imperial fragility: the counsel for the Crown had evoked the ostensibly excitable nature of its Hindu subjects. Religion was once again a focal point of alleged anti-colonial disaffection, just as it had been in 1857 and in 1870.⁸¹ The discussion around the alleged intent to excite disaffection had thus been moved away from the specific statements made in the paper and unto a discussion of the colonized populace, which was alleged to be irrational and vulnerable to agitation. Despite the reframing of 124A by Petheram, the jury could not agree on a verdict and the accused were released. A retrial was ordered by Petheram, but the charges were dropped after an apology from *Bangavasi*. Petheram’s interpretation of sedition, however, survived the court proceedings and would be taken up and expanded upon in subsequent sedition cases.⁸²

77 Donogh, *A Treatise*, 39–40.

78 Donogh, *A Treatise*, 40–41.

79 Bhatia, *Offend, Shock, or Disturb*, 85.

80 Donogh, *A Treatise*, 18.

81 Agathocleous, “Criticism on Trial,” 445.

82 Ganachari, *Nationalism and Social Reform*, 58.

On June 22, 1897, William Charles Rand, the sanitation commissioner of Pune, was shot alongside his escort, Lt. Charles Ayerst. The attack had been carried out by a group of brothers from Pune, who disapproved of the commissioner's draconian measures to curtail the spread of the bubonic plague.⁸³ In addition to the hunt for the perpetrators of the shooting, the *Times of India* demanded punishment for alleged agitators, who, through their criticism of the government measures, were accused of having contributed to the killings.⁸⁴ Bal Gangadhar Tilak, a prominent critic of Commissioner Rand, quickly drew the ire of the Anglo-Indian press for several articles in the Marathi-language newspaper *Kesari*, of which he was the editor in chief and, following a public campaign against him, became the suspect in India's second trial under 124A.⁸⁵ The object of the case against Tilak were two writings on Shijavi (1630–1680), the founder of the Maratha Empire.⁸⁶ In the two texts, Shijavi's rebellion against the established order and his killing of the general Afzal Khan during negotiations between the two, are reframed into a legitimate quest for self-rule.⁸⁷ Both works argue that violence, under certain circumstances, can be justified or, at the very least, cannot be judged by the usual moral and legal frameworks.⁸⁸ The texts appear to indirectly lambast oppression under colonial rule and to question the illegitimacy of anti-colonial violence.

The prosecution was handed a difficult case against Tilak. Neither text explicitly called for resistance against the British and Tilak had repeatedly condemned the act of violence against Rand.⁸⁹ As such, the conditions for a conviction under 124A as set out by Stephen in 1870, namely that disaffection required support for a removal of the established government, were not met. Instead, the prosecution and the presiding judge, Arthur Strachey, once again utilized an expanded definition of disaffection. Tilak argued in court that his criticism was not incompatible with loyalty to the government, and that he had in no way advocated to overthrow it.⁹⁰ Strachey, however, disagreed with the statement and instructed the jury that “the amount or intensity of disaffection [was] immaterial,”⁹¹ when it came to determining seditious intent,

83 I. J. Catanach, “‘The Gendered Terrain of Disaster’?: India and the Plague, c. 1896–1918,” *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 30, no. 2 (2007): 248.

84 Ganachari, *Nationalism and Social Reform*, 60.

85 Sukeshi Kamra, “Law and Radical Rhetoric in British India: The 1897 Trial of Bal Gangadhar Tilak,” *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 39, no. 3 (2016): 549.

86 Queen-Empress v. Bal Gangadhar Tilak, (1898) ILR 22 Bom 112.

87 Kamra, “Law and Radical Rhetoric,” 553.

88 Kamra, “Law and Radical Rhetoric,” 554.

89 Tilak stated in court: “We do not hold that bomb throwing is not a criminal act and is not reprehensible. We condemn it.” Quoted in Kamra, “Law and Radical Rhetoric,” 555.

90 Ganachari, *Nationalism and Social Reform*, 60.

91 Ganachari, *Nationalism and Social Reform*, 60.

and that disaffection “simply [meant] the absence of affection.”⁹² Justice Strachey’s interpretation, in which any criticism deemed to lack “affection” for the government could be seen as an expression of disloyalty, quickly came to be referred to by the press as “Strachey’s law” and faced widespread criticism in Indian papers.⁹³ Nevertheless, Tilak was found guilty and sentenced to a prison term of 18 months. The European majority in the jury had voted to convict and overruled the three Indian jurors.⁹⁴

In 1898, the Legislative Council moved to amend section 124A.⁹⁵ The updated section criminalized the incitement of “hatred, contempt [. . .] disloyalty and all feelings of enmity” towards the government. Members of the council also heavily utilized narratives of civilizational differences between colonizers and the colonized.⁹⁶ The presiding member of the select committee, Mackenzie Dalzell Chalmers, stated that Stephen had introduced 124A to “assimilate the law of India to the law of England as regards the offence of sedition.”⁹⁷ The planned amendment, he argued, would now bring sedition “clearly into accord with English law.”⁹⁸ Others however, Chalmers conceded, had claimed:

That the proposed clause goes further than English law. But after all, these arguments are more or less academic [. . .] How much license of speech can be safely allowed is a question of time and place. [. . .] Language may be tolerated in England which it is unsafe to tolerate in India [. . .] It is clear that a sedition law which is adequate for a people ruled by a government of its own nationality and faith may be inadequate [. . .] for a country under foreign rule and inhabited by many races, with diverse customs and conflicting creeds.⁹⁹

Conclusion

In the decades that followed the Tilak trial, charges of sedition would remain one of the central tools to suppress the nationalist movement.¹⁰⁰ In the

92 Quoted in J. Minnatur, “Freedom of the Press in India: Constitutional Provisions and their Application” (PhD diss., The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1961), 31.

93 Ganachari, *Nationalism and Social Reform*, 61.

94 Kamra, “Law and Radical Rhetoric,” 550.

95 Bhatia, *Offend, Shock, or Disturb*, 86–87.

96 Tanya Agathocleous, “Reading for the Political Plot: A Genealogy of Disaffection,” *Criticism* 61, no. 4 (2019): 577.

97 Donogh, *A Treatise*, 61.

98 Donogh, *A Treatise*, 61.

99 Donogh, *A Treatise*, 64–65.

100 Morton, “Terrorism, Literature, and Sedition,” 203.

immediate aftermath of the amendment of 1898, the Bombay government alone prosecuted half a dozen newspapers. Following the Partition of Bengal in 1905, dramatic performances (1905), gatherings (1908) and works of literature (1910) could be deemed seditious.¹⁰¹ It is worth considering, if claims of colonial difference were inherent to the prosecution of “sedition,” and how section 124 came to grow into “the prince among the political sections of the Indian Penal Code designed to suppress the liberty of the citizen” that Gandhi decried in 1922.¹⁰² In Great Britain, consecutive court decisions had placed great emphasis on the freedom of the press and the importance of public criticism. In the case against John Burns, a jury ruled in favour of the defendant, despite the riots that followed his speech. Ireland and India, on the other hand, were described in court as perpetually insecure and vulnerable to conspiracy and agitation. Despite frequent claims to the contrary, the “state of the country” and its colonized population, that were enshrined in the colonial interpretations of sedition, opened the door for racial, religious, or cultural narratives of difference. These authoritarian cracks in the liberal façade of British rule accompanied perceived ruptures in colonial stability. In Ireland, prosecution charges followed the Fenian Rising. The *Bangavasi* case in India came after widespread protest against the Age of Consent Bill and was shaped by the colonial fear of religious incitement brought on by the rebellion of 1857. The changing relationship between universalism and “difference” occurred in a time of crisis: the British Empire found itself rocked by the rebellions and uprisings in India (1857), Jamaica (1865) and Ireland (1867). As Karuna Mantena has argued, against increasing resistance, “universalism easily gave way to harsh attitudes about the intractable differences between people, the inscrutability of other ways of life, and the ever-present potential for racial and cultural conflict.”¹⁰³ In the court room, a liberal ideal of the “complete liberty of the Press” gave way to the increasingly paranoid concerns of the colonial security state.

101 Ganachari, *Nationalism and Social Reform*, 68–69.

102 Morton, “Terrorism, Literature, and Sedition,” 203.

103 Karuna Mantena, “Mill and the Imperial Predicament,” in *J.S. Mill’s Political Thought: A Bicentennial Reassessment*, ed. Nadia Urbinati and Alex Zakaras (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 299.

“We Got Another Mexican—but He’s Dead”: How the Portrayal of the Texas Rangers in Print Media Minimised Their Racial Violence towards Mexicans, 1910–1919

ABSTRACT

Scholars of racially motivated violence in the United States have focused largely on acts against African Americans, neglecting the incidents faced by Mexicans, particularly those at the hands of the Texas Rangers. This paper explores the group’s brutal acts and their justification in Texas newspapers, glorification in East Coast publications and total omission from a New York magazine claiming to be a “record of the darker races.” It argues that the racial violence against Mexicans was minimised as a result of its coverage in US print media from 1910 to 1919.

BY

Alex Loftus

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Alex Loftus recently graduated from the University of Exeter with a BA in History. His work examines racial violence against Mexicans in the United States, with a particular focus on the state of Texas.

Introduction

“We got another Mexican—but he’s dead.”¹ This was the official statement of Texas Ranger Captain James Fox following his investigation into a series of raids just north of Brownsville, Texas, in August 1915. Fox found a Mexican man on a ranch in the area and, believing him to be connected to the raids, killed him. The quote was flippantly offered over the phone to a journalist of *The Austin Statesman and Tribune*.² This paper examines the ways in which the Texas Rangers were portrayed in print media between 1910 and 1919, and consequently how these portrayals served to minimise the brutal, racially motivated violence they committed towards Mexicans in Texas. It argues that the publishers of print media misrepresented the real-world actions of the Texas Rangers, in order to satisfy the demands of their respective audiences, which ultimately minimised the violence they committed.

Texas is the state with the third-highest number of total lynchings, and the most perpetrated against Mexicans, with the Texas Rangers being the state’s primary perpetrator. Despite a gradual decline in lynchings nationwide from the 1890s, the 1910s marked a considerable increase in the number of those against Mexicans.³ This notable rise in lynchings, in a state infamous for such horrific acts, did not gain significant press coverage at the time, nor did it carve out a place anywhere in US history or popular memory. As a result, 1910s Texas is the perfect case study to examine how racial violence against Mexicans in the US was minimised.

For most of the nineteenth century, the Texas Rangers were a decentralised group of citizen-soldiers who took it upon themselves to squash a perceived “Indian threat” to Anglo-American westward expansion. This changed in 1874 when the state legislature turned the group into official lawmen. The vigilantes, who had largely existed to commit racially motivated violence, were incorporated into the Texas justice system.

This paper does not use the terms, or variations of, Hispanic and Latino as they were not used contemporarily, and refer to a broader demographic not being studied here.⁴ Instead, Mexican is used to encompass all individuals

1 “‘We Got Another Mexican,’ Phones Ranger Captain: Indications Point to Early End of Disturbance That Has Cost Many Lives,” *The Austin Statesman and Tribune*, August 15, 1915, 1, <https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/we-got-another-mexican-phones-ranger-captain/docview/1617247052/se-2>.

2 “We Got Another,” *Austin Statesman and Tribune*, 1.

3 Nicholas Villanueva, *The Lynching of Mexicans in the Texas Borderlands* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2017), 4.

4 William D. Carrigan and Clive Webb, *Forgotten Dead: Mob Violence Against Mexicans in the United States, 1848–1928* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), xi.

who identify as Mexican nationals, Mexican immigrants living in Texas, and the descendants of Mexicans (mixed or otherwise).⁵ Due to the exclusion of Mexicans from US records which classified people as either Black or White, it is challenging enough to identify a person in historical sources as Mexican and further specificity is often neither practical nor possible.⁶ Additionally, the Texas Rangers and other perpetrators of racially motivated violence did not differentiate between these subgroups, attacking them as a unified identity linked to Mexico through race or nationality.

The usage of the term “lynching” has, in recent years, received more debate among academics. Previously, scholars have used the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)’s 1940 definition, but this has been largely dropped due to its limitations.⁷ For instance, it insists that the violence must be extra-legal but does not define the term, so it creates a grey area for police brutality which goes unpunished by a corrupt and institutionally racist organisation, such as the Texas Rangers. Historian Christopher Waldrep convincingly argues that the term is incredibly culturally significant and outlines how not using it can shift public opinion to justify racial violence.⁸ Nicholas Villanueva Jr., professor of ethnic studies, builds on this and believes that to hold all perpetrators of racial violence against Mexicans accountable, scholars should use the term to broadly encompass all executions supposedly carried out in the name of justice.⁹ This paper uses Villanueva Jr.’s inclusive definition, whilst also using mob violence as a broader term to also encompass acts which did not lead to death.

Historians William D. Carrigan and Clive Webb pioneered the field dedicated to mob violence against Mexicans, first with their 2003 article and then with the 2013 book *Forgotten Dead*.¹⁰ They were the first lynching scholars to approach Texas as a state that borders Mexico, and not as the “West of the

5 Scholars such as Harris and Sadler also use the term *Tejano* to describe a Mexican resident of Texas. See Charles H. Harris and Louis R. Sadler, *The Texas Rangers and the Mexican Revolution: The Bloodiest Decade, 1910–1920* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 2007), 7.

6 Neil Foley, *The White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 5.

7 According to the NAACP’s website, “a lynching is the public killing of an individual who has not received any due process.” See NAACP, “What Are Lynchings?,” History of Lynching in America, accessed February 12, 2023, <https://naacp.org/find-resources/history-explained/history-lynching-america#:~:text=A%20lynching%20is%20the%20public,under%20the%20pretext%20of%20justice>.

8 Christopher Waldrep, *The Many Faces of Judge Lynch: Extralegal Violence and Punishment in America* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 4.

9 Villanueva, *Lynching of Mexicans*, 6.

10 Carrigan and Webb, *Forgotten Dead*; William D. Carrigan and Clive Webb, “The Lynching of Persons of Mexican Origin or Descent in the United States, 1848 to 1928,” *Journal of Social History* 37, no. 2 (2003): 411–438, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3790404>.

South.”¹¹ Prior to their work, there were two subsections of scholars studying violence in Texas: There were traditional scholars of lynching who engaged with racial violence, but only by viewing Texas as an extension of the South, which therefore overlooked violence against Mexicans.¹² And there were scholars studying violence in Texas as a Western state who neglected race as a factor. For example, Richard Maxwell Brown, the “foremost” scholar on Western violence, failed to include race in his six key reasons behind violence in the West, and historian Philip Dray’s award-winning 2002 book on broader US lynching, which includes a section dedicated to Texas, does not mention Mexicans.¹³ In 1949, the journalist Carey McWilliams said “vast research” was required to estimate the number of Mexican lynchings before the field could blossom; half a century later, Carrigan and Webb provided this research.¹⁴ *Forgotten Dead* includes two extensive tables documenting confirmed and unconfirmed lynchings of Mexicans that, while greatly beneficial, highlight the field’s main interdisciplinary struggle. In 2019, sociologists Charles Seguin and David Rigby confessed that social science lynching studies are far behind those of historians.¹⁵ Despite Seguin and Rigby’s attempts to improve this, even their publicly available dataset only allows users to filter for “Black” and “White,” not for “Mexican.”¹⁶ Since 2003, the scholarship has largely continued to work with a revisionist approach to the field of lynching, typically through focused case studies such as those by historians Ronald Hall and Monica Muñoz Martinez.¹⁷ The reputation of the Texas Rangers has been similarly re-assessed, notably by the historians Charles Harris and Louis Sadler. They question the group’s heroic portrayal and draw attention to the violence committed against Mexicans, but largely absolve them of responsibility, instead blaming a lack of pay.¹⁸ Nonetheless, they provide a strong foundation for this paper to take the next step from showing that the Texas Rangers had a significant role in the

11 Foley, *White Scourge*, 3.

12 Foley, *White Scourge*, 1–2; Ronald E. Hall, “They Lynched Mexican-Americans Too: A Question of Anglo Colorism,” *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences* 42, no. 1 (2020): 62.

13 Richard Maxwell Brown, “Violence,” in *The Oxford History of the American West*, ed. Clyde A. Milner, II, Carol A. O’Connor and Martha A. Sandweiss (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 393, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780195112122.003.0012>; James W. Ely, “Review: Strain of Violence: Historical Studies of American Violence and Vigilantism,” *Columbia Law Review* 76, no. 2 (1976): 362; Philip Dray, *At the Hands of Persons Unknown: The Lynching of Black America* (New York: Modern Library, 2003), 518.

14 Carey McWilliams, *North From Mexico: The Spanish-Speaking People of the United States* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1949), 98.

15 Charles Seguin and David Rigby, “National Crimes: A New National Data Set of Lynchings in the United States, 1883 to 1941,” *Sociological Research for a Dynamix World* 5, no.3 (2019): 1.

16 David L. Rigby, “Interactive Map of Lynching, 1883 to 1941, By Race of Victim,” accessed April 3, 2023, https://davidrigbysociology.com/lynching_dot_map.

17 Hall, “They Lynched Mexican-Americans,” 62; Monica Muñoz Martinez, *The Injustice Never Leaves You: Anti-Mexican Violence in Texas* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2018), 9.

18 Harris and Sadler, *Texas Rangers and Mexican Revolution*; Charles H. Harris and Louis R. Sadler, *The Texas Rangers in Transition, from Gunfighters to Criminal Investigators, 1921–1935* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2019).

lynchings of Mexicans to analysing how this role is not more widely known and how it was minimised by print media.

The justice system existed but failed to protect Mexicans. It did not punish Texas Rangers for the lynchings, and its prisons were unable to protect those awaiting trial.¹⁹ American cultural historian Amy Louise Wood famously writes about the “spectacle of lynching,” arguing it was a public display which aimed to instil fear into the targeted group.²⁰ While the Rangers frequently lynched in visible urban settings, there are also numerous instances where the bodily remains of Mexicans were found hidden in areas of woodland.²¹ For almost all lynchings in the historical record, their first mention is in a local newspaper and, excluding a small number which went on to be documented in national publications and governmental records, it is the only proof of their existence.²² Despite this, no scholar has dedicated a study to this source type’s coverage of Mexican lynchings by the Rangers.²³ By beginning with an examination of local newspaper reports in Texas, then expanding the focus to East Coast publications, this paper maps the trajectory of information in US print media, and reflects contemporary attitudes effectively.

The approach employed to use print media as a methodology is largely informed by communication theorist James Carey’s famous 1974 article, which criticises journalism historians for solely focusing on a source’s factual information rather than examining the attitudes, emotions, and expectations of the readership.²⁴ This paper does include information about publishers, but agrees with Carey that a more useful analysis of print media is one which focuses on the content and the audience. It makes use of obituaries which typically face hesitancy from scholars. Sociologists Bridget Fowler and Esperança Bielsa contend that obituaries are more about forgetting than remembrance and that the overwhelming focus on some demographics due to class, gender, race, and profession, serves to undermine them as a source type.²⁵ However, it is this specificity in subject choice that makes them

19 Carrigan and Webb, “Lynching of Persons,” 417.

20 Amy Louise Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle: Witnessing Racial Violence in America, 1890–1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 2.

21 Martinez, *Injustice*, 1; Hall, “They Lynched Mexican-Americans,” 63.

22 Carrigan and Webb, *Forgotten Dead*, 22.

23 It has been studied for African American lynchings, such as in Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle*; Richard M. Perloff, “The Press and Lynchings of African Americans,” *Journal of Black Studies* 30, no. 3 (2000): 315–330, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2645940>; Charles A. Simmons, *The African American Press: A History of News Coverage During National Crises, With Special Reference to Four Black Newspapers, 1827–1965* (North Carolina: McFarland, 2006).

24 For the discussion on Carey’s research, see Nelanthi Hewa, “For the Record: Journalism Recording Technologies from ‘Fish Hooks’ to Frame Rates,” *Journalism Studies* 22, no. 3 (2021): 342–343, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2020.1871400>.

25 Bridget Fowler and Esperança Bielsa, “The Lives We Choose to Remember: A Quantitative

incredibly valuable tools. Kimberly R. Bowman convincingly argues that obituaries reflect the dominant norms and values of a society and that they show what was considered significant to the people within it.²⁶

This paper will begin by examining newspapers within Texas, which racistly portrayed the Mexican population as a significant threat to Anglo-Texans and the Texas Rangers as their only protection. Particularly, the use of the “Mexican situation” as an all-encompassing term to justify racially motivated violence. Then this research will look at newspapers in the states of Georgia and Connecticut, which misrepresent the real Texas Rangers as fictional characters found in dime novels and other works of fiction. It will examine audiences on the East Coast which wanted to believe in the existence of mythic characters of the Old West, causing the Rangers to be presented as heroes. This paper will end by analysing the New York-based magazine, *The Crisis*, the NAACP’s anti-racist magazine. The magazine did not report on any Mexican lynchings in its 110 issues spanning the decade studied, despite its tagline claiming to be a “record of the darker races.”²⁷ This omission, from this type of publication, implies the violence was not occurring, which of course minimises it.

The “Mexican situation”

A theme looming over Texas print media of the 1910s was what they called the “Mexican situation.”²⁸ It refers in part to the Mexican Revolution and the subsequent political destabilisation of Mexico, but also describes the broader Anglo-Texan dissatisfaction towards the state’s Mexican population.²⁹ The broadness of the term gives it its power; its ambiguity masking calls to violence. By examining a single issue of *The Austin Statesman and Tribune* from August 1915, we can see how the “Mexican situation” dominated the narrative. References to Mexico and Mexicans can be found throughout the issue, and they are always framed as components of a wider threat to Anglo-Texans. One article reports on an incident of “outlawry” by a Mexican but extrapolates

Analysis of Newspaper Obituaries,” *The Social Review* 55, no. 2 (2007): 203, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-954X.2007.00702.x>.

26 Kimberly R. Bowman, “History in Memoriam: Analyzing Obituaries to Learn Historical Context,” *The Social Studies* 111, no. 2 (2020): 51, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00377996.2019.1653253>.

27 This was confirmed by analysing all 110 issues published during 1910–1919. See *The Crisis* 1, no. 1–19, no. 2 (1910–1919), Modernist Journals Project, accessed April 29, 2023, <https://modjourn.org/journal/crisis/>.

28 “The Border Situation,” *The Austin Statesman and Tribune*, August 15, 1915, 4, <https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/five-mexican-states-declare-independence/docview/1617248420/se-2>.

29 Harris and Sadler, *Texas Rangers and Mexican Revolution*, 5.

this to be supported ideologically and physically by all Mexican individuals and authorities.³⁰ Another article reports on fifty ranchers who “declare war” on some Mexicans for cattle theft. The ranchers broaden their target to all of Mexico and plan to cross the border, going so far as telling the Mexican governor José María Maytorena to prepare for an attack.³¹ Even news which proves evidence against a unified Mexican conspiracy, such as five Mexican states declaring independence, is framed to intensify Anglo-Texan hatred. It is presented as proof that Mexicans are fiercely territorial and loyal to those they fight with and thus are a threat.³²

Other newspapers perpetuated the “Mexican situation” as a context through which racial violence was minimised. For example, the *El Paso Herald* added provocative headlines to translated Spanish-language Mexican news articles to portray Mexicans as the aggressors, implicitly calling on Anglo-Texans to defend their land. One issue runs with the headline “A Sonora Paper Clamors Against Americans.” It includes the article “Calls on Mexicans to Smite Americans” which demands Mexicans to “rise against” Anglo-Texans.³³ However, a following article on the same page describes only protests against President Porfirio Díaz of Mexico and not Anglo-Texans, and a translated Mexican article in the same issue even clarifies that they knew “the American people as a whole do not approve of the action taken at Rock Springs,” referring to a lynching.³⁴ In Mexico, students led small-scale, peaceful protests against Anglo-Texan racial violence, whilst a much larger section of the population led violent riots against Díaz. The students made speeches and boycotted US businesses, whilst the anti-Díaz riots tried to radically overturn the presidency, leading to hundreds of protestors being arrested.³⁵

30 “Funston Convinced Mexican Officials Behind Disorders,” *The Austin Statesman and Tribune*, August 15, 1915, 1, <https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/funston-convinced-mexican-officials-behind/docview/1617246679/se-2>.

31 “Mexicans Raid Ranch; Cowboys ‘Declare War,’” *The Austin Statesman and Tribune*, August 15, 1915, 1, <https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/mexicans-raid-ranch-cowboys-declare-war/docview/1617247368/se-2>.

32 “Five Mexican States Declare Independence,” *The Austin Statesman and Tribune*, August 15, 1915, 2, <https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/five-mexican-states-declare-independence/docview/1617248420/se-2>.

33 “A Sonora Paper Clamors Against Mexicans,” *El Paso Herald*, November 17, 1910, 1, Chronicling America, <https://www.loc.gov/resource/sn88084272/1910-11-17/ed-1/?sp=4&st=image&r>; “Calls on Mexicans to Smite Americans,” *El Paso Herald*, November 17, 1910, 4, Chronicling America, <https://www.loc.gov/resource/sn88084272/1910-11-17/ed-1/?sp=4&st=image&r>.

34 “Says the Demonstrations are Really Against Diaz,” *El Paso Herald*, November 17, 1910, 4, Chronicling America, <https://www.loc.gov/resource/sn88084272/1910-11-17/ed-1/?sp=4&st=image&r>; “Sonora Paper Berates Yankees,” *El Paso Herald*, November 17, 1910, 4, Chronicling America, <https://www.loc.gov/resource/sn88084272/1910-11-17/ed-1/?sp=4&st=image&r>.

35 Nicholas Villanueva, “Sincerely Yours for Dignified Manhood: Lynching, Violence, and American Masculinity During the Early Years of the Mexican Revolution, 1910–1914,” *Journal of*

This distinction was reported in broader US newspapers, but was not used to contextualise translated articles in Texas publications.³⁶

Further success of newspapers in using the “Mexican situation” as rhetoric to blame a unified Mexican threat for Anglo-Texan problems can be seen in the range of situations for which the phrase was used. As Texas governor Oscar Colquitt neared the end of his second term in 1915, he sought to replace Senator Morris Sheppard as one of the state’s Democratic members of the US Senate. To do this, Colquitt challenged Sheppard to debate the “Mexican situation”; its significance as a campaign point reflecting the magnitude it carried in the state.³⁷ The “Mexican situation” had become the de facto response from Anglo-Texans when they faced any issue involving a Mexican. Therefore, the Texas newspapers were part of the active misrepresentation of Mexicans which antagonised the Anglo-Texan population into believing it needed immediate, violent defence.

An article from the above-mentioned issue of *The Austin Statesman and Tribune* is critical towards the US government for its disregard of the Texas border. It declares they “owe one plain duty to... protect them from a foreign foe,” but they are utterly incapable of doing this.³⁸ A series of articles in a 1911 issue of the *El Paso Herald* portray the US government as weak and ambivalent towards Texas. They claim American president William Howard Taft has “not thought of” Texas, but even if he had, he would be constrained by “inadequate... neutrality laws.”³⁹ These articles show that the state’s newspapers portrayed the federal government as incapable of defending the population from the “Mexican situation.” In his analysis of letters to the governor’s office, Villanueva Jr. concludes that the Anglo-Texan population was largely unhappy with the federal government’s handling of the “Mexican situation.” The Anglo-Texans were frustrated that the government took action in regard to radical political manifestos, but passed no comment on livestock theft and other issues deemed more pressing by Anglo-Texan civilians.⁴⁰ The government did increase their commitment to the border in 1916 when they sent 100,000 troops to Brownsville, Texas, but it was treated as training

the West 49 (2010): 43.

36 Villanueva, “Sincerely Yours,” 43.

37 Patrick Cox, *The First Texas News Barons* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005), 117.

38 “Border Situation,” *Austin Statesman and Tribune*, 4.

39 “Congressman Presents A Complaint: Says El Pasoans Do Not Want Intervention; Has El Paso Letters,” *El Paso Herald*, April 20, 1911, 1, *Chronicling America*, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn88084272/1911-04-20/ed-1/seq-1/>; “Diaz Lays the Blame onto Americans,” *El Paso Herald*, April 20, 1911, 1, *Chronicling America*, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn88084272/1911-04-20/ed-1/seq-1/>; “Mexico Replies to Taft’s Note,” *El Paso Herald*, April 20, 1911, 1, *Chronicling America*, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn88084272/1911-04-20/ed-1/seq-1/>.

40 Villanueva, “Sincerely Yours,” 44.

for the First World War rather than a response to the “Mexican situation.”⁴¹ This further detached Anglo-Texans from the government and increased the demand for violent intervention, which the Texas Rangers happily provided. Additionally, due to the rules of engagement, the government troops were not permitted to cross the border into Mexico, something the Texas Rangers had been doing extra-legally for years.⁴²

After creating a context of demand for mob violence against Mexicans enacted by the Texas Rangers, or at the very least strengthening an existing appeal, the newspapers directly addressed the Texas Rangers’ lynchings and justified their actions. An article from the 1915 issue of *The Austin Statesman and Tribune* outlined above, describes the lynching of a Mexican by Texas Rangers after he resisted arrest. It says the lynching is “another” example that Rangers “will not waste any time on bad Mexicans...if they show any desire” to resist arrest, they will be shot.⁴³ It does not state that they shoot anyone who resists arrest, only the Mexicans who do. The article goes on to attribute a series of crimes to Mexicans, despite acknowledging that they have no evidence to confirm this suspicion.⁴⁴ Furthermore, two articles in an issue of *The Statesman* from 1918 display the different reactions from the Texas Rangers towards Whites and Mexicans. After Texas Ranger Rowe was killed by a number of White draft evaders, it took four days until the suspects were caught and imprisoned.⁴⁵ Whereas Mexican draft evaders who killed a Ranger were caught and killed within 24 hours.⁴⁶ In isolation, these examples might not be sufficient to claim Mexicans received disproportionate and unlawful treatment from the Rangers, but when placed within the broader culture of racial violence, they serve to highlight the systemic discriminatory actions of the Texas Rangers. This behaviour justifies Carrigan and Webb’s description of “state-sanctioned terrorism,” but was not portrayed as such in contemporary Texas newspapers, thus minimising the violence.⁴⁷

Even with the wave of revisionist historiography dedicated to proving that Mexicans were lynched too, the Texas Rangers found ways of hiding

41 Martinez, *Injustice*, 17, 19–20.

42 Linda B. Hall and Don M. Coerver, *Revolution on the Border: The United States and Mexico, 1910–1920* (Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press, 1988), 59.

43 “We Got Another,” *Austin Statesman and Tribune*, 1.

44 “We Got Another,” *Austin Statesman and Tribune*, 1.

45 “White City Deserters Surrender: Alleged Slayers of Texas Ranger Gave Up Last Night, Eleven Men Are Taken, Rangers Have Control of the Former Fugitives,” *The Statesman*, July 16, 1918, 1, <https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/white-city-deserters-surrender/docview/1619621188/se-2>.

46 “Texas Draft Evaders Kill Ranger White,” *The Statesman*, July 13, 1918, 1, <https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/texas-draft-evaders-kill-ranger-white/docview/1619620017/se-2>.

47 Carrigan and Webb, “Lynching of Persons,” 415.

their lynchings in plain sight and so the scale of violence can often be underestimated. This includes the *Ley de Fuga* execution method (which translates as “the law of flight”) where Texas Rangers would capture Mexicans, set them free, and then shoot them for running away.⁴⁸ It is impossible to know the extent of this, but there have been “dozens” of confirmed instances.⁴⁹ Even historian Walter Prescott Webb’s disgustingly glamorous 1935 work on the Rangers’ history acknowledges that *Ley de Fuga* was used.⁵⁰ Historian Monica Muñoz Martinez argues that these actions by the Rangers set a pattern for abuse which led to collusion with mobs and state cover ups.⁵¹

Texas newspapers created an environment, knowingly or not, of the “Mexican situation.” They perpetuated racial hostility by framing all events involving Mexicans or Mexico as part of a wider conspiracy against Anglo-Texans. They led the population to demand intervention, and because they presented the federal government as incapable of doing this, there was a space for the Texas Rangers to exploit. Texas print media’s subsequent coverage of the Rangers directly addressed their lynchings and justified them and, as a result, minimised their racial violence towards Mexicans.

The “Texas cowboy type” and silence in media portrayal

While publications within Texas covered the Rangers’ violence positively, those outside were largely silent. In the case of progressive New York-based magazines, this silence was a purposeful omission and will be covered in due course. On the contrary, magazines in the Eastern states of Georgia and Connecticut reported on the Texas Rangers as heroic characters in stories. This can be seen in obituaries, which glorified the Rangers to an extent that East Coast military personnel did not receive. Also, when these newspapers reported real-world events, they replaced accurate depictions of violence with common tropes, such as the retired cowboy. This misrepresented the real Texas Rangers by creating a heroic fantasy and minimised the violence they committed against Mexicans.

For example, Richard King, a soldier from Georgia, and Bill McDonald, a Texas Ranger, both held the rank of captain and both received obituaries of

48 Martinez, *Injustice*, 11.

49 Andrew R. Graybill, “Anglos, Mexicans, and Rangers in Texas, 1850–1900,” in *Reverberations of Racial Violence: Critical Reflections on the History of the Border*, ed. John Morán González and Sonia Hernández (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2021), 59.

50 Walter Prescott Webb, *The Texas Rangers: A Century of Frontier Defence* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1935), 227.

51 Martinez, *Injustice*, 7.

similar length in Georgia newspapers, but were portrayed very differently.⁵² McDonald was celebrated, with the title describing him as a “noted Texas Ranger and personal friend of several Presidents.”⁵³ King’s obituary received no title and he was portrayed as a soldier instead of a celebrity.⁵⁴ After glossing over McDonald’s personal life, his obituary dedicates itself to glorifying his military career. The passage calls him “famous” for his controlling the “most desperate characters,” and for his part in stopping the “most sensational crimes” on the Mexican border. It states he was known for his “daring” and would not hesitate to “charge Hades with a bucketful of water.”⁵⁵ Meanwhile, King’s obituary is much more personal and emotive. It respectfully mentions his wife and children, and where he was born. It calls him a “brave soldier” who signed up as an officer in the American Civil War but does not talk about individual actions.⁵⁶ The single aspect of McDonald’s life discussed most in his obituary is his suppression of Mexicans—further confirming that the Georgia newspaper knew about the racial violence. But it was framed with a unique honour and glory, bestowed only to the Texas Rangers.

There was an appetite for stories of “frontier violence.”⁵⁷ The newspapers did not want to accuse the cultural icons of committing illegal, racially motivated violence and instead wanted to capitalise on the East Coast demand for Western stories. The real Rangers were portrayed to align with their mythic counterparts. This is further seen in a Connecticut newspaper’s reporting of the Texas Ranger J. McNeel, who came out of retirement to organise a militia to help protect Americans from the Mexican border. It focuses on his “experience in frontier work,” stating his squadron was “trained in frontier service” and represented the “Texas cowboy type.” McNeel deployed his militia in Mexico, where they explored the perceived untamed land and acted as the territorial aggressor.⁵⁸ These are all classic tropes of the American expansionary myth. Alongside this glamorisation, the report fails to address any racial violence, instead choosing to mirror some

52 “Capt. ‘Bill’ M’Donald Crosses Great Divide: Noted Texas Ranger and Personal Friend of Several Presidents,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, January 16, 1918, 4, <https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/capt-bill-mdonald-crosses-great-divide/docview/497249610/se-2>; “Obituary,” *The Brunswick News*, July 8, 1913, 2, *Chronicling America*, <https://gahistoricnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/lccn/sn90052143/1913-07-08/ed-1/seq-2/>.

53 “Capt. ‘Bill’ M’Donald,” *Atlanta Constitution*, 4.

54 “Obituary,” *Brunswick News*, 2.

55 “Capt. ‘Bill’ M’Donald,” *Atlanta Constitution*, 4.

56 “Obituary,” *Brunswick News*, 2.

57 Stephen J. Mexal, “‘My Dear Judge’: Owen Wister’s Virginian, Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., and Natural Law,” *Western American Literature* 51 (2016): 280, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44668475>.

58 “Mounted Scouts: Former Texas Ranger Raising Squadron of Cavalry,” *The Hartford Courant*, May 1, 1914, 10, <https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/mounted-scouts/docview/552500146/se-2>.

of the most successful Western novels of the time, such as *A Texas Ranger* by Napoleon Jennings and Owen Wister's *The Virginian*.⁵⁹ The former is written in the first-person perspective of a Texas Ranger, describing how his captain came out of retirement to heroically lead a squadron into Mexico; the captain's vast experience was vital to the mission's success.⁶⁰ Although Wister's novel although did not centre on a formerly retired Texas Ranger, it explored the idea of a changing West and the protagonist's struggle to adapt.⁶¹ Both books long for the days of the frontier and laud the actions of earlier Anglo-Texans, reflecting an audience that craved mythic depictions of the Texas Rangers.

The supposedly factual Connecticut news article on McNeel mirroring the fictional heroic cowboy image demonstrates the glorification of the Texas Rangers; when a lawless frontier needed protection, the retired Texas Rangers were the only men up for the job. The consequence of this tasteless rhetoric was a lack of understanding on the East Coast of the true racially motivated violence faced by Mexicans. This was undoubtedly a major factor in the minimising of the lynchings nationwide.

In contrast, for New York-based magazines, the media silence surrounding coverage of the racial violence committed by Texas Rangers against Mexicans was even more overt. Instead of actively misrepresenting the events, as was the case in other East Coast newspapers, the magazines simply refused to discuss them. This omission is particularly consequential as these magazines were expected to criticise the period's social issues. Therefore, the silence implies to its readers that the racial violence was not happening or was simply not worth their attention.

The first of these publications is *The Masses* (1911-1917), a socialist magazine that was shut down by the federal government because of its criticism of the government's decision to implement conscription for the First World War. It only discussed the racial violence in Texas in one brief series, and this was to satisfy its anti-establishment agenda. From March to June 1911, *The Masses* published the four-part series of articles sharing the title "Revolutionary Mexico."⁶² Each issue contained a longread on the current US-

59 "Mounted Scouts," *Hartford Courant*, 10; Napoleon Jennings, *A Texas Ranger* (New York: Charles Scribners Sons, 1899); Owen Wister, *The Virginian* (New York: Gramercy Books, 1902).

60 Jennings, *A Texas Ranger*.

61 Wister, *The Virginian*.

62 Carlo De Fornaro, "Revolutionary Mexico: Diaz and the Revolution, I," *The Masses* 1, no. 3 (1911): 5-6, <https://modjournal.org/issue/bdr526921/>; Carlo De Fornaro, "Revolutionary Mexico: The Fighting Parties in Mexico, II," *The Masses* 1, no. 4 (1911): 13-14, <https://modjournal.org/issue/bdr526732/>; Carlo De Fornaro, "Revolutionary Mexico: American Intervention—What For?, III," *The Masses* 1, no. 5 (1911): 11, <https://modjournal.org/issue/bdr526753/>; Carlo De Fornaro, "Revolutionary Mexico: Tomorrow in Mexico, IV," *The Masses* 1, no. 6 (1911): 9, [https://](https://modjournal.org/issue/bdr526753/)

Mexico geopolitical situation: the first two focused on the events in Mexico, and the final two on the impact this had on the US. The series writer Carlo de Fornaro began his career in US newspapers but moved to Mexico in 1906 where he became editor of a newspaper incredibly critical of President Díaz. Fornaro served an eight-month prison sentence for criminal libel and later returned to the US and wrote for *The Masses*.⁶³ Since the publication did not contain advertisements and received all its funding from subscribers, it relied on provocative articles to lure in new readers.⁶⁴ Benoît Tadié believes the magazine would cover any topic, provided the article would sufficiently peddle anti-government and anti-capitalist rhetoric.⁶⁵ Therefore, it can be inferred that the editorial board's sympathetic stance towards the Mexican people and the racial violence they faced was only to satisfy the publication's agenda. The "Revolutionary Mexico" series was refreshing for the time in its portrayal of Mexicans, which validated the Mexicans' criticisms of Díaz and pointed out their racially demonised position in the US. Despite this, the series' angle was not to condemn the Texas Rangers but to demand socialism and relate the violence to the White readership.⁶⁶ Therefore, the "Revolutionary Mexico" articles should be viewed as anti-government, and not pro-Mexican. The fact that the series remains a significant piece of pro-Mexican coverage in 1910s US print media, illustrates how little representation the violence received in New York magazines.⁶⁷

Another magazine in discussion is *The Crisis* (1910-1932)—the official magazine of the NAACP. In addition to issues concerning African Americans, *The Crisis* covered issues faced by Native Americans, Chinese immigrants, Indian immigrants, and many other racial minorities across the US.⁶⁸ Its tagline even claimed to be a "record of the darker races," but Mexicans received no

modjourn.org/issue/bdr526774/.

63 "Artists Welcome Fornaro From Jail: Friends Greet Him Warmly on His Release After Eight Months on Blackwell's Island," *The New York Times*, October 4, 1910, 6, <https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/artists-welcome-fornaro-jail/docview/97029482/se-2>.

64 Benoît Tadié, "The Masses Speak: The Masses (1911–17); The Liberator (1918–24); New Masses (1926–48); and Masses & Mainstream (1948–63)," in *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines: Volume II: North America 1894–1960*, ed. Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 835.

65 Tadié, "The Masses Speak," 833–836.

66 De Fornaro, "Revolutionary Mexico: Diaz," 5–6.

67 Rebecca Zurier, *Arts for the Masses: A Radical Magazine and Its Graphics, 1911–1917* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988), 22.

68 Nicholas Vachel Lindsay, "The Golden-Faced People: A Story of the Chinese Conquest of America," *The Crisis* 9, no. 1 (1914): 36–42, <https://modjourn.org/issue/bdr519339/>; Royal Freeman Nash, "The Cherokee Fires: An N. A. A. C. P. Investigation," *The Crisis* 11, no. 5 (1916): 265–268, <https://modjourn.org/issue/bdr508525/>; "Gandhi and India," *The Crisis* 23, no. 5 (1922): 203–207, <https://modjourn.org/issue/bdr514154/>. The last source was published after the 1910s, but it shows the dedication of *The Crisis* to covering India.

representation or mention of any kind.⁶⁹

One of the lynching-related examples that can be used to examine *The Crisis*' silence on the Mexican cases was an issue from late 1911 containing a detailed report about the unjust, racially motivated lynching of the African American Zachariah Walker. It quotes *The New York Times* saying, "nowhere in the United States was a man ever lynched with less excuse or with an equal heaping up of horror on horror."⁷⁰ This is blatantly untrue. *The Crisis* asserts that the lynching's brutality and its allowance by state authorities makes it an exceptional case, but both factors are unremarkable during this period considering the Texas Rangers' racial violence against Mexicans. To say otherwise is to minimise the group's actions. Despite not providing any specific details of Walker's lynching, *The Crisis* implies that no word in English can convey its horror accurately. The publication says even the terms "inhuman" and "brutal" are too mild.⁷¹ Walker was alleged to have shot a White man in Pennsylvania, before fleeing from an angry mob and hiding in a tree. The mob eventually caught up with Walker, and he was burnt to death.⁷² Walker's lynching is deeply hurtful but was by no means unique. Nine months earlier, the Mexican Antonio Rodríguez broke out of a Texas prison and was burnt to death by the Rangers. His lynching led to mass protests in Mexico and was reported all over the US, including in New York, Washington, and Florida.⁷³ The case would have been known to those behind the "record of the darker races," but *The Crisis* excluded it from their publication.

The Crisis also claimed Walker's lynching was uniquely abhorrent because of the state's involvement, however it paled in comparison to that of Mexican lynchings. In Walker's case, the police chiefs were investigated but ultimately found not guilty of involuntary manslaughter.⁷⁴ Meanwhile, the Texas Rangers were a state law enforcement group committing lynchings themselves. They shot three Mexicans dead without trial in 1915, and massacred further 18

69 See *The Crisis* 1, no. 1–19, no. 2.

70 Raymond M. Hyser and Dennis B. Downey, "A Crooked Death': Coatesville, Pennsylvania and the Lynching of Zachariah Walker," *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies* 54, no. 2 (1987): 87, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27773172>.

71 "Opinion: The Coatesville Lynching," *The Crisis* 2, no. 5 (1911): 188, <https://modjournal.org/issue/bdr522307/>.

72 Hyser and Downey, "Crooked Death," 86–87.

73 "Crowds in Mexico City Make Demonstrations Against Americans—Newspaper Building Stoned," *New York Tribune*, November 10, 1910, 1, *Chronicling America*, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030214/1910-11-10/ed-1/seq-1/>; "Greasers After Gore," *The Ocala Evening Star*, November 10, 1910, 1, *Chronicling America*, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84027621/1910-11-10/ed-1/seq-1/>; "Mexican Rioters Attempt Life of U.S. Ambassador," *The Wenatchee Daily World*, November 10, 1910, 1, *Chronicling America*, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn86072041/1910-11-10/ed-1/seq-1/>.

74 Hyser and Downey, "Crooked Death," 86.

Mexicans in 1918.⁷⁵ Historian Monica Muñoz Martinez states that alongside their hundreds of documented killings, thousands more were successfully covered up.⁷⁶ The Confirmed Cases Database by Carrigan and Webb includes several other incidents of Mexicans being killed by burning, as well as similarly brutal lynchings in Texas during each of the six preceding decades.⁷⁷ To say that two police officers not stopping the racially motivated lynching of an African American makes it an exceptional case is to grossly undermine, and certainly to minimise, the hundreds of Mexican lynchings the Texas Rangers allowed to happen, and the thousands more directly committed by them. An explanation for these lynchings' exclusion from *The Crisis* could be that the NAACP rejected the assertion that Mexicans were racially discriminated against because Mexico presented a supposedly safe land. Descriptions of Texas often centred on border towns and the borderlands.⁷⁸ It can be deduced that in the eyes of the NAACP, Texas was half Mexico, half US, making the lynchings as much the fault of the Mexicans as they were of the Anglo-Texans.

Despite their supposed dedication to exposing oppression, both progressive New York magazines did not cover Mexican lynchings in the same manner as lynchings of African Americans and other racial minorities. *The Masses* reported on the violence in its four-part longread “Revolutionary Mexico,” and whilst the magazine was sympathetic towards Mexicans, the articles were only published to satisfy the magazine’s anti-establishment, socialist agenda. Additionally, the Texas Rangers’ violence towards the Mexicans was never the focus of the magazine and the series. *The Crisis* was the NAACP’s magazine tasked with being a “record for the darker races.” It aimed to cover all non-White racial minorities in the US but failed to report on the plight of Mexicans. Such lack of coverage from a racial-inequality-focused magazine implied that the lynchings of Mexicans were not worthy of public attention, and thus, served to erase the violence committed by the Texas Rangers against Mexicans from the historical record. This combined with newspapers in other East Coast states, which knowingly mischaracterised the Texas Rangers as mythic defenders of the American frontier, created a culture in US print media outside of Texas where coverage the true violence faced by Mexicans was actively disregarded.

75 Carrigan and Webb, *Forgotten Dead*, 214, 217.

76 Martinez, *Injustice*, 8.

77 For examples, see Carrigan and Webb, *Forgotten Dead*, 180, 193, 200, 209, 211, 212.

78 Martinez, *Injustice*, 17; Carrigan and Webb, “Lynching of Persons,” 412; Hall, “They Lynched Mexican-Americans,” 62.

Conclusion

The portrayal of the Texas Rangers in the 1910s print media undoubtedly served to minimise their racial violence against Mexicans. An honest portrayal of the lynchings did not fit into the various agendas of different publications. For example, some Texas newspapers presented the violence honestly but through a manipulative context that further fuelled the racial hatred against Mexicans. By perpetuating the “Mexican situation” and presenting the federal government as incapable of protecting the state’s population, the print media encouraged the Texas Rangers to intervene and served to justify their racial violence. Newspapers outside of Texas sanitised the violence to fit into a romanticised depiction of the frontier ever-present in contemporary fiction. Even the New York-based publications that were committed to speaking up for voiceless victims of racism omitted the racial violence committed against Mexicans, suggesting its non-existence. None of these media depictions held the Texas Rangers accountable for their actions, and all were silent on their racial violence against Mexicans.

Notably, this study has shown there is not a one-size-fits-all answer to how the violence was minimised, as each section demonstrates how publications in different states minimised the violence in different ways. For the last twenty years, historians have been adopting a revisionist approach against US lynching scholars who have focused almost exclusively on African Americans. When discussing *The Crisis*, this paper embodies a similar technique, but largely keeps the focus on Mexicans. Using the two decades of revisionist historiography as the foundation, this study analyses how the violence itself was presented or erased.

Finally, limited access to the non-digitised archival material, such as letters to the governor, and insufficient Spanish language knowledge has reduced the scope of this paper. If future scholars can utilise these resources and further examine the contemporary public opinion, it would greatly benefit the historiography of the Texas Rangers’ violence against Mexicans. “We got another Mexican—but he’s dead.”⁷⁹ Historians are only just beginning to learn the extent of the brutality behind such cavalier boasts.

79 “We Got Another,” *Austin Statesman and Tribune*, 1.

African Americans and the Construction of Solidarity with Ethiopia, 1935–1936

ABSTRACT

While practical aspects of African American solidarity with Ethiopia in the years 1935-1936 received considerable scholarly attention, little has been written on the process of the construction of solidarity with Ethiopia, or how African Americans came to think of Ethiopia as deserving of their solidarity. To answer this question, this study analyses several African American publications' (*Afro-American*, *The Chicago Defender*, *The Crisis*, and *Associated Negro Press*) articles about the Italian aggression against Ethiopia. To address why African Americans mobilized in thousands to support Ethiopia and expressed solidarity with the African empire, the analysis includes the letters to the editors of *The Chicago Defender* and *Afro-American* in the years 1935 and 1936. The process of the construction of solidarity with Ethiopia was based on African American racial identification with Ethiopians, which was strengthened by the appeal of Ethiopia as a historical model of Black nationhood and the religious identification of African American Christians with Ethiopian Christianity. This same process was challenged by a minority of African Americans, who disputed Ethiopians' Blackness and claimed Ethiopians looked down on other people of African descent. These challenges were successfully countered by emphasizing similarities in the physical appearance of African Americans and Ethiopians, and by reports on Ethiopians' positive attitude towards African Americans. As African Americans increasingly saw the hypocritical treatment of Ethiopia as analogous to the racist treatment they experienced at home, the moral feeling of resentment against racial discrimination spilled into the international arena and strengthened the construction of solidarity with Ethiopia.

BY

Matevž Rezman Tasič

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Matevž Rezman Tasič completed his undergraduate degree in History and Politics at the University of Edinburgh and is currently pursuing an MLitt degree in Modern History at University of St Andrews. His main interests lie in twentieth-century international activist networks and the Non-Aligned Movement.

In response to the Italian aggression against Ethiopia in the aftermath of the Wal Wal incident in November 1934, thousands across the globe mobilized in support of the African nation-state in 1935 and 1936.¹ In the United States, the US African diaspora—African Americans—was at the forefront of political mobilization in support of Ethiopia. African Americans established Black solidarity groups, such as Friends of Ethiopia and United Aid for Ethiopia, and were key to the formation of multiracial groups founded for the same purpose, like Harlem’s Provisional Committee for the Defense of Ethiopia. These groups had—alongside other African American organization, such as Pan-African Reconstruction Association, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Garveyite groups, and African American churches—organized pro-Ethiopian demonstrations and sought to aid the country by organizing prayers and talks on Ethiopian history and politics, collecting financial and medical aid, and attempting to send volunteers to fight on the front.² By the summer of 1936, a congruence of several factors—the Italian occupation of Addis Ababa in May 1936, Haile Selassie’s exile in Britain, the League of Nations decision to lift its ineffective sanctions on Italy, and the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War—resulted in a decrease of pro-Ethiopian political agitation in the US. Nevertheless, the years 1935-1936 stand out due to unprecedented African American engagement with US foreign policy.³ As American historian Joseph Fronczak puts it, the political activism of these years “pressed together popular politics and geopolitics, providing common people with unprecedented access to a question of international affairs.”⁴

While political mobilization in solidarity with Ethiopia was a global affair,⁵ this study adopts a narrower focus as it examines African Americans’ construction of solidarity with Ethiopia. In other words, the study examines how and why African Americans came to think of Ethiopia as deserving of their sacrifices even though the vast majority of African Americans had no personal or familial links with Ethiopia. Tiffany Ruby Patterson and Robing D.G.

1 Joseph Fronczak, “Local People’s Global Politics: A Transnational History of the Hands Off Ethiopia Movement of 1935,” *Diplomatic History* 39, no. 2 (2015): 245–274; Hakim Adi, *Pan-Africanism: A History* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), 107–117.

2 For the African American responses to the Ethiopian crisis and Italian invasion, see Edward O. Erhagbe and Ehimika A. Ifidon, “African-Americans and the Italo–Ethiopian Crisis, 1935–1936: The Practical Dimension of Pan-Africanism,” *Aethiopica* 11 (2008): 68–84; Joseph E. Harris, *African-American Reactions to War in Ethiopia, 1936–1941* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1994); William R. Scott, *The Sons of Sheba’s Race: African-Americans and the Italo–Ethiopian War, 1935–1941* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993).

3 See Brenda Gayle Plummer, *Rising Wind: Black Americans and U.S. Foreign Affairs, 1935–1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 37–81; Alvin B. Tillery, *Between Homeland and Motherland: Africa, U.S. Foreign Policy, and Black Leadership in America* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011).

4 Fronczak, “Local People’s Global,” 246.

5 Fronczak, “Local People’s Global,” 246.

Kelley emphasize that historians must remember “that diasporic identities are socially and historically constituted, reconstituted, and reproduced.”⁶ The same applies to relations between the diaspora and the imagined homeland—in this case, Africa—since its meaning changes, at least partially, as it is reconstituted in diaspora.⁷ The present study, then, can be read as a contribution to the study of the global African diaspora within the US context as it examines how diasporan identity and its connection with the African continent changed in the context of European imperialist aggression against an African state.

Contrary to most works on the topic,⁸ the main concern here is not the practical dimensions of solidarity, but rather its discursive foundations. The study approaches this question through the analysis of four African American publications’ reportage on the Italian aggression against Ethiopia. In addition to *The Chicago Defender* and *Afro-American*, the two largest African American newspapers at the time,⁹ the essay also analyses the NAACP’s journal *The Crisis* and the press releases of the *Associated Negro Press* (ANP). They were chosen due to the NAACP’s position as the largest and most influential civil rights group at the time and the fact that most African American publications were serviced by ANP press releases.¹⁰ African American publications were often viewed as playing a crucial role in coordinating campaigns, sharing information about the invasion, and mobilizing public opinion in support of Ethiopia. While all of these are undeniably true, such an emphasis neglects the role of African American publications as sites where African American public opinion was shaped and contested. As Stuart Hall writes in relation to cinema, identity is “constituted not outside but within representations.”¹¹ By analyzing African American publications, then, the process of diasporan identity formation in relation to the African continent in general and Ethiopia in particular can be explored. Because the letters to the editor provide insight into the “space in which the meaning and significance of unfolding narratives

6 Tiffany Ruby Patterson and Robing D.G. Kelley, “Unfinished Migrations: Reflections on the African Diaspora and the Making of the Modern World,” *African Studies Review* 43, no. 1 (April 2000): 19.

7 Stuart Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” in *Identity, Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990), 224–225, 230–237.

8 For a focus on practical dimensions of solidarity, see Erhagbe and Ifidon, “African-Americans”; Harris, *African-American Reactions*; Scott, *Sons of Sheba’s*.

9 Michael A. Lord, “Baltimore Afro-American,” in *Encyclopedia of African American Culture and History: The Black Experience in the Americas*, ed. Colin A. Palmer, 2nd ed., vol. 1 (Detroit: Macmillan USA, 2006), 184.

10 Natalie J. Ring, “National Association for the Advancement of Colored People,” in *Encyclopedia of American Studies*, ed. Simon J. Bronner (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2018), <http://eas-ref.press.jhu.edu/view?aid=372>; Gerald Horne, *The Rise and Fall of the Associated Negro Press: Claude Barnett’s Pan-African News and the Jim Crow Paradox* (Urbana, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2017), 5.

11 Hall, “Cultural Identity,” 237.

and events are contested,” the inclusion of letters to the editor of *The Chicago Defender* and *Afro-American* allows one to bring this function of the African American press to the fore.¹² Moreover, they enable the analysis of readers’ reactions to and interpretations of events and reporting.¹³ In sum, letters to the editor allow for the reconstruction of popular attitudes that sustained solidarity with Ethiopia among the African diaspora in the US in the years 1935-1936.

The study consists of three sections. First, the article analyzes how racial identification with Ethiopians enabled the construction of solidarity. While racial identification was a necessary condition for solidarity with Ethiopia, it was not a sufficient one. Were it not for Ethiopia’s historical legacy as a model of Black nationhood and its importance for African American Christians, solidarity with Ethiopia would not have reached the proportions it did. Second, it examines the grounds on which the minority of African Americans opposed solidarity with Ethiopia and evaluates what impact this had on the construction of solidarity. Last, the study examines how *ressentiment*—a French term defined as a moral emotion originating from a historical injury and/or injustice that leads to feelings of bitterness, rancor, anger, ire, and indignation among those wronged, even after said injury was committed¹⁴—impacted the construction of solidarity with Ethiopia. By analyzing African American responses to the issue of Ethiopian slavery, the study argues that because African Americans saw the treatment of Ethiopia as analogous to the racist treatment they experienced in the US, feelings of *ressentiment* fueled the construction of solidarity with Ethiopia.

Foundations of solidarity: race, history, and Christianity

To understand how African Americans came to stand in solidarity with Ethiopia, one must begin by accounting for the racial identification of African Americans with Ethiopians. In other words, one must account how, as Michael Onyebuchi Eze puts it, African Americans came to see themselves and Ethiopians as belonging to the same “metaphysical unity.”¹⁵ In the context

12 Allison Cavanagh and John Steel, “Introduction,” in *Letters to the Editor: Historical and Comparative Perspective*, ed. Allison Cavanagh and John Steel (Cham: Springer Nature, 2019), 2.

13 Note that the letters to the editor provide an editorialized view of readers’ opinions as the editors sought to present the range of readers’ opinions while also stylistically improving the letters. See Cavanagh and Steel, “Introduction.”

14 See Didier Fassin, “On Resentment and *Ressentiment*: The Politics and Ethics of Moral Emotions,” *Current Anthropology* 54, no. 3 (June 2013): 249–267.

15 Michael Onyebuchi Eze, “Pan-Africanism and the Politics of History,” *History Compass* 11, no. 9 (2013): 676.

of Italian propaganda's racialized language of Italy's "civilizing mission" in Ethiopia, it is unsurprising that people of color employed a racial interpretation of the conflict.¹⁶ In a July 1935 *Crisis* article, George Padmore argued that solidarity with Ethiopia presented an opportunity to "demonstrate to the peoples of Africa that their descendants in the New World have not forgotten their ties of blood and race. For when all is said and done, the struggles of the Abyssinians is fundamentally the part of the struggles of the Black race."¹⁷ Likewise, *The Chicago Defender's* coverage of the meeting of the Negro World Alliance held the same month in Chicago emphasized how "America's black millions become aware of the threat to the only country they can call their own."¹⁸ African American authors at the time presented the same sentiment of racial identification with Ethiopia. In September 1935, *The Associated Negro Press* published Robert Carlston's poem "Delenda Est Ethiopia" which spoke of Ethiopia as "a nation of color so bold that dares to independence hold" in which "folks like you and me are thrusting."¹⁹ For many historians, like Robert G. Weisbord, African American solidarity with Ethiopia was based on "a strong racial identification with their beleaguered brothers in Ethiopia."²⁰

There is no doubt that racial identification played a key role in the construction of solidarity with Ethiopia. However, racial identification was a necessary but insufficient condition for the construction of solidarity. If the construction of bonds of solidarity with Ethiopia were a simple process of racial identification, it is rather unclear why only the Ethiopian conflict managed to arouse such widespread outrage among African Americans. While both the US occupation of Haiti (1915-1934) and the scrutiny of Liberia's humanitarian record received attention among the African American press, the reactions remained limited and beyond the interest of ordinary African Americans.²¹ The conflict in Ethiopia inaugurated a new and unprecedented period of popular engagement with US foreign policy among African Americans.²² As Roi Ottley put it in 1943, there is "no event in recent times that stirred the rank and file of Negroes more than the Italo-Ethiopian war."²³ As the remainder of this contribution argues, the appeal of Ethiopia as a model of

16 Erhagbe and Ifidon, "African-Americans," 68–69.

17 George Padmore, "The Missionary Racket in Africa," *The Crisis* 42, no. 7 (July 1935): 214.

18 "US Policy on Ethiopia is Criticized," *The Chicago Defender*, July 13, 1935, 2.

19 Robert Carlston, "Delenda Est Ethiopia," *The Associated Negro Press*, September 9, 1935, 9.

20 Robert G. Weisbord, *Ebony Kinship: Africa, Africans, and the Afro-American* (London: Greenwood Press, 1973), 110.

21 See Erhagbe and Ifidon, "African-Americans"; Fronczak, "Local People's Global"; Plummer, *Rising Wind*.

22 Adi, *Pan-Africanism*, 58; P. Olaniswuche Esedebe, *Pan-Africanism: The Idea and Movement, 1776–1991* (Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1994), 111–115.

23 Roi Ottley, *New World A-Coming: Inside Black America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1943), 111.

Black nationhood and the religious identification with Ethiopian Christianity strengthened African American racial identification with Ethiopia.

Nadia Nurhussein argues that since the late nineteenth century, Ethiopia represented “a bound and delineated geographic space onto which to project abstract Black nationhood.”²⁴ Ethiopia’s ancient history, tracing back to the kingdom of Aksum, coupled with the fact that Ethiopian independence was preserved during the “Scramble for Africa,” made it an “alternative imperial force” with which the African diaspora in the US could identify.²⁵ Contrary to Haiti and Liberia, the only other independent Black states, Ethiopia had also proven itself capable of preserving its independence from foreign encroachment. The defeat of the Italian army at Adowa in 1896 and Ethiopian diplomacy at the League of Nations proved Ethiopia’s ability to defend its independence through military force and diplomacy.²⁶ In an era when African Americans sought an alternative to White imperial powers, a Black empire’s ability to preserve its independence made Ethiopia an appealing model of Black nationhood. For W.E.B. du Bois, Ethiopia was “an example and a promise of what a native population untouched by modern exploitation and race prejudice might do.”²⁷ An additional factor in the development of solidarity with Ethiopia was its continuous presence in press coverage, which enabled the adoption of the symbolism of Ethiopia by many organizations in the US, such as Marcus Garvey’s United Negro Improvement Association.²⁸ Some African Americans even settled in Ethiopia prior to the Italian invasion.²⁹ Racial identification of African Americans with Ethiopia, then, was underpinned by its role as a model of a Black nation-state that managed to compete with White powers. In this context, Italian aggression was interpreted not only as an aggression against Ethiopia, but also as an aggression against Black nationhood in general.

The African American press often invoked Ethiopian history to construct bonds of solidarity with Ethiopia. In March 1935, *The Defender* published an open letter, allegedly written by an Ethiopian, which emphasized how Ethiopia had survived many challenges in its history. Ethiopia, “more than

24 Nadia Nurhussein, *Black Land: Imperial Ethiopianism and African America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019), 12.

25 Nurhussein, *Black Land*, 1.

26 Ian S. Spears, “The Ethiopian Crisis and the Emergence of Ethiopia in a Changing State System,” in *Collision of Empires: Italy's Invasion of Ethiopia and its International Impact*, ed. G. Bruce Strang (Farnham: Taylor & Francis Group, 2013), 42–44.

27 W.E.B. du Bois, “Inter-Racial Implications of the Ethiopian Crisis: A Negro View,” *Foreign Affairs* 14, no. 1 (October 1935): 85–86.

28 Nurhussein, *Black Land*, 14–15; Robert G. Weisbord, “Black America and the Italian-Ethiopian Crisis: An Episode in Pan-Negroism,” *The Historian* 34, no. 2 (1972): 231–234.

29 Alberto Sbacchi, *Legacy of Bitterness: Ethiopia and Fascist Italy, 1935–1941* (Lawrenceville, NJ: The Red Sea Press, 1997), 6.

1400 years old [. . .] [has] seen the burial of Rome and Constantinople, and to us the governments of Europe were borne yesterday.”³⁰ While “a new trial” faced Ethiopia, the author asserted that the imperial “rulership of our king [. . .] has been a strong weapon against all our foes.”³¹ Therefore, Mussolini had to remember that Ethiopia’s “judgement is with God.”³² The emphasis on Ethiopia’s history and its imperial governance, then, sought to give hope to the readers of *The Defender*. For if Ethiopia outlived Rome and Constantinople, how could a government “borne yesterday” destroy it? Sometimes, the appeal to Ethiopia’s history was less direct. Reuben S. Young’s *Crisis* article called on African Americans to “help [Ethiopia] by using concerted pressure on our government to use every effort to prevent an attack by Italy.”³³ This call to action follows a recounting of the emperor Menelik and Haile Selassie’s “effort to consolidate the empire” and “to lay foundations for the change from feudalism to capitalism,” frustrated by “machinations of the big powers.”³⁴ In this article, the call to solidarity was based upon the recognition of the efforts of the Black empire to centralize and reform, which was continuously thwarted by the White powers. These appeals to the idea of a Black empire—as both a historical example of a state capable of competing with imperial powers and as an empire inching towards modernity—represent a broader trend of the construction of solidarity with Ethiopia based on its imperial history.

The readership of *The Defender* and *Afro-American* shared such a conception of solidarity with Ethiopia. For a reader of the *Afro-American*, the Ethiopian crisis presented an opportunity to develop “a closer relationship of our own race group” and to “show disapproval of this high-handed attempt by Italy to grab the ancient kingdom.”³⁵ A letter to *The Chicago Defender* argued that “Ethiopia, as a black nation, the very last one on earth,” offered the opportunity for African Americans to “wake up and try to become a respected race.”³⁶ Following the Italian invasion, another reader emphasized that Ethiopia’s defeat constituted “a calamity to the entire race.”³⁷ These letters to the editors show how Ethiopia’s history reinforced the racial identification of African Americans with Ethiopia. Due to the appeal of the history of the Black empire as a historical and contemporary model of Black nationhood, Ethiopia was transformed into the last Black nation on

30 Guebra-Kristos Kema, “An Ethiopian Writes Open Letter to the American People,” *The Chicago Defender*, March 9, 1935, 1.

31 Kema, “An Ethiopian,” 2.

32 Kema, “An Ethiopian,” 2.

33 Reuben S. Young, “Ethiopia Awakens,” *The Crisis* 42, no. 9 (September 1935): 283.

34 Young, “Ethiopia Awakens,” 263.

35 Fabius Howell, “Our Duty to Aid Abyssinia,” *Afro-American*, March 2, 1935, 4.

36 Charles Rothwell, “What the People Say: Long Live Ethiopia,” *The Chicago Defender*, March 16, 1935, 14.

37 James W. Taylor, “Ethiopia, Last Haven,” *Afro-American*, December 28, 1935, 6.

Earth: it offered more than Liberia and Haiti ever could. This sentiment was well captured by Mae Ida D. Solo-Billings, an occasional contributor to *The Defender*, who wrote that “our [African American] future history and well-being is inexorably linked with that of Ethiopia.”³⁸ For African Americans living under the Jim Crow system of racial discrimination, the threat to Ethiopia represented a threat to Black nationhood.³⁹ As African Americans elevated Ethiopia to the position of a symbol of Black nationhood and as the only Black country capable of successfully resisting foreign encroachment, they viewed the loss of its independence as a calamity for people of African descent across the globe. Solidarity with Ethiopia, then, was not simply a product of the racial identification of African Americans with Ethiopians—rather, it was underpinned by an appeal to the Ethiopian imperial model of Black nationhood.

Religious identification with Ethiopia was another factor that enabled the construction of solidarity among African Americans. While in the 1930s Caribbean, Rastafarianism played an important role,⁴⁰ the predominantly Christian African Americans identified with Ethiopian Christianity. Ethiopia held an important place in the hearts of Black Christians in the US due to its Biblical significance and status as one of the oldest Christian nations.⁴¹ Psalms 68:31, which read “Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch her hands unto God,”⁴² was often interpreted as a liberation prophecy for the African continent under the leadership of a pious leader; for many, Haile Selassie was the prophesized prince.⁴³ The sacral importance of Ethiopia to Black Christendom was such that many of the Black churches that emerged in the nineteenth century adopted the name Abyssinian, or Ethiopian, churches.⁴⁴ In a letter to *The Chicago Defender*, a reader expressed his view that “Ethiopia and black people of the world are going to come out [of war] alright” for “David, the Psalmist, tells the world what Ethiopia and the black people [. . .] are going to do.”⁴⁵ As the war progressed, a letter to the *Afro-American* pondered whether “the Ethiopians have the same divine rights under the sun to exist as other people?”⁴⁶ Clearly not, if, as another letter put it, “white man’s idea of Christianity is” the “killing [of] defenseless women

38 Mae Ida D. Solo-Billings, “What the People Say: The Doughty Ethiopians,” *The Chicago Defender*, March 23, 1935, 14.

39 Weisbord, “Black America,” 236; Weisbord, *Ebony Kinship*, 96.

40 For a comparative discussion of religion’s role in the Caribbean and the US, see Fikru Gebrekidan, “In Defense of Ethiopia: A Comparative Assessment of Caribbean and African American Anti-Fascist Protests, 1935–1941,” *Northeast African Studies* 2, no. 1 (1995): 153–155.

41 Tillery, *Between Homeland*, 66.

42 Psalms 68:31 (King James Version).

43 Tillery, *Between Homeland*, 66.

44 Scott, *Sons of Sheba’s*, 12–22; Weisbord, *Ebony Kinship*, 90.

45 Jas M. Web, “Mussolini vs. Ethiopia,” *The Chicago Defender*, June 15, 1935, 16.

46 Benjamin Price, “Ethiopia and Divine Rights,” *Afro-American*, December 14, 1935, 6.

and children.”⁴⁷ The readers of African American publications identified with Ethiopian Christianity, which, like the appeal of the Ethiopian model of Black nationhood, amplified the construction of solidarity with Ethiopia.

Similarly, African American publications emphasized Ethiopia’s anti-Islamic character in its importance for Black Christendom. In addition to appeals to Christian symbolism, the press often highlighted Ethiopia’s role as a bulwark against the spread of Islam in East Africa. *The Defender’s* open letter, discussed above, spoke of “the oldest Christian nation” without whom “all of Africa would be Mohammedan.”⁴⁸ He continued that for all the service Ethiopia did for Christendom, its “reward” was “that the Italian comes to our door today and demands our death.”⁴⁹ The letter appealed to the Christian readers, then, by emphasizing the historical importance of Ethiopia for Christianity, while highlighting its imperial history as discussed above. Joel Augustus Rogers, who later became *The Defender’s* correspondent to Ethiopia and wrote prolifically in support of its cause, reported in *The Crisis* that Ethiopia was “a Christian Verdun against Mohammedanism.”⁵⁰ Articles like these established Ethiopia not only as a fellow Christian nation, but one which sacrificed much as a regional force against Islam.

African Americans often contrasted this with Italian Christianity, which they saw as a smokescreen for Italian imperialism. George Padmore argued that the “technique which Mussolini is now trying to apply to Abyssinia” was based on the British conquest of Uganda, which began with missionaries and ended with “soldiers with machine guns.”⁵¹ This abuse of Christianity “for predatory designs against colonial peoples” was to fail, for “the Ethiopians are more determined than ever [. . .] to defend the 3000 years’ independence of their country.”⁵² A satirical article in the *Afro-American* echoed these sentiments when it warned, “Haile, you have made a serious error, almost unforgivable, by reading the Bible [. . .] and following it to the letter.”⁵³ European Christianity was purported to be good only for sending “missionaries with the Bible in one hand and a club in another” so that they could exploit African “diamonds, iron and silver.”⁵⁴ In the eyes of African Americans,

47 J. W., “Italian Christianity,” *Afro-American*, November 2, 1935, 6. Please note that the usage of racial language in all quotations in this article is original from the cited text and has not been modified.

48 Kema, “An Ethiopian,” 1–2.

49 Kema, “An Ethiopian,” 2.

50 Joel Augustus Rogers, “Italy Over Abyssinia,” *The Crisis* 42, no. 2 (February 1935): 39.

51 Padmore, “Missionary Racket,” 214.

52 Padmore, “Missionary Racket,” 198, 214.

53 Lucius C. Harper, “On How to Become Civilized,” *The Chicago Defender*, October 19, 1935, 12.

54 Harper, “How to Become,” 12.

European commitment to Christianity was ingenuine. As a reader of *The Defender* put it, there was little to Italian Christianity but a “desire to gain possessions of the gold, silver and precious stones of Africa and especially of Ethiopia.”⁵⁵ Contrary to Ethiopia, European powers were concerned with Christianity only if they benefited from it.

Ethiopian struggle against the Italian aggression, was indeed, as Padmore put it, “the part of the struggles of the black race” for African Americans.⁵⁶ However, it did not end up a part of the global struggle solely by the virtue of Ethiopians’ black skin. While racial identification was a necessary condition for the outpouring of solidarity with Ethiopia among African Americans, it was shaped by the fact that Ethiopia presented an alternative (imperial) model of Black nationhood, and by the religious identification of African American Christians with Ethiopian Christianity. These factors enabled the construction of solidarity with Ethiopia among the African diaspora in the US and resulted in the popular mobilization of African Americans in the years 1935-1936.

African American opposition to solidarity with Ethiopia

It would be wrong to assume that all African Americans supported the construction of solidarity with Ethiopia. As Arno Sonderegger emphasizes in the case of Pan-Africanism, opinions of people of African descent were “by no means uniform [. . .] infighting was always a factor.”⁵⁷ In the years 1935-1936, a minority of African Americans opposed the construction of solidarity with Ethiopia. For them, African Americans should “fight our own battles, get all we can, and let the Italians and Ethiopians do their own fighting.”⁵⁸ They justified their isolationist stance by disputing Ethiopians’ Blackness and by claiming that Ethiopians held negative attitudes towards other people of African descent. Such opposition, designed to undermine racial identification with Ethiopia, received significant attention from Ethiopia’s supporters. Therefore, it is important to account for the role African American opposition played in the construction of solidarity with Ethiopia.

While most African Americans agitated in support of Ethiopia in 1935, several argued that Ethiopia was undeserving of their support as it was not

55 Alexander Morisson Jr., “On Pope Pius,” *The Chicago Defender*, September 28, 1935, 16.

56 Padmore, “Missionary Racket,” 214.

57 Arno Sonderegger, “Ideas Matter: Framing Pan-Africanism, its Concept and History,” *Stichproben: Vienna Journal of African Studies* 20, no. 38 (2020): 11.

58 Frank St. Claire, “He Advocates an Isolationist Policy,” *Afro-American*, September 28, 1935, 6.

a Black nation. Several African Americans felt Ethiopia was not Black due to Ethiopians' reluctance to use the word "Negro" to describe themselves and due to the royal family's emphasis on their Semitic heritage.⁵⁹ Ralph Matthews, a columnist for the *Afro-American*, wrote that he could not get "overly enthused on behalf of the conquering Lion, Haile Selassie, because I have seen little evidences that either he or any of his subjects believe us to be their kinsmen."⁶⁰ Not only was there a lack of kinship between Ethiopians and African Americans, but Ethiopians never extended their solidarity to African Americans. As Matthews put it, Ethiopians did not even "pen a sharp note to Uncle Sam after every lynching."⁶¹ For these reasons, he concluded, the war had "to be fought without me."⁶² Likewise, a letter to the *Afro-American* implored its readers to "stop hunting hostilities on behalf of a people who claim Semitic origin."⁶³ With the mobilization among African Americans reaching unprecedented levels in 1935 and all energy seemingly reserved for Ethiopia, even *The Chicago Defender*, otherwise at the forefront of solidarity with Ethiopia, satirized volunteers signing up for service in Ethiopia. The satirical call for volunteers promised each African American volunteer "his own rock behind which to hide in case the battle gets hot" and "a military outfit [. . .] which will make it easy for them to run."⁶⁴

While opposition to Ethiopia toned down after the Italian invasion, possibly because Italian atrocities became known, it reemerged in the summer of 1936 when Italy conquered Addis Ababa and Haile Selassie fled to England. In August 1936, after the League had lifted its sanctions on Italy, *Afro-American* published an interview with Colonel Hubert Julian, one of the few African Americans to serve in Ethiopia as a part of the emperor's air force, in which he alleged Ethiopia lost "due more to Haile's 'white brain' trust rather than to Mussolini's war machine."⁶⁵ Not only did he find that the emperor prioritized White advisors, but also that Ethiopians "despise American educated colored people," which was made clear by the fact there were "82 American and West Indian families poverty stricken in Ethiopia [. . .] starving because Ethiopians refuse to cater to skilled black artisans when there is a white man who can do a job."⁶⁶ Their disdain for people of African descent in America was further evidenced by the fact there was "no colored American officially invited to the coronation of Haile Selassie."⁶⁷ In other words, as

59 Erhagbe and Ifidon, "African-Americans," 80–81; Gebrekidan, "In Defense," 152.

60 Ralph Matthews, "Watching the Big Parade," *Afro-American*, March 9, 1935, 4.

61 Matthews, "Watching," 4.

62 Matthews, "Watching," 4.

63 Meeba A. Ficklin, "A Pill for Ethiopia's Supporters," *Afro-American*, August 31, 1935, 4.

64 "Uncle Eph Says," *The Chicago Defender*, March 16, 1935, 9.

65 "Why Ethiopia Lost!," *Afro-American*, August 22, 1936, 20.

66 "Why Ethiopia Lost," 20.

67 "Why Ethiopia Lost," 20.

Ethiopians held only disdain for African Americans, they were not deserving of their solidarity. Nonetheless, opposition to solidarity with Ethiopia was a minority position in the years 1935-1936, demonstrated by the number of editorial stances sympathetic to Ethiopia, the prevalence of positive news coverage, and the continuous mobilization of African Americans.⁶⁸ However, opposition to solidarity received significant attention by those supportive of Ethiopia because it challenged the foundations of African American solidarity.

Such challenges undermined racial identification with Ethiopia. After all, had the argument that Ethiopians were not Black won the day, Ethiopia's significance as a model of Black nationhood and its importance to African American Christianity would be lost, too. In response, the pro-Ethiopian authors emphasized how Ethiopians and African Americans shared many physical features. In the lead-up to the invasion, W.E.B. du Bois argued that "Ethiopia is Negro" for the "pictures of Abyssinians" displayed "Negroid" features.⁶⁹ Moreover, he disputed the idea that Ethiopians cannot be Black due to the former's intermixing with people of Semitic origins, since "humanity was mixed to the core."⁷⁰ Similarly, Gladys L. Wilson argued in a piece for *Defender* that even if "the ruling classes in Abyssinia are mixed with Semitic blood," this cannot be taken to mean that they were not black: "whenever a race has been in a close proximity with another, there has been [. . .] mixture."⁷¹ To claim Ethiopians are not Black was as ridiculous as to claim "Southern Italians [. . .] because they are mixed with Moorish blood" are not Italian.⁷² Ethiopian mixed racial heritage did not imply that Ethiopians were not Black—as long as they displayed the same racial features as people of African descent in the US, African Americans viewed them as deserving of their solidarity. The press often supported these claims with photographic material that sought to dispel any remaining doubts. For example, Joel Augustus Rogers, who was a war correspondent in Ethiopia during the invasion and published a pamphlet on the country, wrote that "every Ethiopian this author has seen would be a Negro," followed by pictures of Ethiopians on the next page.⁷³ The opposition to solidarity with Ethiopia led to an increase in discussion on the true race of the Ethiopian nation, a discussion that relied on physical appearance as its primary attribute.

Likewise, the reports on the negative attitude of Ethiopians towards

68 Erhagbe and Ifidon, "African-Americans," 79–81; Plummer, *Rising Wind*, 51–53.

69 Du Bois, "Inter-Racial Implications," 82.

70 Du Bois, "Inter-Racial Implications," 82.

71 "Gladys Wilson Traces Blood: Disputes Those Who Say Ethiopians Are White," *The Chicago Defender*, October 26, 1935, 24.

72 "Gladys Wilson," 24.

73 Joel Augustus Rogers, *The Real Facts About Ethiopia* (1936; repr., Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1982), 5–6. Citations hereafter refer to the 1982 publication.

other people of African descent were countered by the press. The December 1935 issue of the *Associated Negro Press* featured an interview with Augustina Bastian, who served as a nurse in Ethiopia in the early stages of the Italian invasion. In the interview, she emphasized how she “did not find any feelings against American Negroes.”⁷⁴ Similarly, *Afro-American* reported on prince Lij Tasfaye Zaphiro’s visit to the US and quoted him saying “there is a decided blood relationship between the Ethiopian and the Negro. We are of the same people and race.”⁷⁵ The press also set out to explain why Ethiopians were hesitant to use the word “Negro.” As Dr Malaku E. Bayen, Haile Selassie’s representative, explained to African Americans, “we are not Negroes we are Ethiopians [. . .] you should not accept a nickname given you by another country.”⁷⁶ In this way, the African American press sought to provide further context to the Ethiopian statements that were used to justify African American opposition to solidarity with Ethiopia.

While it is hard to establish the effect of dissenting voices on the political sentiments among African Americans, it seems that arguments in favor of solidarity with Ethiopia won the day. For example, the Ethiopian delegation’s fundraising tour of the US, while facing some issues, continued to raise funds for Ethiopia throughout 1936 through American Aid for Ethiopia and similar organizations.⁷⁷ In May 1936, news of Italians’ mass executions of Ethiopian soldiers led to rioting in Harlem, and high tensions between Italians and African Americans in New York persisted throughout the summer.⁷⁸ These developments, coupled with continuous positive coverage of Ethiopia, show that racial identification with Ethiopia, seen as key by both supporters and opponents of solidarity with Ethiopia, survived through 1936.⁷⁹ Opposition to solidarity with Ethiopia was constructed through the contestation of events and facts, fought out on the pages of African American publications. Such publications contributed to convincing African Americans that Ethiopians deserved their solidarity.

Ressentiment, Ethiopian slavery, and African Americans

Another potential obstacle to African American solidarity with Ethiopia was

74 G. James Fleming, “Eyewitness Tells About Colonel Julian,” *Associated Negro Press*, December 30, 1935, 6.

75 “Ethiopians Related to Us, Visiting Consul Declares,” *Afro-American*, December 28, 1935, 12.

76 “Ethiopians not Negroes–Bayen,” *Afro-American*, October 24, 1936, 9.

77 Harris, *African-American Reactions*, 80-84.

78 William R. Scott, “Black Nationalism and the Italo-Ethiopian Conflict 1934–1936,” *The Journal of Negro History* 63, no. 2 (1978): 130–131.

79 Scott, *Sons of Sheba’s*, 213–214; Plummer, *Rising Wind*, 55–56.

the issue of Ethiopian slavery. Ethiopian slavery—a form of unfree labor that included trade in persons and coexisted with other relations of dependency—was legal before 1935; however, it was in decline since the 1920s, and Haile Selassie had taken steps towards its gradual abolition.⁸⁰ Like other imperial powers, Italy, and Western press sympathetic to Italian imperialist ambitions, used Ethiopian slavery to justify its aggression.⁸¹ For example, on October 14, 1935, *The Daily Mirror*, a New York-based newspaper, published an editorial that displayed pictures of debtors and slaves in chains, arguing that “if Mussolini plans, as he undoubtedly does, to end in Ethiopia the condition that you see illustrated here, your conscience might forbid you to interfere with him.”⁸² Occasionally, African Americans cited slavery as a reason for opposition to solidarity with Ethiopia. Josephine Baker, an African American singer and actress, was one of the few to do so. *The Chicago Defender* reported that she supported Mussolini because Haile Selassie “keeps her people in bondage.”⁸³ The following pages first analyze how African Americans sympathetic to Ethiopia responded to Ethiopian slavery. Their responses, this study argues, can be explained by reference to African American feelings of *ressentiment* against the national and global systems of racial discrimination. As African Americans viewed the treatment of Ethiopia as analogous to the treatment they experienced in the US, their *ressentiment* extended into the sphere of international relations.

African Americans sympathetic to Ethiopia responded to Ethiopian slavery either by arguing that Ethiopian slavery was unlike chattel slavery, emphasizing the obstacles for abolition, or by arguing that Ethiopia was unfairly singled out. The former group argued that Ethiopian slavery was unlike Atlantic chattel slavery. In 1935, du Bois argued “the institution of domestic slavery [. . .] which survives in Ethiopia, has nothing in common with the exploitation of slaves through the [Atlantic] slave trade.”⁸⁴ Similarly, Joel Augustus Rogers’ 1937 pamphlet on Ethiopia claimed Ethiopian slaves were “members of the family” and their condition was “never as degrading as American slavery.”⁸⁵ Moreover, the African American press emphasized Haile Selassie’s efforts to gradually abolish slavery and blamed the lack of

80 Giulia Bonacci and Alexander Meckelburg, “Revisiting Slavery and the Slave Trade in Ethiopia,” *Northeast African Studies* 17, no. 2 (2017): 8–15.

81 Bonacci and Meckelburg, “Revisiting Slavery,” 15–16; Erhagbe and Ifidon, “African-Americans,” 69. For the connection between humanitarianism and empire, see Michael Barnett, *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011).

82 “Once More, Consider ‘Civilization’ in Ethiopia,” *The Daily Mirror (US)*, October 14, 1935, 19.

83 “Josephine Baker Pledges Aid to Italy,” *The Chicago Defender*, October 5, 1935, 1.

84 Du Bois, “Inter-Racial Implications,” 86.

85 Rogers, *Real Facts*, 19.

central authority for the slow pace of such efforts. As Reuben S. Young argued in *The Crisis*, “proclamations against slavery were ineffective except in the immediate territory of the Emperor.”⁸⁶ Emphasizing social and economic consequences, Rogers asserted “it was impossible, however, to bring about immediate emancipation because large numbers of the slaves had no homes. Turned adrift they would become beggars or bandits.”⁸⁷ For some African Americans, Ethiopian slavery was unfortunate, but as it was incomparable to Atlantic slavery and Ethiopia made efforts towards its gradual abolition, Ethiopian slavery was not an obstacle to solidarity.

Others emphasized that Ethiopian slavery, while problematic, was not exclusive to Ethiopia, and that the White world had nothing better to offer to people of African descent. After all, slavery and forms of unfree labor indistinguishable from it were practiced across the colonial world, including in Italian colonies. Reporting on the League of Nations proceedings in Geneva, *Afro-American* noted how the Italian delegate to the League “had to admit that slavery exists in the Italian colonies” following the publication of a report that concluded that “a system of compulsory labor, analogous to chattel slavery, obtains in the Italian possessions.”⁸⁸ A few weeks later, the *Associated Negro Press* pondered “why Mussolini doesn’t free the slaves in the Italian colonies of Tripoli and Eritrea if he is so fond of freedom?”⁸⁹ The charge with which Italy justified its aggression against Ethiopia applied to its colonial possessions, too. Additionally, the African American press emphasized that this was not a problem exclusive to Italian colonies. Mae Ida Solo-Billings reminded the readers of *The Chicago Defender* that there was “no hue and cry against England’s great ‘slave mines’ in South Africa; nor does [. . .] any righteous nation seem concerned about the existence of the same kind of slavery in the English ruled Hong Kong.”⁹⁰ In the context of the use of humanitarian concerns for imperialist ends, which the African Americans also witnessed in the League members’ treatment of Liberia in 1930s,⁹¹ African Americans doubted that the colonial powers could offer any better future to Ethiopians. As African American singer, actor, and activist Paul Robeson told the *Associated Negro Press* in January 1936:

My sympathy is with all the Ethiopians. It would seem that those people could get along without the kind of civilization that European nations do

86 Young, “Ethiopia Awakens,” 262.

87 Rogers, *Real Facts*, 20.

88 “League Learns of Slavery in Italy’s African Colonies,” *Afro-American*, June 22, 1935, 6.

89 A. E. White, “Italian Wants to Know Why Mussolini Doesn’t Free Slaves in Tripoli and Eritrea,” *Associated Negro Press*, July 20, 1935, 3.

90 Mae Ida Solo-Billings, “Ethiopia and Slaves,” *The Chicago Defender*, July 13, 1935, 12.

91 For how concerns about slavery were used to criticize the Liberian government and Pan-Africanist responses to it, see Esedebe, *Pan-Africanism*, 111–115.

with bombs and machine guns. There may be serious problems—slavery, for example, but Ethiopia could work out her own problems in time. There is no reason to believe Italy can work them out for her.⁹²

In the context of widespread colonial use of unfree labor, Italian concerns for slavery in Ethiopia were recognized by African Americans as an attempt to provide a veneer of legitimacy to their aggression. Accordingly, Italian occupation could not be an improvement for Ethiopians, free or enslaved. Whether the Ethiopian slavery was comparable to Atlantic chattel slavery or not, the experience of Africans across the continent demonstrated that colonial rule could not constitute an alternative.

Ethiopia being unfairly singled out on the issue of slavery fueled African American feelings of *ressentiment* and strengthened bonds of solidarity with Ethiopia. Because African Americans saw the treatment of Ethiopia as analogous to the treatment of people of African descent in the US, singling out of Ethiopia became another example of racial discrimination in the international arena. Already in May 1935, George Padmore warned the readers of *The Crisis* that Ethiopia was a price “white Europe” was ready to pay to preserve European peace, for the “white man’s continent is more important than the black man’s.”⁹³ To even “the most liberal whites,” Italian expansion in East Africa was acceptable because they believed “that the blacks are unfit to rule themselves and that Italy will civilize them.”⁹⁴ When the contents of the Hoare-Laval Plan, which proposed for most of the Ethiopian territory to be ceded to Italy, became public in December 1935, similar sentiment was repeated by others. Frank Marshall Davis, the managing editor of *Associated Negro Press*, wrote that “the loss of white prestige” was “a greater evil than threats of Italian rivalry” for White powers.⁹⁵ Ethiopia, in the words of *Defender*, was put “on the auction block.”⁹⁶ Such word choice, invoking the treatment of Africans at the hands of White slave traders, shows how African Americans perceived the treatment of Ethiopia.

Henry L. Rockel was even more explicit when it came to drawing parallels between the treatment of Ethiopia and African Americans. His *Defender* article emphasized how the different treatment of Ethiopia and Italy by the international community reflected the treatment of White and Black assailants under the US justice system:

92 “Paul Robeson Airs His Views and Sails,” *Associated Negro Press*, January 13, 1936, 3.

93 George Padmore, “Ethiopia and World Politics,” *The Crisis* 42, no. 5 (May 1935): 139.

94 Padmore, “Ethiopia,” 157.

95 Frank Marshall Davis, “World in Review,” *Associated Negro Press*, December 19, 1935, 1.

96 “Sacrifice Instead of Sanctions,” *The Chicago Defender*, December 21, 1935, 16.

When black rapes white, he is executed first and judged afterwards, but when white [. . .] rapes black, there is a marked difference of treatment of the white malefactor. The same white persons who would have pulled the noose about the neck of the black and applied match to the fagots piled about his body, are content to stand idly by while the white villain outrages the black victim. [. . .]. This is no exaggeration of what has taken place in regard to Mussolini's conduct in Ethiopia.⁹⁷

Italy was, like the White assailants in the US, supported by the inaction of others, and even rewarded by a peace proposal that sought to “take the possessions of the black victim and deliver them to the white rapist.”⁹⁸ In the eyes of African Americans, the Ethiopian invasion was proof, as a reader of the *Afro-American* put it, that:

We have no rights that the white man is bound to respect [. . .] people of African descent are held in contempt and loathing, trodden under foot, and despised by millions of white people. The white people of Maryland believe this, and so does Mussolini.⁹⁹

Similar sentiments were further entrenched in the summer of 1936 when it became clear that Ethiopia lost the war and the African American press began reporting on Italian plans for occupation. *Associated Negro Press*, for example, warned that Italian plans for racial segregation in Ethiopia indicated “a possibility that native Abyssinians may eventually share the fate of the American Indians by being crowded into oblivion.”¹⁰⁰ For African Americans, the treatment of Ethiopia was analogous to the treatment they—and other persons of color—experienced under the US system of racial discrimination.

This *ressentiment* among African Americans made responses to the issue of Ethiopian slavery possible. As Mihaela Mihai argues “reasoned argument [. . .] does not constitute the only mode of engaging legitimately in politics,” emotions and desires are just as important.¹⁰¹ *Ressentiment* thus allowed African Americans to construct solidarity with Ethiopia despite Ethiopian slavery. This does not mean that African Americans were blind to Ethiopian shortcomings—after all, African Americans agreed that Ethiopian slavery was regrettable. Rather, they felt that the colonial powers offered nothing better. As Solo-Billings put it, “no native African will ever tell you that the rule of a

97 Henry L. Rockel, “The Rape of Ethiopia,” *The Chicago Defender*, January 25, 1936, 11.

98 Rockel, “Rape of Ethiopia,” 11.

99 Robert F. Stansbury, “Help Ethiopians,” *Afro-American*, July 20, 1935, 4.

100 “Italy to Keep Races Separate in Ethiopian Colonization,” *Associated Negro Press*, June 24, 1936, 15.

101 Mihaela Mihai, “Theorizing Agonistic Emotions,” *Parallax* 20, no. 2 (2014): 34.

righteous race has dawned in Africa.”¹⁰² In this context, African Americans extended their solidarity to Ethiopia despite Ethiopian slavery. Moreover, feelings of *ressentiment* further strengthened the African American solidarity with Ethiopia that was built upon their racial identification with Ethiopia, the appeal of the Ethiopian historical model of Black nationhood, and Ethiopian Christianity. It was this combination that made possible what Brenda Gayle Plummer calls “a curious complementarity between foreign and domestic affairs” among the people of African descent in the US.¹⁰³

Conclusion

The present study of the construction of solidarity with Ethiopia among African Americans in the US in the years 1935-1936 offers several insights into the global history of the African diaspora. To begin with, it demonstrates that solidarity with Ethiopia was not predetermined, but constructed through political agitation. While African Americans’ racial identification with Ethiopia was a necessary condition for the construction of this solidarity, it was not sufficient. Ethiopia, contrary to Haiti or Liberia, was recognized as an alternative (imperial) model of Black nationhood and held religious importance for African American Christians. As this analysis of the articles and letters to the editor demonstrates, it was the combination of these three factors that enabled the construction of solidarity with Ethiopia among so many African Americans.

Similarly, the opposition of the minority of African Americans to the construction of solidarity with Ethiopia lends further credence to the view that solidarity was politically constructed rather than predetermined. A minority of the readers of and contributors to African American publications argued Ethiopia was undeserving of African American solidarity: they argued that Ethiopians were not Black and viewed other people of African descent negatively. Such opposition put the construction of solidarity with Ethiopia under strain and necessitated response from sympathetic African Americans, who emphasized the physical similarities between themselves and Ethiopians, as well as disputed claims of the latter’s negative attitudes towards other people of African descent. Importantly, even the nature of racial identification with Ethiopia had to be constructed, indicated by the presence of both advocates and opponents in the African American press. In sum, the first and second section of the dissertation reiterate the need for the global history of the African diaspora to not take diasporan identities for granted. Rather,

102 Solo-Billings, “Ethiopia and Slaves,” 12.

103 Plummer, *Rising Wind*, 37.

they tend to be part of historical and political processes of constitution and reconstitution, which continuously reinterpret the relationship between the diaspora and the African continent.

Moreover, this study highlights the role emotions played in this process, a dimension that has so far been underexplored. The singling out of Ethiopian slavery in the context of widespread colonial systems of unfree labor fueled feelings of *ressentiment* among African Americans against the systems of racial discrimination. The African diaspora in the US saw the treatment of Ethiopia as analogous to their treatment at home, enabling these feelings of *ressentiment* to spill into the arena of international relations. Many African Americans reasoned that the colonial powers could not offer an alternative to people of African descent. In such a context, the issue of Ethiopian slavery never became a major obstacle to the construction of solidarity with Ethiopia. In the end, African Americans' solidarity with an African country facing imperialist aggression was upheld by emotions against racial discrimination just as much as by any other factor.

Ultimately, this study shows that global histories of the African diaspora—and beyond—can benefit from the analysis of printed media not only as a “second-order mirror of what already exists, but as that form of representation which is able to constitute us as new kinds of subjects, and thereby enable us to discover places from which to speak.”¹⁰⁴ In 1935 and 1936, the African American press became a site where the events of the international crisis caused by Italian aggression against Ethiopia came to be interpreted. Not only did African American publications contest the actions and justifications of the Italian state, but African Americans also addressed and contested other African Americans' interpretations of the events in the realm of international relations. In this way, the African American press became a site where solidarity with Ethiopia was constructed. The analysis of the letters to the editors of the *Afro-American* and *The Chicago Defender* shows how ordinary African Americans engaged with these events, and how they contested their importance and meaning. To conclude, this study arrives at a more complete view of why African Americans vociferously extended solidarity to Ethiopia, and, therefore, how they reconstructed their diasporan identity in the years 1935-1936.

104 Hall, “Cultural Identity,” 237.

Sex Worker Activism, Transnationality, and the Imperial Gaze in Britain, France, and the United States, 1973–1990

ABSTRACT

This article comprehensively examines the transnational dynamics that characterised sex worker activism in the United States, Britain, and France between 1973 and 1990. Within these years and in each of these countries, sex workers formed formal activist groups and established transnational networks aimed at dismantling the systemic discrimination and criminalisation that sex workers faced. Within existing scholarship, the role of transnationality has yet to be examined. This article addresses this gap by offering a nuanced exploration of how transnationality profoundly shaped sex worker activism during these nascent years. I argue that transnationality was a significant aspect of sex worker activism through the exchange of insights and experiences across borders that emerged as a defining hallmark of their activism. Through transnational networks, sex worker activists formulated and honed their analysis and perspectives and supported each other's struggles across borders. Moreover, this research delves into the ways the activism of sex workers was also deeply embedded within the geopolitical landscape of the 1970s and 1980s. I critically examine the work of sex worker activists to advance our understanding of the complex interplay between transnational activism, internal dynamics, and the potential pitfalls of well-meaning engagement. By illuminating the diverse perspectives within the movement, shedding light on transnational networks, and scrutinising the subtle manifestations of neo-colonialism, the study enriches our comprehension of this transformative era in sex worker activism.

BY

Lola Dickinson

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lola Dickinson is a second-year PhD student at Birkbeck, University of London, in the School of Historical Studies. Her PhD project is centred around public health, HIV/AIDS and sex work in 1980s and 1990s Britain. She is the Senior Editor of the multidisciplinary student journal *Brief Encounters* and the publicity officer for History Lab, the United Kingdom's national network for postgraduate students in history and related disciplines. Currently, Lola is on placement at the University of Illinois, Chicago, working with Dr Jennifer Brier on Listening for the Long Haul, an oral history-based public humanities project on long COVID.

Introduction

In the documentary *Les Prostituées de Lyon Parlent* a sex worker, speaking at the 1975 occupation of St Nizier Church, Lyon, declared, “There aren’t many other ways to survive in today’s world other than what we do.”¹ The French occupation of St Nizier Church involved at least one hundred sex workers who took over the church for eight days from June 2, 1975. The sex workers demanded change in police conduct, an end to relentless fines and improved working conditions for those who sold sex. The occupation has come to represent one of the most enduring symbols of sex worker activism in the late twentieth century and has in many ways come to epitomise the struggle of sex workers’ rights during the latter half of the twentieth century. Across the 1970s and 1980s, sex workers in Western Europe and North America formed formal activist groups, collectives and networks which criticised the construction of “the prostitute” and advocated for the legitimacy of this work as well as for the corresponding labour rights of the newly termed “sex worker.”² These grassroots groups, though often driven by local and national goals, framed the struggle for sex workers’ rights as one that transcended national boundaries. The emerging articulations of “sex work” and “sex workers” were firmly placed within an understanding of, as the opening quote articulated, “today’s world.” This article attempts to trace exactly how this “world” was constructed by sex worker activists in the Global North, with a particular focus on the role and limits of transnationality within the activism of sex workers in the US, Britain, and France in the 1970s and 1980s. On the one hand, I argue that transnationality was a crucial aspect of sex workers’ rights activism in the US, Britain, and France. Yet, on the other hand, I point to the limits of this early activism through their universal understanding of the “sex worker” and their determination to universalise their claims across the globe.

Though historical works have called attention to the over-focus of the Global North within histories of sex worker activism, such as Kempadoo and Doezema’s pioneering *Global Sex Workers*, there are nuances of the activism of Britain, France and the US that remain unexamined.³ Specifically, this article interrogates the ways sex worker activists in Britain, France and the US engaged with “transnationalism” and how their work fits into

1 *Les Prostituées de Lyon Parlent*, directed by Carole Roussopoulos (France: Vidéo Out, 1975).

2 The term “sex work” was introduced by US activist Carol Leigh in the late 1970s. See Carole Leigh, “Inventing Sex Work,” in *Whores and Other Feminists*, ed. Jill Nagle (New York: Routledge, 1997).

3 This work made extremely important shifts in the conversations around sex workers activism and highlighted the cultural hegemony of the Global North within histories of sex workers’ rights. See Kamala Kempadoo and Jo Doezema, eds., *Global Sex Workers: Rights, Resistance, and Redefinition* (New York: Routledge, 1998).

wider geopolitical power dynamics. By drawing on both published and unpublished materials from sex worker groups of the 1970s and 1980s, including newsletters, position papers, and pamphlets, this article undertakes a twofold analysis of transnationality. First, it scrutinises the significance of transnational networks and exchange to sex worker activism. Second, it probes the integration of transnationalism within this activism. I focus on the largest and best documented activist groups including, the English Collective of Prostitutes (ECP) in London, the Programme for the Reform of the Laws on Soliciting (PROS) in Birmingham, UK, Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics (COYOTE) in San Francisco, the US PROStitutes Collective (US PROS) in New York and the National Task Force on Prostitution (NTFP) in the US. Each of these groups hoped to minimise the discrimination sex workers faced and reform national legislative frameworks. Yet, beyond national laws, each of these groups prioritised transnationality in their activism, and by the mid-1980s they increasingly attempted to forge groups that were not simply “sister” organisations involved in a dialogue across nations but were explicitly *international* in their activism.

In this article I point to the issues in the attempts of Western activists to represent and forge a global pursuit of sex workers’ rights in the 1980s and the aspects that represented a form of “neo-colonialism,” through which sex workers in the Global North assumed their own framework and analysis as globally relevant. Here, I am using Clisby and Enderstein’s definition of “neo-colonialism” which refers to, “the continued denomination of nations and peoples in the postcolonial context through economic and political structures of power,” as opposed to the explicit territorial acquisition significant to “colonialism.”⁴ Further, within this article I consider the extent to which sex worker activist groups in the US, Britain and France formulated their construction of “sex work” and “sex trafficking” through an imperial gaze. I utilise a definition of “imperial gaze” that builds from Mary Louise Pratt’s 1993 *Imperial Eyes* and the post-colonial scholarship of Ann Kaplan that underscores that this gaze assumes the superiority of the white Western subject and is unidirectional. Through this gaze, the Western voice defines how the non-Western subjects are seen, as well as how they see themselves.⁵

This article departs from conventional methodological nationalism by under-scoring the essential role of transnationality in understanding sex worker activism. As historian Stefan Eklof Amirell has argued, methodological

4 Suzanne Clisby and Athena-Maria Enderstein, “Caught between the Orientalist–Occidental Polemic: Gender Mainstreaming as Feminist Transformation or Neocolonial Subversion?,” *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 19, no. 2, 3 (April 2017): 234.

5 E. Ann Kaplan, *Looking for the Other: Feminism, Film, and the Imperial Gaze* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 78.

nationalism is centred on the nation-state, presuming that “historical narratives and interpretations are thus structured beforehand by national perspectives, limitations, sources, concepts, and categories.”⁶ In contrast, this study centres an explicitly transnational approach that acknowledges the significance of transnationality not only within the activism itself but within the contextualisation and shared understandings of sex work that the US, Britain and France held. This article offers a comprehensive view of both the transformative power and limitations to the extent of “transnationality” within an activist movement. In doing so, it challenges traditional historiographical frameworks and contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the intricate interplay between sex work activism, transnational dynamics, and the quest for global recognition of labour rights. Transnationality was a useful tool for sex worker activists that was embedded in their formation, strategy, and practice, but over time its application became limited. Far from representing dependence across borders the forms of internationalism by the mid 1980s were built around one understanding and interpretation of sex work that was both “liberal” and US-centric.

Transnationality and sex worker activism: Dependence across borders

In line with many activist movements of the 1970s and 1980s, transnationality emerged as a defining cornerstone within the landscape of sex worker activism across the Global North during the 1970s and 1980s. Sex worker collectives built transnational networks of solidarity and exchanged experiences, theories, and critiques of legislation and discourses around sex work. At the same time, sex worker collectives sat awkwardly with mainstream feminist groups who problematised the plight of the sex worker as subsumed easily within a feminist framework. In this context, transnationalism became a tool for sex worker collectives to make the explicit point that the category of “the prostitute” was as universal as the category of “the woman” and, in this way, reflected many of the shortcomings of the so-called second wave by assuming a Western-defined perspective as absolute.

The centrality of transnationalism is immediately clear in the formation of sex worker collectives that sprung up across the 1970s and 1980s. As Australian scholar Eurydice Aroney has noted, the French sex workers’ occupation of 1975 constituted the “building [of] a new collective that fed into

6 Stefan Eklöf Amirell, “The End of Methodological Nationalism: The Internationalization of Historical Research in Sweden since 2000,” *Scandinavian Journal of History* (December 2021): 2.

the emerging global sex workers' rights movement."⁷ The English translation of the book *Prostitutes, Our Life*, based on interviews with French sex workers was published in 1980. It included contributions from both US and British sex worker activists. In this, COYOTE founder Margo St James argued that "the inspiration I felt when I read of the French women's occupation of the churches was extremely important to my decision to continue the campaign in the United States. And again, the success the English women had."⁸ Similarly, the ECP argued that "perhaps the greatest victory of the French strike was the birth of the prostitutes' organisations all over the world... it was now easy to decide that abolition of the prostitution laws was what we wanted."⁹ In this way, the collectives and their theoretical underpinnings were formed through transnational exchanges. There was a dynamic aspect of transnationalism beyond mere expressions of international solidarity: the groups were made and remade in relation to one another. This can be seen, for example, in the fact that the ECP's largest display of activism in this period was the 1982 occupation of the Holy Cross Church in King's Cross, London. The ECP took over the church for twelve days and demanded an end to police racism with a banner that read "Mothers Need Money." This was a direct echo of the French occupation in Lyon seven years prior. During the French occupation, banners had read "*nos enfants ne veulent pas leurs mères en prison* (our children don't want their mothers in prison)." The strategies and ideological underpinnings of their activism was something that took direct influence from their French counterparts.

Activists argued that it was through transnational exchanges they were able to formulate a cogent theorisation of sex work. Though it is worth noting that there were key aspects that these groups ideologically diverged on, they ultimately shared the belief that sex work was work, sex work should be decriminalised, and that the marginalisation of sex workers was one example of the oppression of women. As the ECP argued in the introduction to the French collection *Prostitutes, Our Life*, these groups shared the belief that "prostitution laws are not only about prostitutes. They keep all women under control."¹⁰ Further, within the undated publication "Who are the ECP?," the ECP stated that international networks of sex workers "made it possible to find out about each other's situation under different governments and types of legislation, whether 'prohibition' or 'legalisation'."¹¹ Here, the ECP

7 Eurydice Aroney, "The 1975 French Sex Workers' Revolt: A Narrative of Influence," *Sexualities* 23, no. 1-2 (February 2020): 64-80.

8 Margo St James, "What's a Girl Like You...?," in *Prostitutes, Our Life*, ed. Claude Jaget (Bristol, England: Falling Wall Press, 1980).

9 Claude Jaget, ed., *Prostitutes, Our Life* (Bristol, England: Falling Wall Press, 1980).

10 English Collective of Prostitutes, "Introduction: On the Game and On the Move," in *Prostitutes, Our Life*, ed. Claude Jaget (Bristol, England: Falling Wall Press, 1980), 21.

11 English Collective of Prostitutes, "Who Are the ECP?," n.d., ref. ECP/1, Bishopsgate

argued that the exchange of experience and knowledge, specifically under different legal frameworks, helped develop their own analysis and positionality on sex work. Indeed, in their 1980 published chapter *The Rules of the Game*, the ECP argued specifically that “although the laws in relation to prostitution differ from country to country, the effect of the laws on prostitute women is fundamentally the same all over the world.”¹² At the anniversary of the French occupation in June 1976, Wilmette Brown, a member of the Black Women for Wages for Housework (USA) and representing the ECP, opened her speech by stating that, “I am here this evening to support you in the struggle of prostitute women in France, because this struggle is also the struggle of Black women in the USA.”¹³ Embedded throughout their work, sex worker activists drew parallels and used this to make connections between the gendered discriminations of sex workers that were not considered to be nation-based. In 1980, the ECP argued that “the differences in the laws between France and England, for example, are so minor that all the problems prostitute women face in France are faced also by prostitutes in England. The same is true for the US.”¹⁴ Throughout the mid-1970s and early 1980s, sex worker activists drew connections between the oppression of sex workers and actively sought to emphasise the similarities of their experiences. This comparison drew on both the similarities in legislation around sex work but also similarities in how prostitution was policed and who was policed under this legislation. Each country was, for example, particularly explicit on the fact that Black sex workers were those most likely to be arrested and sentenced under sex work legislation.

Newsletters of activist groups consistently highlighted the contemporary work of sex worker activists in different countries. In a 1977 bulletin of the Birmingham-based British group the Programme for the Reform of the Law on Soliciting (PROS), the PROS cited the work of COYOTE in San Francisco and promoted their newsletter “COYOTE Howls” which, they argued, “uncovers exploitation by police and hotels” in the US.¹⁵ Similarly, within COYOTE Howls, a section “Around the World in Eighty Lays: From S.F to Rome” detailed sex workers’ experiences and activism in many different cities and countries.¹⁶ A

Institute, UK.

12 English Collective of Prostitutes, “The Rules of the Game,” in *Prostitutes, Our Life*, ed. Claude Jaget (Bristol, England: Falling Wall Press, 1980).

13 English Collective of Prostitutes, “Introduction.”

14 English Collective of Prostitutes, “Rules of Game.”

15 Programme for the Reform of the Law on Soliciting, “PROS Bulletin, No.1,” April 1977, ref. 1100/2/1, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, United Kingdom.

16 E.g., Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics, “COYOTE HOWLS, Volume 5, Number 1,” Spring 1978, ref. 81-M32-90-M1-43, Schlesinger Library, Harvard University, United States; Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics, “COYOTE HOWLS, Volume 5, Number 2,” Fall 1978, ref. 81-M32-90-M1-43, Schlesinger Library, Harvard University, United States.

1979 newsletter had submissions from the PROS and the London-based group Prostitute Laws Are Nonsense (PLAN) in an attempt to “keep up with events as they happen in this country and around the world.”¹⁷ The constant exchange of dialogue and information between these groups is prolific. The newsletters were the primary communication tool with members, and the transnational aspect of sex worker activism was continually emphasised. The contribution from Helen Buckingham, the founder of PLAN, even complained that “I still cannot get women here [in Britain] to accept that COYOTE’s methods work.”¹⁸ This indicates the strained relationship between sex worker activism and mainstream feminist groups, and demonstrates the prolific nature of the shared exchange of information and tactics across borders. For Buckingham, the activism of the US appeared as more of a source of inspiration than local organising did. The purpose of the newsletters of sex worker activist groups in part was to situate local activism within a broader, international sex worker movement. Thus, the newsletters consistently underscored the transnational dimensions of sex worker activism, reflecting, reinforcing, and furthering its significance.

Within the very foundation of many of these activist groups, transnationality was an explicit goal of their activism and informed how sex worker activists framed their groups. In an undated publication titled “Who are the ECP?,” the ECP recorded that “we have organised across national boundaries, helping to build a network of prostitutes’ organisations which is an integral part of the international women’s movement.”¹⁹ In forming and articulating their identity, the ECP centralised their transnational participation in activism. This trend of emphasising the importance of transnationality to augment the significance of the groups’ activism was in no way limited to the ECP. The second listed “Accomplishment” of COYOTE in a letter of 1975 for a grant application noted the introduction of “Sister chapters in Seattle, New York, San Diego, Honolulu, Los Angeles and Mexico City, France...”²⁰ The development and upkeep of these “sister” chapters is preserved also within the meticulous record-keeping of the listed “sister” organisations of COYOTE updated year-on-year.²¹ Language of “sister” organisations, a mainstay of “second wave feminism,” permeate discussions and illustrates that sex worker initiatives saw themselves as part of a wider collective struggle that linked

17 Call Off Your Tired Old Ethics, “COYOTE HOWLS, Volume 6, Number 1,” 1979, ref. 81-M32-90-M1-43, Schlesinger Library, Harvard University, United States.

18 “COYOTE HOWLS, Volume 6, Number 1,” Schlesinger Library.

19 English Collective of Prostitutes, “Who Are the ECP?”

20 Call Off Your Tired Old Ethics, “Letter from COYOTE: A Loose Woman’s Organisation, June 6, 1975, to Mr. Herb Allen from the ‘Regional Young Adult Project,’” 6 June 1975, ref. 81-M32-90-M1-26, Schlesinger Library, Harvard University, United States.

21 Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics, “Sister Organisations,” ca. 1973-1977, ref. 81-M32-90-M1-26, Schlesinger Library, Harvard University, United States.

women rhetorically and ideologically. The ECP framed the social and legal struggle of sex workers as transcendent of national borders, and situated the struggle of the sex worker as a gendered and universal issue.

In this way, the emphasis on transnationality served as a strategic means of legitimising sex worker activism within the broader feminist framework. By highlighting the activism and experiences of sex workers in different countries, sex worker activists explicitly placed themselves within an ongoing transnational struggle for women's rights. The sex worker movement struggled to gain legitimacy within the broader feminist movement. Many feminists and feminist groups rejected sex work ideologically and considered sex workers collaborators of patriarchy. The notorious "sex wars" of second wave feminism continued to situate the figure of the "sex worker" in an ambiguous position in relation to women's rights- sometimes as the pinnacle of women's oppression and at other times the colluders with it. In 1976, the COYOTE newsletter included a segment from a member, Laughing Lion, who argued that "the most cruel criticism of COYOTE has come from individual feminists."²² Similarly, in 1983, the ECP complained in their newsletter that "most so-called feminist organisations didn't bother to come to support prostitute women."²³ Through articulating demands as exclusively gendered, however, sex worker groups hoped to subsume themselves within the broader feminist struggle, highlighting the universality of sex workers' experiences as women who faced discrimination and as mothers who hoped to provide for their children.

The discourses surrounding "the prostitute" that these groups depicted overwhelmingly gendered the figure of the sex worker, and almost exclusively discussed the "sex worker" with female pronouns. They situated their own struggle for sex workers' rights as part of a broader struggle for women's rights. The ECP, for example, argued that the French national hookers' strike was "one of the most dramatic events of the women's movement internationally," whilst COYOTE spokeswoman St James argued that "whores should be on the frontline of the women's movement."²⁴ While all the groups acknowledged that sex work represented something of a "difficult issue" for feminists, they each decidedly placed sex worker activism within this framework.²⁵ By constructing the sex worker, the prostitute, or the whore as

22 Call Off Your Tired Old Ethics, "International COYOTE Howls, Volume 3, Number 1," 1976, ref. 81-M32-90-M1-43, Schlesinger Library, Harvard University, United States.

23 English Collective of Prostitutes, "Network: News from the English Collective of Prostitutes. No. 1," July 1983, ref. ECP, Bishopsgate Institute, UK.

24 English Collective of Prostitutes, "Introduction," 10; Gail Pheterson, ed., *A Vindication of the Rights of Whores* (Seattle, WA: Seal Press, 1989), 20.

25 National Task Force on Prostitution, Priscilla Alexander and Gloria Lockett, "Violence Against Prostitutes," 1987, ref. 81-M32-90-M1-33, Schlesinger Library, Harvard University,

exclusively female, sex worker activists challenged feminists who claimed prostitution a “difficult issue.” When the ECP noted that, “we have organised across national boundaries, helping to build a network of prostitutes’ organisations which is an integral part of the international women’s movement,” they touted their legitimacy as activists and as feminists.²⁶

The transnationality of these sex worker groups was, however, firmly centred around the Global North. Despite making frequent claims to universality, what emerges are clear boundaries to this internationalism. COYOTE’s newsletter’s “Around the World” section demonstrates the unacknowledged Western centrism of some sex worker activism. It overwhelmingly includes the activities of many different states in the US, Britain, and smaller discussions of other Western and Central European countries, but rarely from beyond. The Spring 1978 newsletter, for example, contained lengthy discussions of Holland, Switzerland, Sweden, Denmark and Paris and one short paragraph on Mexico.²⁷ Curiously, one third of the paragraph on Mexico discussed “prostitutes in Spain” who had “threatened to divulge the names of high members of the Spanish government who frequented bordellos”; the colonial relationships between the Global North and Global South were clearly recognised but remained unproblematised. The Fall 1978 newsletter discussed only activities within the USA and Europe.²⁸ What begins to emerge is the limits to the “world” through which sex worker activists operated. Similarly, in the appendix of Jaget’s 1980 *Prostitutes, Our Life*, the ECP argued the experiences of sex workers were the “same all over the world,” yet their expansion of this argument included examples only from Western Europe and the US.²⁹ Thus, we can recognise the inherent tension within the framework and perspective of groups such as COYOTE and the ECP. While on the one hand, they hoped to universalise the plight of the sex worker, on the other they failed to reflect or critically analyse the ways that the figure of the sex worker was culturally produced in different ways nor their place within the geopolitical landscape. They continued to argue and depict the discrimination that sex workers experienced as globally uniform though racially stratified, but this was informed by an analysis of the experiences of sex workers only in North America and Western Europe. Thus, while they drew attention to racial differences, by highlighting the increased violence that Black women who sold sex faced, they assumed the same cultural understanding of the “sex worker” or “the prostitute”: a woman who *chose* to sell sex to provide for herself and her family. It was this understanding which

United States.

26 English Collective of Prostitutes, “Who Are the ECP?”

27 “COYOTE HOWLS, Volume 5, Number 1,” Schlesinger Library.

28 “COYOTE HOWLS, Volume 5, Number 2,” Schlesinger Library.

29 English Collective of Prostitutes, “Rules of Game,” 205.

in the later decades came to complicate how certain groups reckoned with the global manifestations of selling sex, as I will detail later in this article.

The imperial gaze

Throughout the 1980s, it was not only that groups hoped to foster networks, exchange experiences, and collaborate, there were more concrete attempts to introduce formal international groups that represented sex workers globally. In contrast to “sister groups,” the 1980s brought with it attempts to forge “international” collectives that sought global change. The ECP organisationally expanded to establish an international collective, and from the mid-1980s the ECP and their direct US-counterpart, the US Collective (US PROS), positioned themselves as two branches of one wider (transnational) collective called the International Prostitutes Collective (IPC) that also included representatives from Canada and Trinidad and Tobago.³⁰ Similarly, by the 1980s, COYOTE had emerged as the largest sex worker collective in the US, and the liberal standpoint of their analysis was clear. From the mid-1980s COYOTE, re-named the National Task Force on Prostitution (NTFP), turned also to international organising. The mid-1980s therefore represent a moment where the shift from transnational exchanges and cooperation to international platforms wholly emerged. In the following sections, I aim to analyse how this internationalism developed through analysing the work of the NTFP and its development into the International Committee of Prostitutes’ Rights (ICPR). The ICPR was formed in 1985 by US-activists Margo St James and Gail Pheterson following the First World Whores’ Conference held in Amsterdam.³¹

The use and perpetuation of colonial imagery in anti-trafficking campaigns have been well documented. Kempadoo argued that the construction of sex trafficking by anti-sex trafficking activists included colonial imagery “without shame” as women within the Global South were depicted as “incapable of self-determination.”³² Anti-trafficking activist groups proliferated in the 1980s, including the infamous US-based Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW), led by Kathleen Barry, which was

30 Unlike the other “sister” groups which were usually defined as distinct groups with separate goals but who fostered solidarity with one another, the relationship between the ECP and the US PROS was more developed. This was reflected in the fact that their goals were the same and the two groups merely represented two “branches” of the same network.

31 Valerie Jenness, “From Sex as Sin to Sex as Work: COYOTE and the Reorganization of Prostitution as a Social Problem,” *Social Problems* 37, no. 3 (August 1990): 410.

32 Kamala Kempadoo, “Introduction: Globalizing Sex Workers’ Rights,” in *Global Sex Workers: Rights, Resistance, and Redefinition*, ed. Kamala Kempadoo and Jo Doezema (New York: Routledge, 1998).

established in 1988.³³ Barry specifically relied on colonial imagery to further her activism, in which “vulnerable” women from the Global South were depicted as “victims” forced to sell sex for the profit of men.³⁴ As Doezema has argued, anti-sex trafficking campaigns were in many ways reformulations of earlier narratives of “white slavery,” “moral crusades” through which activists challenged definitions and legislation around sex work.³⁵ Further, Doezema has situated these campaigns as a form of neo-colonialism through which Western superiority and the need to “rescue” women in the Global South were established.

I build on this analysis to argue that such discourses around the construction of the sex worker and the figure of the sex trafficked woman were embedded within many “liberal” constructions of sex work during the 1970s and 1980s furthered by some sex worker organisations. The NTFP utilised imperial discourses to argue for the “choice” of sex work within Western states. Like Barry’s construction of sex trafficking, the NTFP’s depiction of “forced prostitution” relied on and perpetuated imperialist discourses of women and sex workers in the Global South. In a discussion paper authored by Priscilla Alexander and published in 1987 titled, “On Prostitution,” an entire page was devoted to outlining the reality of “Forced Prostitution.” This paper highlighted that:

Technological western countries, where most women are at least functionally literate and there is a significant array of occupational choices, about 10 percent of women who work as prostitutes are coerced into prostitution by third parties through a combination of trickery and violence... At the other extreme, in India, where there is massive poverty with large numbers of people dying in the streets, and where there are few occupations open to women, 70-80 percent of the women who work as prostitutes are forced into the life.³⁶

In their discussions of “forced prostitution,” the language and imagery around their descriptions are worth highlighting. The United States and India were depicted as “extreme” opposites, in which “technological western countries” offer the best conditions for women, in contrast to India in which people die

33 Charlotte Valadier, “Migration and Sex Work through a Gender Perspective,” *Contexto Internacional* 40, no. 3 (December 2018): 505.

34 Nandita Sharma, “Anti-Trafficking Rhetoric and the Making of a Global Apartheid,” *NWSA Journal* Autumn 17, no. 3 (Autumn 2005): 100.

35 Jo Doezema, “Loose Women or Lost Women? The Re-Emergence of the Myth of White Slavery in Contemporary Discourses of Trafficking in Women,” *Gender Issues* 18, no. 1 (December 1999): 23-50.

36 National Task Force on Prostitution and Priscilla Alexander, “On Prostitution,” February 1987, ref. 81-M32-90-M1-33, Schlesinger Library, Harvard University, United States.

on the streets and women have no, or limited, agency and are, therefore, “forced into the life” of sex work. Through this portrayal, the NTFP employed the “free” and “oppressed” dichotomy to the Global North and South: only in the West were women able to make the “occupational choices” that facilitated acceptable sex work.

This depiction fits with the arguments of postcolonial scholar Chandra Talpade Mohanty on the construction of the “third world woman” by Western feminists.³⁷ Mohanty argued that, within certain feminist depictions, the “third world woman leads an essentially truncated life based on her feminine gender (read: sexually constrained) and being ‘third world’ (read: ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition-bound, domestic, family-oriented, victimized, etc).”³⁸ These constructions can be seen within the NTFP’s depictions which drew on the “poverty,” illiteracy, occupation options which were all highlighted as limiting the agency Indian women were afforded.³⁹ Certainly, women living in India were victimised through this narrative in which they had limited “choices.” This fits Mohanty’s assertions that Western feminism can erase “the fundamental complexities and conflicts which characterize the lives of women of different classes, religions, cultures, races and castes.” Such descriptions constructed the “third world woman” as homogenous and as the antithesis to the Western woman; though womanhood was universal it was only within the West that true “freedom” could be experienced. Mohanty argued that it is through the construction of the “third world woman” that Western feminists were able to create the “(singular and privileged) first world” through a binary analytic.⁴⁰

The NTFP’s discussion of forced prostitution was expanded later in the same paper with the assertion that “In India, young girls are sometimes sold by their parents to traders, allegedly for service to the ‘goddess,’ but actually for work in brothels in major cities.”⁴¹ The NTFP’s assumptions and lack of critical interrogation of stereotypes, which were of course created, reflected, and furthered through such language, is apparent. The NTFP’s construction of the Global South was explicitly predicated upon the superiority of a (Western) secular society for the control which women had over their own lives, which Mohanty argued was a significant aspect of the discursive self-presentation of Western feminists.⁴² The NTFP’s arguments followed this framework,

37 Chandra Talpade Mohanty, “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses,” *Boundary 2* 12/13 (1984): 353.

38 Mohanty, “Under Western Eyes,” 337.

39 “On Prostitution,” Schlesinger Library.

40 “On Prostitution,” Schlesinger Library.

41 “On Prostitution,” Schlesinger Library.

42 Mohanty, “Under Western Eyes,” 353.

as the construction of sex work in India was used to reinforce the freedom and choice that Western women were afforded and absolve Western sex workers, within this context, from charges of sex trafficking. This situated “sex trafficking” as something very real but predominantly external to the US/ the West and lent into the solution of the intervention and “saving” of women in the Global South, in this example in India.

In 2001, Doezema argued that depictions of sex workers in the Global South utilised by anti-trafficking activists served to contrast between the “liberated” woman and the oppressed and became the “image of sexually subordinated womanhood.”⁴³ While Doezema analysed the notorious Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW), these same colonial divisions and understandings of women in the Global South are recognisable in the work of the NTFP, an association that was assumed to be far more radical, left-wing and supportive of sex workers’ rights. As Doezema highlighted, these constructions of women in the Global South were not new. Rather, these constructions can be seen as reformulations of understandings of sex work, innocence, and gender “established by over a century of feminist, abolitionist and colonialist discourse.”⁴⁴ Despite being acutely aware of the racialised dynamics of sex work within the West as well as attempting to forge an international plight for sex workers’ rights, the NTFP’s work was overshadowed by uninterrogated assumptions. The dichotomised depiction of sex workers in the Global North and the Global South was not based on the incorporation of standpoints from a diverse range of countries. The NTFP’s construction of sex trafficking relied on constructed and reinforced colonial understandings of gender in the Global South, through which divisions between the Global North and Global South were discursively maintained.

Discursive borders: The worldwide whore?

The First World Whores Congress, held in Amsterdam in 1985, was, as gender studies scholar Penny Weiss argued, “the result of years of local organizing and coalition building in many sites around the world.”⁴⁵ It was a congress organised by COYOTE/NTFP and led by Margo St James, a former sex worker leader of COYOTE/NTFP, and Gail Pheterson, an American researcher of sex work. At this Congress, the International Committee of Prostitutes’ Rights (ICPR) was formed, drafting the World Charter for Prostitutes’ Rights (WCPR),

43 Jo Doezema, “Ouch! Western Feminists’ ‘Wounded Attachment’ to the ‘Third World Prostitute,’” *Feminist Review*, no. 67 (2001): 32.

44 Doezema, “Western Feminists,” 32.

45 Penny A. Weiss, ed., *Feminist Manifestos: A Global Documentary Reader* (NYU Press, 2018), 302.

and establishing an international newsletter, the World Wide Whore's News (WWWNNews). Criminologist Valerie Jenness argued that the ICPR and World Charter were the culmination of the attempt to forge a collaborative international movement by St James and Pheterson and, thus, represented "COYOTE's international crusade."⁴⁶

Jenness' use of the term "crusade" to describe the process through which COYOTE aimed to "redefine prostitution as a social problem" is particularly striking.⁴⁷ The term "crusade" has a long history not least within histories of sex work in which it is usually associated with a "moral crusade against prostitution" seen within, for example, white slavery campaigns in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries or, from the 1980s, in association with anti-trafficking campaigns.⁴⁸ Yet, it is also deeply related to colonial histories of territorial and cultural domination and acquisition.⁴⁹ Thus, while Jenness was uncritical of this term, the term "international crusade" is pertinent to the histories of the ICPR. The leaders of this "crusade" were Western European and American and while they hoped for the congress to build a global movement, the ability to achieve this was limited. As an "international crusade," both the ICPR and the WCPR illustrated the Western-centrism and neo-colonial aspects which were embedded in earlier sex worker activism of the 1970s. Indeed, though in 1981, St James complained that "the whores of Manila, as the ones in Bangkok, don't care much about the theories of the feminists in the developed countries," the events of the 1980s saw the expansion of international attempts at organising.⁵⁰

As with the previous newsletters of individual campaigns, the continued Western centrism of the WWWNNews is significant. The newsletter itself included reports from various countries and in the first newsletter, the WWWNNews included contributions from Italy, Germany, Switzerland, France, Belgium, England, USA over four pages of the eleven-page newsletter.⁵¹ In a separate section, the WWWNNews included two short paragraphs on

46 Jenness, "From Sex as Sin," 410.

47 Jenness, "From Sex as Sin," 403.

48 E.g., Brian Donovan, *White Slave Crusades: Race, Gender, and Anti-Vice Activism, 1887-1917* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006); Ronald Weitzer, "The Social Construction of Sex Trafficking: Ideology and Institutionalization of a Moral Crusade," *Politics & Society* 35, no. 3 (September 2007): 447-475.

49 E.g., Livingstone M. Huff, "The Crusades and Colonial Imperialism: Some Historical Considerations Concerning Christian-Muslim Interaction and Dialogue," *Missiology: An International Review* 32, no. 2 (April 2004): 141-148.

50 Margo St James, "Letter from 'Margo, Jennifer, et Al,'" 5 March 1981, ref. 81-M32-90-M1-546, Schlesinger Library, Harvard University, United States.

51 International Committee for Prostitutes' Rights, "World Wide Whore's News, Volume 1, Number 1," December 1985, ref. 81-M32-90-M1-557, Schlesinger Library, Harvard University, United States.

experiences of sex workers in Japan and Egypt in significantly less detail. As Kempadoo and Doezema have highlighted, it was not until the 1990s that sex worker activism began to emerge within the Global South.⁵² It was not that groups and newsletters actively excluded or minimised the activism of countries within the Global South, but rather that they uncritically positioned themselves as the leader of an assumed “global” campaign with little consideration for the regional specificities of their positionality or activism.

The ICPR was shaped by a distinctly liberal and US-centric understanding of “sex work,” “sexuality,” and “consent” under the leadership of COYOTE / NTFP members. The 1985 World Charter stated that the ICPR’s first demand was to “Decriminalize all aspects of adult prostitution resulting from individual decision.”⁵³ Many of the position papers of COYOTE and the NTFP had similar conclusions around consent and sex work, such as an undated paper on sex worker legislation of the NTFP which argued “All sexual behaviour, in private, between consenting adults should be outside the purview of the law.”⁵⁴ This analysis reflected the liberal perspective of COYOTE and the NTFP which centred “choice” and “privacy” in constructing legality around sex work. This liberal perspective was significant especially within the context of the prominence of radical feminism in the US, as radical feminists and anti-trafficking activists argued that sex work “willingly entered into is as damaging as forced prostitution.”⁵⁵ Situated within these debates, liberal sex worker activist groups such as COYOTE and the NTFP frequently distinguished sex work from “forced prostitution” to underline the consent and agency that sex workers had. The ICPR’s charter replicated and reinforced a liberal framework of sex work which was built especially from COYOTE/ the NTFP’s understandings of sex work. How sex work was framed within the ICPR’s analysis, and how it was legitimised, was through a North American lens. The ICPR was firmly based on liberal and American understandings of legitimate (and illegitimate) forms of sex work.

According to law scholar Chi Adanna Mgbako, sex worker activists’ utilisation of a human rights framework served as a “powerful feminist critique of whorephobia, the politics of rescue, and carceral feminism.” I argue, however, that this utilisation of the concept of human rights only

52 Chi Adanna Mgbako, “The Mainstreaming of Sex Workers’ Rights as Human Rights,” *Harvard Journal of Law & Gender* 43 (2020): 136.

53 Penny A. Weiss, ed., “World Charter for Prostitutes’ Rights: First World Whores’ Congress; International Committee for Prostitutes’ Rights; Amsterdam, Netherlands; February 1985,” in *Feminist Manifestos: A Global Documentary Reader* (New York: NYU Press, 2018).

54 National Task Force on Prostitution, “Prostitution and the Constitution,” n.d., ref. 81-M32-90-M1-33, Schlesinger Library, Harvard University, United States.

55 Kate Sutherland, “Work, Sex, and Sex-Work: Competing Feminist Discourses on the International Sex Trade,” *Osgoode Hall Law Journal* 42, no. 1 (2004): 160.

reinforced the Western framing that the ICPR represented, and homogenised the construct of the “prostitute” that was relatively incompatible outside a Western framework.⁵⁶ In other words, though Mgbako stated that “the mainstreaming of sex workers’ rights as human rights should mark the end of feminist debates regarding sex work,” it is, I argue, pertinent to concede that the universalisation of Western understandings of rights is at its core in conflict with anti-colonial feminism. The ICPR’s framework explicitly defined sex work against sex trafficking, the Global North against the Global South and seemingly colluded with (not critiqued) “the politics of rescue.” Feminist philosopher Ranjoo Seodu Herr has argued that human rights campaigns, and especially feminist human rights campaigns, “may replicate the imperialist stance of the colonial era and erode culturally diverse modes of gender justice in the Global South.”⁵⁷ The experiences of those who sold sex in the Global South were not included in the ICPR’s demands or critiques. During the Second World Whores Congress in 1986, the special session on human rights had testimonies which were overwhelmingly from the Global North and especially Europe. Of fifteen reports, four were from the Global South (Ecuador, India, Vietnam, Thailand), and eleven were from Western and Central Europe and North America. In Pheterson’s 1989 *A Vindication of the Rights of Whores*, she provided a transcript of testimony from the human rights sessions of the Second World Whores’ Congress. Within the fifty pages, only eight and a half refer to testimonies from the Global South. Criticising the present-day “Women’s Rights as Human Rights” movement, Seodu Herr argued that this fails to exemplify “transnational feminist solidarity,” as it does not “represent the standpoint of marginalized/oppressed women in the Global South.”⁵⁸ These same conclusions, I argue, can be drawn from the recourse to human rights for sex workers. Despite this, the ICPR made continual claims to universality, setting the terms of debate and platforming their own interpretations of the “sex worker.” The representation at the Congress itself was telling. As Meg Weeks has noted, in lieu of representatives from non-Western countries, “Pheterson and St James asked immigrant advocates living in the Netherlands to speak about the status of sex work in their home countries.”⁵⁹ This was explained as the ICPR had been unable to provide economic compensation for international flights and accommodation to allow for individuals from non-Western countries to travel to the Congress held in Europe. Though this on the one hand reflects the difficulties of international

56 Mgbako, “Mainstreaming of Sex Workers,” 136.

57 Ranjoo Seodu Herr, “Women’s Rights as Human Rights and Cultural Imperialism,” *Feminist Formations* 31, no. 3 (2019): 118.

58 Seodu Herr, “Women’s Rights,” 118.

59 Meg Weeks, “A Prostitutes’ Jamboree: The World Whores’ Congresses of the 1980s and the Rise of a New Feminism,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 31, no. 3 (September 2022): 273-301.

organising and obtainment of funds for discussions around sex work and sex worker liberation, on the other hand it points to the priorities of the ICPR that nonetheless claimed to be wholly “international.”

There was, therefore, a clear tension between how the ICPR grew to construct the “sex worker” around a language of “choice” so typical of the neoliberal shift in the 1980s. In a 1989 chapter titled “Reports and New Voices,” Pheterson partly acknowledged this when she expressed her hopes that the ICPR would expand beyond being “a young organisation which began in the West,” and stating that: “In the coming months we expect to expand our network as we organise the next World Whores’ Congress, a meeting which will prioritise the rights of sex workers from developing countries.”⁶⁰ Yet, this third Congress never occurred and the activity of the ICPR declined at this point. The integration of “developing countries” would require a more expansive framework of the “sex worker” than the ICPR employed. Through building an understanding of sex work around choice, these same cultural manifestations were unable to translate easily in the ICPR’s pursuit of global expansion. From the 1980s sex workers in the Global South formed their own collectives, as Kempadoo and Doezema have chronicled. These groups largely rejected the frameworks of the ICPR and called attention to the neocolonial dynamics of the late twentieth century. In this way, their aims and approach held markedly different priorities, most notably with the centrality of AIDS from the mid-1980s to their plight.⁶¹ These groups made critical interventions to understandings of the “sex worker” and rejected a neoliberal framework of selling sex.

Through an analysis of Western sex worker activism in the late twentieth century it is possible to chart not only the impact of neoliberalism on the sex workers’ rights movement but also an understanding of how certain constructions of “sex work” have morphed over time. Transnationality was undoubtedly a central aspect of sex worker activism for those organising in the US, Britain and France in the late twentieth century. Across the 1970s and the early 1980s as sex worker collectives emerged, they were brought into a wider conversation amongst sex worker activists both nationally and internationally. Through these networks, groups developed their positionality, organised events, and promoted international activism. The representation within these transnational networks is significant as well as the emphasis given to predominantly North American and Western European voices. Further, by focusing on the NTFP, an American liberal sex worker group, I have also argued

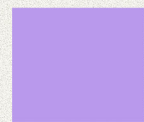
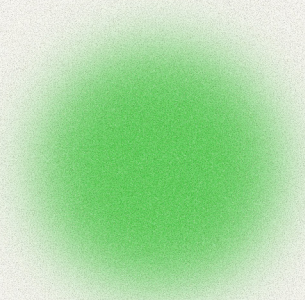
60 Gail Pheterson, ed., *A Vindication of the Rights of Whores* (Seattle, WA: Seal Press, 1989), 259.

61 Kempadoo and Doezema, *Global Sex Workers*.

that some Western sex worker activists were involved in the construction of sex work and sex trafficking that represented and perpetuated a form of neo-colonialism. The figure of the “sex worker” as well as the concept of “sex trafficking” was constructed within a Western liberal framework that emphasised the centrality of “choice” within debates around sex work.

From the mid-1980s, Western sex worker activists specifically aimed to pursue an international campaign. While this may have been in recognition of the shared discriminations that sex workers faced, this was also built from an understanding of the West as culturally superior, as leaders of “women’s rights.” As they explicitly attempted to universalise their demands, these continued to form from and through the experiences of women in the West who sold sex, though now they explicitly spoke for a wider audience. The emerging dominance of a liberal and American perspective within so-called international activism is a crucial limitation of this early activism. Within their organising and praxis, activists grappled with how to navigate both emerging calls for decolonial approaches to feminism whilst also attempting to assimilate within the broader mainstream feminist movement. Yet, through the attempts to globalise sex worker demands these activists also spoke over and for the Global South; despite the “international” nature of the organising, the dominant framing of sex worker rights was formed in opposition to the Global South.

II. BOOK REVIEWS



**Racism and the Making of Gay Rights:
A Sexologist, His Student, and the
Empire of Queer Love.**

**By Laurie Marhoefer. Toronto:
University of Toronto Press, 2022.
Pp. 334. ISBN: 9781487523978.**

REVIEWED BY

Oliver Jung

ABOUT THE REVIEWER

Oliver Jung is finishing his Master's in Global History at the Freie Universität Berlin. Oliver is fascinated by early twentieth-century Eastern European history, queer history, and histories of the body—in particular, the myriad ways in which bodies were read to gain a grip on increasingly mobile mass populations as part of concurrent anxieties of the modern metropolis as a site of civilizational decay, decadence, sexual inversion, and political radicalism.

Since the 1970s, Magnus Hirschfeld’s legacy has steadily risen and has become somewhat mainstream over the past two decades, even outside the Germanophone world. The Jewish-German sexologist is remembered for his major scientific contributions to the field, which he spearheaded mostly in his role as director of the Berlin-based *Institut für Sexualwissenschaft*, and his lifelong public commitment to homosexual emancipation.¹ Considered the embodiment of the brief but explosive window of possibility Weimar Germany presented to those who lived and loved outside the heterosexual norm, Hirschfeld is often held up as an unsung hero by those looking towards the past to understand their present-day reality. In this monograph, Laurie Marhoefer sets out to critically reevaluate and complicate this legacy in an attempt to cast light on *all* of the intellectual movements and cultural notions Hirschfeld drew upon to craft his model of homosexuality, including those less palatable to modern-day audiences (such as racist civilizational discourse and eugenics)—in doing so, Marhoefer offers a fresh and much-needed perspective on this historical actor, who has taken on almost larger-than-life proportions in both the public imagination and academic writing.²

A central assumption of Marhoefer’s book is that Hirschfeld’s model of homosexuality—namely, homosexuality as a non-pathological, but a squarely biological phenomenon, in a way similar to how he saw race—was perhaps the most influential model of homosexuality and single-handedly created the framework in which many later queer activists operated (though, crucially, not all). Though this seems plausible enough, Marhoefer never explicitly points the reader to the subsequent history of this model or explains why it was Hirschfeld in particular who invented “the homosexual” and not any of the other activists, writers, and academics working on homosexual emancipation at the time.³ This is precisely what I aim to do with this book review: I will analyze the reasons behind this particular model’s salience and longevity, heeding the historian Samuel Moyn’s call to consider “why some ideas have conquered the globe” while “others have remained stranded without a passport.”⁴ In doing so, I will expand on Marhoefer’s work by

1 Although Hirschfeld researched transness in his ethnographic work, the bulk of his work regarded male homosexuals, which is why I refer to his model as one of homosexual emancipation. When speaking of later activism, I use the broader umbrella term “queer” out of convenience, cognizant of the anachronism.

2 A couple of relatively recent titles on Hirschfeld include: Ralf Dose, *Magnus Hirschfeld and the Origins of the Gay Liberation Movement*, trans. Edward H. Willis (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2014); Manfred Herzer, *Magnus Hirschfeld und seine Zeit* (Munich: De Gruyter, 2017). As one can tell by the title of these, Marhoefer’s book is rather unique in its dialing in on race as central to Hirschfeld’s thinking and his model of homosexuality.

3 Laurie Marhoefer, *Racism and the Making of Gay Rights: A Sexologist, His Student, and the Empire of Queer Love* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2022), 89.

4 Samuel Moyn and Andrew Sartori, “What is Global Intellectual History? If It Should Exist At All?,” *Imperial & Global Forum*, published February 23, 2015, <http://imperialglobalexeter>.

connecting it to the pertinent temporal/civilizational discourse in Weimar Germany.

Following Hirschfeld and his partner, Li Shiu Tong, on their 1931 trip around the world, Marhoefer expertly and compellingly weaves together biographical details, correspondence with other activists, and Hirschfeld’s writing to paint a picture of his life, his travels, and his political views on everything ranging from race (chapters five to eight), imperialism (chapters two and four), and eugenics (chapter nine) to, crucially, his model of homosexuality (chapter one). In opposition to the dominant turn-of-the-century image of homosexuality as a disease, Hirschfeld defined it as a non-pathological, biologically innate trait that showed up in a certain percentage of human beings regardless of time and place—homosexuality was a stable, universal category, not somehow constructed, nor based on environmental factors.⁵ It was Hirschfeld’s universalist-biological model that made it possible to think of homosexuals as a class or a “sexual minority” that functioned very similarly to the other omnipresent, supposed biological marker of identity: race.

Marhoefer’s main thrust is this: despite Hirschfeld’s avowed anti-imperialism, a certain level of racism is baked into his theory. The principle that homosexuality was universal, despite racial differences—which reveals Hirschfeld’s belief in the true, biological significance of race—lay at the very core of his doctrine.⁶ Additionally, the analogy of homosexuality as a “sexual minority”—an analogy which was both explicitly copied from discourses surrounding “racial minorities” and constructed as its antithesis—precluded an intersectional approach to identity and assumed whiteness in a way that still echoes through into today’s world.⁷ Precisely because Marhoefer posits that it was Hirschfeld’s model (with all of its imperfections) that determined the shape of later conceptualizations of homosexuality, it is imperative to think about the potential reasons behind the long-lasting impact of said model. There were other models out there—just in Berlin alone, younger sexologists at the Institute hoped to deemphasize biology and the centrality of scientists within their vision of queer emancipation, while “masculinists,” drawing upon quasi-spiritual language of heroism and male leadership, positioned themselves as the antithesis to Hirschfeld’s democratic cosmopolitanism.⁸ Why then was it precisely Hirschfeld’s model that survived?

[com/2015/02/23/what-is-global-intellectual-history-if-it-should-exist-at-all](https://www.ohiohistorycentral.org/2015/02/23/what-is-global-intellectual-history-if-it-should-exist-at-all); Marhoefer, *Racism*, 196.

5 Marhoefer, *Racism*, 35.

6 Marhoefer, *Racism*, 89.

7 Marhoefer, *Racism*, 86.

8 Marhoefer, *Racism*, 84; Peter Morgan, “Coming out in Weimar: Crisis and homosexuality in

An obvious part of the puzzle is that Hirschfeld’s model was one based upon middle-class values and sexual discreetness.⁹ Marhoefer’s chapter on Hirschfeld’s view on eugenics was incredibly thought-provoking in that it made me wonder whether there was perhaps a less obvious element to the longevity of his model: the role eugenics played in constructing an air of respectability, and indeed, utility around homosexuality. Both a Darwinist and supporter of (mostly) voluntary sterilization, Hirschfeld believed that there was some sort of evolutionary logic to the existence of homosexuality; since homosexuals were less likely to procreate, he posited that they were born into families with undesirable genes, functioning as a natural stop to the transmission of flawed characteristics unto the next generation.¹⁰ This logic turned homosexuals into productive cogs in the Darwinist machine, a move that cemented Hirschfeld’s claim of homosexual respectability.

His views on eugenics betrayed a more general view of nature as a space of internal order, a harmonious system where every creature has a predetermined role. For Hirschfeld, homosexuality was a phenomenon willed into being by nature. Suppressing it through policy would be unnatural, unscientific, and down-right foolish: homosexual emancipation was, in Hirschfeld’s own words, no more and certainly no less than “the battle of modern science against superstition and ignorance of nature.”¹¹ This view of nature reflected a sentiment that would have appealed to a large swath of reformers active at the time: the idea that humankind had lost its way in its long march towards progress and civilization and needed only to turn to nature, a source of great wisdom and teaching, to find its path forwards.

In this way, Hirschfeld implicitly placed his program of homosexual emancipation within the broader Primitivist framework influential across the political spectrum in Weimar Germany and abroad, ranging from adolescent hiking groups (*Wandervögel*) to Indophile, vegetarian “life reformers” (*Lebensreform*) to nationalist “back-to-the-land” groups striving for racial purity (the *Völkische Bewegung*). This seems to be another clue that may explain why Hirschfeld’s model initially came into the limelight and “conquered the globe.” In other ways, however, he departed from the Primitivist ideal of fleeing modernity in search of nature, a space of purity and salvation. Where Primitivists hailed nature as the space of the unknowable, the emotional, and the beautifully chaotic, to Hirschfeld, nature represented a locus of superior, rational logic. Nature presented humanity with a truth that was hiding in plain sight—scientists, the very product of modernity, need

the Weimar Republic,” *Thesis Eleven* 111 (2012): 48-65.

9 Marhoefer, *Racism*, 39.

10 Marhoefer, *Racism*, 132, 141.

11 Marhoefer, *Racism*, 85, 122.

only to look and they would find the natural, the scientific, and, thus, the just way forward.

All in all, Marhoefer's book proves to be an extremely worthwhile read; in particular their nuanced and analytical case regarding the centrality of race within Hirschfeld's model of homosexuality is a much-needed addition to existing historiography on Hirschfeld's life and work. While Marhoefer does not explicitly discuss potential reasons behind the longevity of Hirschfeld's model, their fascinating work on "queer eugenics" offer new avenues of thinking about why it could be that it was precisely Hirschfeld's model that shaped the contours of much of today's thinking on homosexuality.

**The Social Construction of Property
Rights in 19th-century Brazil.
By Mariana Armond Dias Paes.
Global Perspectives on Legal History
17. Frankfurt am Main: Max Planck
Institute for Legal History and Legal
Theory, 2021. Pp. 200.
ISBN: 9783944773322.**

REVIEWED BY

Isabel Bedoya Palop

ABOUT THE REVIEWER

Isabel Bedoya holds a BA in History and a BA in Law from the University of Jaén. She also finished an MA in Global History at Pompeu Fabra University of Barcelona, where she is currently working on her MPhil in History. Her research focuses on the history of Spanish law, specializing in slavery law and 19th-century Spanish colonial law. She is currently working on a study of enslaved women in Puerto Rico through legal cases. She is particularly interested in the relationship between the creation of law and its impact on societal structures and vice versa. Her work is supported by the predoctoral program Joan Oró (2023 FI-3 00065) of the Generalitat de Catalunya's Secretariat for Universities and Research and co-funded by the European Social Fund Plus.

In her latest book *The Social Construction of Property Rights in 19th-century Brazil*,¹ the Brazilian legal historian Mariana Armond Dias Paes analyzes Brazil's legal evolution in the context of the relations between people and things.² Utilizing disputes over dominion and possession of slaves and land as primary sources, she adopts a multilateral Atlantic circulation approach. Her central hypothesis is that the effects of this circulation influenced the shaping of legal norms, categories, and justice in nineteenth-century Brazil. Dias Paes explores the social construction of legal relations within the Brazilian context, considering the European *ius commune* legacy, Portuguese legal inheritance, and the involvement of diverse actors—Brazilians, Portuguese, Africans, and other European and American agents—in the development of Brazilian law.

Dias Paes' book challenges Eurocentric perspectives in colonial historiography by transcending a one-way transfer of knowledge from Europe to colonized territories. Emphasizing diverse viewpoints, particularly those of non-European cultures and enslaved individuals, she highlights agencies and voices which are often overlooked. The book explores intersections of race, gender, religion, and socioeconomic status. Critiquing Eurocentrism's impact on historical narratives, she demonstrates how the Brazilian local context played a significant role in shaping the broader scope of the "right to property," acknowledging the contributions of non-European civilizations to the field of law.

As the research group coordinator of Global Legal History on the Ground and a researcher at the Max Planck Institute for Legal History and Legal Theory, Dias Paes focuses on cultural exchanges, aligning her work with global history. Her research delves into the legal status of 19th-century Brazilian slaves, as seen in publications like *Escavidão e direito*.³ By examining legal files and historical perspectives, she sheds light on global legal history, linking her work with broader narratives, including the shared Atlantic legal culture and the intricate connections between legal reasoning, land disputes, and colonialism. Her exploration of the construction of property rights transcends national borders, offering a framework for understanding present global dynamics. Unlike some existing research, her transnational approach, the in-depth exploration of cultural exchanges and interconnectedness and

1 Original title: *Esclavos y tierras entre posesión y títulos. La construcción social del derecho de propiedad en Brasil (siglo XIX)*.

2 In *ius commune*, the term "thing" is a flexible concept encompassing a wide array of external entities, from concrete to abstract, corporeal to incorporeal. It transcends a strict object-oriented definition, allowing for more abstract interpretations. This framework blurs the line between persons and things, as seen in the analysis of enslaved individuals, whose rights and status are treated akin to immaterial "things" like freedom.

3 Mariana Armond Dias Paes, *Escavidão e direito. O estatuto jurídico dos escravos no Brasil oitocentista (1860-1888)* (São Paulo: Alameda, 2019).

the employment of *ius commune* in America, ensures a balanced historical narrative that avoids overemphasizing European history.

Dias Paes' work adds depth to global legal history by addressing gaps in cultural perspectives and offering nuanced insights into the legal status of slaves and the construction of property rights. In the book, she employs microhistory by gathering testimonies and arguments presented in legal proceedings to delineate the development of the subjective concept of "property right" across different legal cultures. Considering law and society as mutually influential, the book asserts that legal traditions and customs shape the studied cases, reciprocally influencing the jurisprudence defining the right to property. By conducting analysis at the micro level while considering the Atlantic dimension of *ius commune*, European heritage, African tradition and the American colonial context, Dias Paes unravels larger-scale processes in the evolution of property rights.

In the introduction, Dias Paes presents the *ius commune*: a flexible, arbitrary and non-hierarchical European law spread orally and through custom that was extrapolated to colonial America. She highlights its broad definition of "thing," encompassing both land and abstract entities like freedom. The concept of "domain" is explored, more related to the faculty of use and objective utility of things than to the liberal conception of "property," the latter linked to a subjective concept of "appropriative will." This flexibility allowed historical subjects to reappropriate, mobilize and resignify their interpretations.

The first chapter focuses on possession as a legal category during a period dominated by the *ius commune*, where utility remains a key consideration. Dias Paes illustrates this through a legal procedure, emphasizing the necessity of exercising possession and effective dominion in a useful, public, and peaceful manner to secure land "property." She draws parallels with slavery, highlighting the significance of the "appearance" of living as a slave or a free person in judicial determinations. Social recognition plays a crucial role in shaping possession situations, impacting the weight of witness testimony based on social hierarchy. The colonial settlement model acknowledges diverse forms of possession, including *terra nullis*, which involves occupying "no-man's lands" with considerations like the "danger of the place" or the "extermination of Indigenous people" influencing effective domain determinations. It incorporates "skilled" and "useful" occupations for legal effects. Colonial law introduces categories of dependents like *agregados*, whose status is not valid for effective possession as they act on behalf of the domain owner. Many *agregados*, often *libertos*, mirror African patterns of dependency relationships towards prestigious chiefs, highlighting local

influences on the broader construction of property rights.

The second chapter explores the document production processes and domain titles in legal proceedings during a period when the authority competent to issue such titles had not yet been established. The recognition of a title as valid or invalid was still a rather arbitrary matter. The validation of titles was subjective, and individuals, particularly the elites, attempted to legitimize their “domain” through “chains of documents.” Despite the growing influence of state authority and scientific knowledge, the lack of regulation allowed community recognition and common knowledge to remain fundamental in proving active and uninterrupted possession. Additionally, the chapter addresses the position of married women, who, despite needing their husbands’ consent for civil capacity in doctrinal and jurisprudential practices, often engaged in business, participated in the slave trade, and undertook actions demonstrating financial independence, highlighting the ongoing tension between evolving liberal law and the influence of European, African and colonial customs.

The final chapter explores illegal land and slave acquisitions within the context of slavery and integration into the Atlantic economy. Dias Paes illustrates, through legal cases, how *ius commune* structures were strategically resignified to build property rights, employing technically illegal methods like altering legal categories on documents. For instance, changing “slave” to “servant” in passports⁴ or modifying baptism certificates. Social recognition and “appearance” remained pivotal for ownership recognition, even as the elites, transitioning to a liberal model, attempted to formalize registers. However, during this period, registers accepted documents without verifying acquisition origins, akin to *ius commune* practices, resulting in illicit land and slave ownership titles.

Through narratives that interlace social and legal history, the author underscores a central argument: the mutual constitution of law and society. Parties, lawyers, and witnesses interpret laws, creating contradictions that prompt judges to develop new doctrines, contributing significantly to shaping Brazilian law. Dias Paes demonstrates how the accumulation of provisions from diverse legal traditions enables actors to reinterpret laws, adapting them to evolving conditions and legal theories. Her approach adeptly examines the coexistence of liberal ideology with old paternalistic or community patterns. A key thesis point emphasizes the paradoxical reinforcement of

4 Scott and Hébrard talk about illegal enslavement through official documents on trips from Santo Domingo to Cuba, New Orleans and Louisiana in their book. See Rebecca Scott and Jean M. Hébrard, *Freedom Papers: An Atlantic Odyssey in the Age of Emancipation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012).

power dynamics, where liberal civil law, ostensibly focused on individualism and private law regulation, intensifies inequalities and relationships of dependence among owners, people, and possessions.

Another argument that Dias Paes strongly defends is that the construction of the right to property was gradual and that was structuring the relations between people and things. Through the study of these cases, she shows how over time the role of the community is marginalized in favor of specialized and bureaucratic knowledge. In addition, she includes legal sources from different contexts that helped to shape it, such as the African customs in which slaves, mixed race and *libertos* operate, the *ius commune* of European origin with its customs and proofs of domination and, the Brazilian colonial context itself, which finds room for new ways of acquiring the domain.

Dias Paes contributes to the legal history by examining judicial cases where possession and dominion are central, regulating relations between people and “things.” Derived from the *ius commune*, these concepts remain crucial in contemporary property-related legal actions. The well-structured book opens avenues for research into law construction in colonial contexts, showcasing Dias Paes’ adept application of the more flexible *ius commune* in the colonies. The case-study format allows readers to comprehend diverse contexts where legal traditions converge. Essential for scholars of colonial law, the book challenges the notion that history is constructed in separate, specific contexts, emphasizing the fluid and permeable nature of knowledge, norms, customs, and societies drawn from various sources, contexts, and geographies.



III. CONFERENCE REVIEW



The Seventh Global History Student Conference, Freie Universität Berlin and Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, June 30–July 2, 2023

REVIEWED BY

Somer Mengqing Zhang and Monalisha Mallik

ABOUT THE REVIEWERS

Somer Mengqing Zhang is pursuing her PhD at Georgetown University, focusing on Russian and Soviet history. In the context of global communism, she examines the transcultural experiences of Chinese revolutionaries in Moscow and beyond. Monalisha Mallik is a current Global History MA student at Freie Universität Berlin and Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. Her research interests lie in gender history, borders, and migration.

The Seventh Annual Global History Student Conference was held in Berlin in the early summer of 2023. The student conference team received a myriad of submissions from twenty-five countries around the world, a testament to the international conference's popularity and reputation among young historians. Twenty-eight participants formed eight panels covering a wide range of topics: (inter)national politics, (un)free movement, advocacy and activism, gender history, historiography, media, encounters, and trade and commodities. Questions regarding sources, methodologies, problems, challenges, and possibilities in global history were raised and discussed among participants, as well as public audiences. The conference brought fresh perspectives and promising insights in shaping the way we perceive historical narratives. In this review, we delve into the key highlights of the intellectual tapestry woven over the course of three days.

Keynote lecture

The conference began with a keynote lecture titled, "Silencing and Erasures in Global History," given by Dr. Sarah Bellows-Blakely, about her work related to a United Nations (UN) research project about girls' education in East Africa. In existing scholarship on economic programs which focus on girls from developing regions, Bellows-Blakely argued that some voices are treated as natural political actors and knowledge producers, whereas others are excluded. The Pan-African, women-run NGO, African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET) was the main subject of her research. By disentangling the history of FEMNET and its complex relationship with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Bellows-Blakely unveiled how the historiographical and methodological erasure of African women was experienced within FEMNET. She further pointed out that the absence of this influential NGO in existing scholarship is a representative case of the erasing of specific actors in historiography. Bellows-Blakely's lecture encouraged historians to be more aware of such erasures. Listening to her sharing her work, we were reminded that working as a historian requires both expertise and courage—to always question the dominant narratives and seek voices that are made invisible and inaudible.

Panel discussion

Several panelists embodied such attentiveness; the panelists discussed below contested the hidden or obvious praxis of erasure and silencing in history with their research projects.

Derya Bozat, a student at the University of Bern, examined the experiences of Sub-Saharan African students in the Soviet Union, an under-

studied group in the historiography of the Cold War. As decolonization movements created new possibilities for the new countries in Asia and Africa, collaboration between the Soviet Union and African countries increased. One group of people directly affected by such Soviet offers of collaboration were students from newly independent African nations. With little research conducted on such non-Western interrelationships, Bozat filled this gap by focusing on the experiences of young African students in Moscow—that their encounters with Soviet students and local citizens were characterized by discrimination based on their racial features, including verbal and physical violence from Soviet male students. Nonetheless, these African students also built remarkable friendships with more open-minded Soviet female students. The difficulties faced by African students in navigating both the Soviet Union and the politically and racially laden concept of “Soviet Friendship,” gave insight into the broader diplomatic entanglements between the Soviet Union and newly independent African countries.

Following the theme of international exchanges, Cui Feng of the National University in Singapore sought to trace the history of a little-known communist movement in Southeast Asia—the Communist Party of Siam (CPS) in Thailand. In the early 20th century, Siam was one of few Southeast Asian countries that escaped Western colonization, which provided a safe space for Asian activists to engage in transnational communist movements. Chinese and Vietnamese Communists were key members of the CPS, and the working languages among them were primarily Chinese and Vietnamese. Cui utilized not just primary sources written in Vietnamese, Chinese, and Russian, but also secondary sources in Thai. To provide a more thorough picture of the founding and evolution of this less well-known, yet historically significant communist group, Cui conducted several oral history interviews with previous CPS members. By including biographical sources in his research, Cui convincingly illustrated how the ethnic Siamese were nearly absent from the communist movement, with foreigners playing the dominant role. He revealed that the local Siamese, including migrant workers from China or Vietnam, had little interest in political activities and communist ideology. Their indifference to the work of the CPS added to the “alienness” of this imported revolutionary party. It was interesting to see how Cui used oral interviews and biographies to make visible both active CPS members and the overlooked local Siamese people in his research.

Casting doubt on the most easily accessible primary sources is a constructive practice for global historians. Like Cui, whose research topic suffered from heavily one-sided sources, Maria Bowling, a student at the Sorbonne in Paris, also conducted oral history interviews. Her interviewees were leaders of several Angolan nationalist groups active in the independence movements

of the 1960s and 1970s. Bowling explored the erasure of defeated groups in revolutionary struggles, questioning the victor’s narrative. Using the framework of state-making during global decolonization, she examined the beginning of the People’s Movement for the Liberation of Angola’s (MPLA) diplomatic militancy and its step-by-step construction of sovereignty. Being self-reflective about the methodological nationalism that restricted existing scholarship and her initial research scope, Bowling came to an important realization. Except for the victorious MPLA, other resistance groups that fought for independence within Angola, yet were less involved in international affairs, have mostly been excluded from the official history of Angola and the existing historiography on the Angolan independence movements. Members of the MPLA were present in international organizations such as the UN and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) since the early stages of the MPLA’s state-making endeavor, and such participation was crucial for Angola’s independence. By studying the independence-makers’ practices abroad, Bowling concluded that the MPLA leaders’ repeated presence in those essentially exclusive spaces, such as the UN, largely contributed to their ultimate success in gaining diplomatic recognition of their independence and eventually obtaining sovereignty domestically.

Another examination of the close interrelationships between domestic and international institutions came from Nelly Ating of Cardiff University. Using the photograph archive of Amnesty International, a human rights organization from the United Kingdom as their main source, she explored Amnesty’s engagement in the anti-apartheid movements in South Africa from the 1960s to 1990s. Highlighting emotional and geographical borders in the visual sources, Ating highlighted easily neglected aspects of institutional photographic archives—the activists’ desires, aspirations, and lived realities. These particular South African sensibilities were documented in those photos, which portrayed not only the violation of human rights but also intimate lived stories under Apartheid. As a global historian, she constantly questioned the agency behind history: a global history by whom and for whom? Who or what is visible? Who has the agency and ownership of what?

Pratika Rizki Dewi of Glasgow University focused their work on issues related to (in)visibility and silencing in the historiography of the independence movement in Indonesia, specifically regarding marginalized female politicians and activists. Dewi employed Deniz Kandiyoti’s framework of “patriarchal bargaining” to show women’s strategies in the face of cultural and social essentials of the patriarchal system and the encounter, contestation, and adaptation between men and women in terms of resources, rights, and responsibilities. In contrast to the Western notions’ restrictions that emphasized more antagonist relationships between male and female activists,

Dewi portrayed a different experience of female activism. In 1950s Indonesia, a group of Indonesian women utilized the health movement as a political weapon to challenge patriarchy. Doctor Hurustiati Subandrio, for example, based on Dewi's archival research, was the Indonesian representative and the most impactful voice during the Asia-Africa Women's Conference in 1958. Subandrio shared struggles and experiences of Indonesian women's movements for maternal and children's health. Her work and words not only gained local recognition but also inspired the health movement and women's movement globally.

Differing from other panelists whose subjects were primarily individuals or institutions, Francisco Lopez Vallejo of the University of Bayreuth focused on the rise and fall of a city in Mexico named Papantla. This little-known place was once an essential hub of the global vanilla market from the late 19th to the early 20th century. However, with the globalization of vanilla, Papantla was gradually excluded from the expanding vanilla economy. Vallejo illustrated how the globalization of a commodity such as vanilla could dramatically reshape a small city's local economy and society. He demonstrated how violence played an important role in the vanilla economy, which revealed the dark side of global economic history when profit is the determinant of development. Moreover, as the Mexican state grew into the connecting actor between local and international networks since the 1970s, state policies largely contributed to the violent land seizure and the further deterioration of the status of vanilla farmers, who were economically vulnerable and unjustly treated in the globalized market. Vallejo's research made visible the forgotten city of Papantla and the lives of those local small farmers who were subjected to violence resulting from the globalized economy of vanilla.

Student salon

In addition to the intellectual exchange of student research projects, the conference acknowledged the importance of inclusion and equality in academia. During the student salon, participants discussed unconventional topics such as student unity, the challenges of academic work, struggles with accessing sources, and the vital practice of self-care. To improve students' overall learning and research experiences at the university level, the participants agreed that forming a supportive student-based community is necessary. Providing a safe space to express students' concerns about sexual harassment, racist and sexist discrimination, and mental health would be a crucial first step to encourage young scholars to pursue further academic goals.

Final discussion

Closing the 2023 conference was a final discussion with panel chairs and panelists where they had the opportunity to reflect on the different approaches to studying global history. Participants discussed their engagement with global history in American, British, German, and Chinese academic environments to shed light on the discipline's worldwide reach and adaptability. The discussion also covered academics' professional and emotional difficulties during their scholarly investigations and the general challenges of working in academia, as previously touched upon during the student salon.

As global history students and reviewers, this was our first time participating in the seven-year-old Global History Student Conference. Like many participants and audience members, we appreciated this international event that combined academic discourses and more casual in-person interactions. With the practice of listening harder and exchanging thoughts respectfully and constructively, we believed that our shared project of unearthing the silenced and erased voices in history would be less overwhelming and more empowering to all subjects involved. This conference offered a multitude of learning opportunities, from the personal to the professional, and the chance to form networks, partnerships, and valuable contacts for future endeavors. All of this will prove fruitful for young researchers looking towards their next chapter.