

**THE  
HANOVER  
HISTORICAL  
REVIEW**



**Volume 19**

**2024**

## GUIDELINES FOR SUBMISSION OF MANUSCRIPTS

The *HHR* Editorial Board welcomes submissions of essays, document transcriptions and translations, and book reviews of a historical nature from any discipline.

Manuscripts must be prepared in conformity with *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 17<sup>th</sup> edition, in 12-point Times Roman font, double-spaced (including footnotes and Works Cited pages) and with pages numbered.

Submissions should be submitted by email attachment as a Microsoft Word document to Professor Michael Raley ([raleym@hanover.edu](mailto:raleym@hanover.edu)). Because all submitted manuscripts will be evaluated anonymously, the author's name should appear only on the title page. There should be no identifying markers (including headers and hidden texts) within the body of the paper.

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# THE HANOVER HISTORICAL REVIEW

Volume 19

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## FOREWORD

In the fall of 1992, supported by colleagues and enthusiastic students, Professor Frank Luttmmer proposed a journal that would publish student papers and documents related to the field of history written, transcribed, and/or translated by students from any department of Hanover College. An editorial board of students was selected to determine which papers and documents would be chosen for the journal and also to edit them for uniformity of style in preparing the journal for publication. Professor Luttmmer provided support to the editors in the early stages of preparing the journal, while Professor Daniel Murphy helped oversee the final copyediting for the printer.

The inaugural issue of *The Hanover Historical Review* appeared in Spring 1993 and enjoyed great success. The *HHR* flourished for the rest of the decade but was published only sporadically after Professor Luttmmer's illness and untimely death. At the outset of the 2016–17 academic year, the Hanover College History Department decided to resume publication of the *Hanover History Review*, provided that we could find sufficient support for this project among our students. Twelve of our students immediately volunteered to serve on the *HHR*'s editorial board. Working with this group of eager and diligent students, and now with their successors in 2023–2024, has turned out to be a great joy for me as their faculty mentor. Most of them have moved on to graduate or professional schools upon graduation from Hanover College.

Throughout the 2023–2024 academic year, the fifteen members of the *HHR* Editorial Board met every other week on Tuesday or Thursday evenings at 7:30 p.m. to discuss the 2024 *HHR* Call for Papers, submission guidelines, review the submissions anonymously, and, finally, edit the articles for publication in their present form. During these meetings, the *HHR* Editorial Board also conducted training sessions for new members and reviews for current members in areas such as grammar, formatting, academic citations, proofreading, and reviewing submissions. Here the senior editors took the lead in organizing and conducting the meetings. Board members also took it upon themselves to set up a booth in the lobby of Classic Hall during October and again in December to advertise the *HHR* Call for Papers. Additionally, members of the Board visited every history class on campus during the fall 2023 semester to share with other students their experiences with getting published and serving on the Board of the *HHR*. These outstanding students did all of this voluntarily and without receiving any college course credit. The result of their diligent efforts and their high standards may be found within the covers of this latest volume of the *HHR*.

The 2024 *HHR* contains essays on historical themes written and submitted by Hanover College students in partial fulfillment of their courses throughout the 2023 calendar year. Two of these were written by first-year students, while the remaining essays were authored by upperclassmen. The depth and breadth of their scholarship attests to the seriousness with which these young historians undertook their research and historical writing. All submissions were also required to conform to *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 17<sup>th</sup> Edition. Only Professor Raley knew the identity of the authors until both the original submissions and their revised versions (based upon the initial reviews) had been reviewed and approved by the *HHR* Board of Editors. This double-blind anonymity the Board regarded as especially important at a small liberal arts college such as

Hanover College, where everyone knows everyone else; beyond this, however, a few of the Board members wished to submit their own essays for consideration, and to ensure impartiality here Professor Raley distributed these essays, minus their authors' names, to other members of the Board for anonymous peer review.

Seven specific criteria guide the Editorial Board's review of submissions:

1. Does the essay's introduction effectively set up and present a clear, original thesis?
2. Is the thesis supported with an ample supply of primary and secondary sources, critically interpreted for the reader?
3. Has the author brought forward a fresh interpretation of the evidence that advances current scholarship?
4. Is the thesis restated clearly in the conclusion to the essay? Does the author also add further implications of his/her/their findings?
5. Are the footnotes and works cited page(s) formatted correctly in Chicago Style?
6. Is the writing style clear, fluid, and logical? Does the essay employ strong transition sentences along with connecting phrases and clauses?
7. What specific revisions or additions does the author need to make to improve the article pending its acceptance for publication?

Following the review process, the authors of the submissions were provided with summaries of the Board members' comments. The review process, the Board decided, would yield one of three ratings: (1) accept for publication as is (or with only minor editing required); (2) revise and resubmit (typically requiring more research and substantive revisions and/or additions as well as reediting the prose and reference notes/works cited pages); or (3) reject for publication. Some authors, of course, chose not to revise and resubmit their work. Those who did revise and resubmit their essays were expected to pay close attention to the comments and suggestions for substantive revisions as well as for the editing of the text and formatting of the notes that had been provided by the Board members in their reviews. In a few cases, the junior and senior editors of the board assisted student authors of promising essays with additional revisions prior to publication. In the final editing process, the Board of Editors met during the winter and spring terms on Thursday evenings for about two and one-half hours each evening, carefully reading aloud and editing each essay for clarity and uniformity. The final copy of the journal is being published both digitally and in hard copy and will henceforth be available on the Hanover College History Department website at: <https://history.hanover.edu/hhrintro.php>.

In 2022, the *HHR* Board members made one important change to our by-laws in order to incorporate a new member category into our structure. We decided to invite select students to join the Board during the winter semester as freshmen interns. The idea here was that, while the Board to date had consisted of sophomores, juniors, and seniors (in part because a published essay in the journal carried with it an automatic invitation to join the Board), it would be good to invite freshmen who showed exceptional promise and/or who had submitted a paper for consideration to the Board for publication in this year's *HHR* (and who thus might be invited to join the Board the

following year anyway) to serve for a semester as a freshman intern on the *HHR* Board. This practice became even more critical this year with more and more of our students graduating after two or three years at Hanover due to their extensive dual credits upon entering the college. Boaz Hoffer, Sarah Newbanks, Lydia Ponsler, and Sophie Whitham accepted the Board's invitation to serve as *HHR* interns this past academic year. They each served faithfully and contributed in meaningful ways to the discussions as we reviewed the submissions and then edited the final draft of this year's *HHR*. Two of them, Boaz Hoffer and Sophie Whitham, also contributed essays to this year's journal.

For all of these reasons and many more personal ones, I have once again thoroughly enjoyed working with these fine students. I hope that you will share my enthusiasm as you read the articles published within this .pdf file if you are reading the digital version or within these covers if you have the pleasure of reading a hard printed copy.

J. Michael Raley, Ph.D. (University of Chicago, 2007)  
Professor, History Department/Medieval and Renaissance Studies Program  
*HHR* Faculty Advisor and Managing Editor, June 2024



**History Essays  
by First-Year Students**



*Eleutheria's Double-Edged Sword:*  
Freedom at a Cost

Boaz Hoffer

In a time of empires, Laconia's Sparta forged its name in sovereignty through resilience. Though small in population, the feats carried out by the Spartans boasted the success of both their political and social systems, much to the surprise of contesting empires. Dissimilar to other powers, Sparta held liberty and independence via freedom to function as a core belief and way of life, understood as *eleutheria*. Derived from the Greek *eleutheros* meaning "free," *eleutheria* expresses personal and political independence and freedom. Spartan military training, education, social life, and politics upheld the concept of *eleutheria* in society through reverent respect for its people. Spartan culture boasted of loyalty to family and state, and through this discipline and persistence, Spartans were united and built a reputation well feared by surrounding empires. Though seemingly hypocritical in the employment of helots as slave labor and oligarchy as a form of government, Spartans prided themselves on devoting their whole lives to the state rather than individual interests. The concept of Spartan *eleutheria* bolstered collectivism under the city-state at the cost of the freedoms of its citizens and inhabitants, as seen in all spheres of Spartan society and culture.

When addressing the freedoms of the individual within a city-state, one must first address what rule the individuals of the state operate under. In Sparta, Oligarchy reigned supreme, "the anonymous but extremely powerful Gerousia of 28 elders...the dual kingship and ephors allowed a certain freedom of choice to Spartan politics."<sup>1</sup> The elders and kings held most power in Sparta, and alongside them were the ephors, elected by the people, who held powers in religious, military, and judicial spheres.<sup>2</sup> While the elections of ephors by the Spartans gave them some resemblance to democracy, their political influence stopped there. Worth noting, when the state of Sparta acquired new territory or allies, this policy of oligarchy remained a blanket form of government, as described in *The History of the Peloponnesian War*: "The policy of Lacedaemon was not to exact tribute from her allies, but merely to secure their subservience to her interests by establishing oligarchies among them."<sup>3</sup> Subject to dual kingship rule and policies made by anonymous councils, the Spartans' political freedom banked on hopes that such councils and kings would rule in their favor, and regardless, they were subject to the rule of said councils and kings. The Oligarchy of Sparta held great importance in military matters and one's service to the state. Due to these values, they saw excessive freedoms of the people as a threat to the betterment of the state. As Plato states: "The Spartan is every inch a soldier, a man of few words himself,

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<sup>1</sup> Charles D. Hamilton, "Spartan Politics and Policy, 405-401 B.C.," *The American Journal of Philology* vol. 91, no. 3 (Jul., 1970): 294-314 at 295.

<sup>2</sup> Hamilton, "Spartan Politics and Policy, 405-401 B.C.," 295.

<sup>3</sup> Thucydides, *The History of the Peloponnesian War* (ca. 411 B.C.E), translated Richard Crawley, *The Project Gutenberg eBook*, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/7142/7142-h/7142-h.htm> (accessed October 13, 2023).

better at deeds than words.”<sup>4</sup> This further provides the basis that the ideal Spartan existed to be an instrument of the state, not questioning authority, and executing orders when requested. Furthermore, starting this military training early in life ranked key in building a collective unit providing much more utility to the state than if purely focusing on the individual; ingraining the ideal of the perfect Spartan in the minds of young boys also encouraged a sort of group tribulation among them, fostering a collective bond and thus orchestrating a hive mind among soldiers from adolescence.<sup>5</sup> This early fostering of a collective mind and appreciation for leadership strengthened the power of the Spartan Oligarchy, though to further distinguish *eleutheria*, a comparison to another empire proves insightful.

Athens differed in many ways from Sparta and in these differences, Sparta's unique system of government and values prove exemplified. Politically Athens remains commonly known as the father of democracy, being the first example of this type of government, within this Athenians already held more political autonomy than the Spartan citizen. Athenian education and societal constructs were also drastically different and more versed from that of Sparta, Athenian boys enjoyed education in grammar, music, gymnastics, poetry, arithmetic, geometry, logic, rhetoric, and other arts.<sup>6</sup> The lack of such subjects in Spartan culture can be explained by the fact every sphere of Sparta was managed by the state: “Only in Sparta, where the organization of the whole of education and society was directed towards military efficiency, was the system entirely in the hands of the State.”<sup>7</sup> This can be viewed in several ways, however, it would be fair to say Sparta suffered a lack of individuality and creativity because of its lack of diversity when it came to fields of study and career offered. Sparta was mainly composed of those in government, those in military, and those who raised the young. Whereas Athens benefited from encouraging individual achievement and intellectual development with a rich education and individual thoughts stemming from an autonomy of thought Sparta sorely lacked. Nonetheless, Sparta found other societal avenues associated with individualism to imbue its collective ideals.

Religion played a pivotal role in preserving *eleutheria* for the state and uniting the people under the state's desires, commonly under the guise of reverence to gods. The few surviving written records provide little insight into Spartans' individual relationships with the gods in their polytheistic sphere, but what little is known tells of group rituals and offerings.<sup>8</sup> When regarding Spartan polytheism, it is important to note that the most prevalent of the gods worshiped were

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<sup>4</sup> Plato, *Laws* (n.d.), *The Project Gutenberg EBook of Laws, by Plato*, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1750/1750-h/1750-h.htm> (accessed November 11, 2023).

<sup>5</sup> Xenophon, *The Laws and Customs of the Spartans*, in *Classics of Western Thought: The Ancient World*, ed. Donald S. Gochberg (Michigan, 1988), 161-172 at 163.

<sup>6</sup> Donāld Attwater. “Athenian Education.” *The Irish Monthly* 55, no. 645 (1927): 132–37.

<sup>7</sup> Attwater, “Athenian Education,” 133.

<sup>8</sup> Nicolette Pavlides, “The Sanctuaries of Apollo Maleatas and Apollo Tyritas in Laconia: Religion in Spartan–Perioikic Relations,” *The Annual of the British School at Athens* 113 (2018): 279-305 at 286.

those relating to battle and warfare, and few were attributed to the sanctity of the individual.<sup>9</sup> Notable in Herodotus's works, Spartans are referred to multiple times as having gone to their gods in hopes of their blessing regarding combat, such as the battle of Plataea.<sup>10</sup> This cult behavior of addressing the gods before battle in expectancy of favor and victory shows the continuous collectivism of the Spartan military and the role it played in preserving the state of *eleutheria*. It is worth noting too that Spartans would justify their attacks and offensive movements by attributing them as calls to action received from the gods, further supported by Pavlides's weaponry findings at Spartan sanctuaries. "The distinctive nature of the finds is also noteworthy, since the weapons consisted mostly of spearheads, javelin heads and arrowheads; that is, offensive weapons."<sup>11</sup> Rather than seeking a personal relationship with the supernatural, the Spartan philosophy prioritized defending and fighting for the freedom of the state, and the gods they worshiped only further encouraged unification under the polity to bring it glory and power. Spartan philosophy materialized further in the thank-offerings of Spartan weapons to the gods and the retirement of old equipment, paying further homage to the supernatural's assistance on the battlefield.<sup>12</sup> This mindset within the Spartan military began early in young Spartans imbuing state values as a way of life.

Through organization and strict discipline, the Spartan military continued the theme of collective freedom holding the utmost value in society. Spartan military familiarization started at a young age and ingrained collective messaging in each child's impressionable mind.<sup>13</sup> As boys grew into men the importance of service to the state continued, and through restrictions on their personal liberties, *eleutheria* of the state persisted in priority. Xenophon noted "Lycurgus prohibited free men from having any connexion [sic] with traffic and enjoined them to consider as their only occupation whatever secures freedom to states."<sup>14</sup> Though some of these restrictions were necessary to preserve the unity of the men and the strength of the unit, they harshly redefined what it meant to be a Spartan, and that one found their purpose in devotion solely to the interests of the state. However, to maintain the men's sense of unity and bravery, propaganda such as that of the poet Tyrtaeus further prioritized obligation to the state's interest. As shown in one of his poems:

For 'tis a fair thing for a good man to fall and die fighting in the van for his native land,  
whereas to leave his city and his rich fields and go a-begging is of all things the most

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<sup>9</sup> Pavlides "The Sanctuaries of Apollo Maleatas and Apollo Tyritas in Laconia," 286.

<sup>10</sup> Herodotus, *The Histories*, ed. and trans. by Walter Blanco and Jennifer Roberts (New York: Norton & Company, 2013), 395-396.

<sup>11</sup> Pavlides "The Sanctuaries of Apollo Maleatas and Apollo Tyritas in Laconia," 282.

<sup>12</sup> Pavlides "The Sanctuaries of Apollo Maleatas and Apollo Tyritas in Laconia," 286.

<sup>13</sup> Xenophon, "The Laws and Customs of the Spartans, in *Classics of Western Thought*," at 164.

<sup>14</sup> Xenophon, "The Laws and Customs of the Spartans, in *Classics of Western Thought*," at 168.

miserable, wandering with mother dear and aged father, with little children and wedded wife. For hateful shall such an one be among all those to whom he shall come in bondage to Want and loathsome Penury, and doth shame his lineage and belie his noble beauty, followed by all evil and dishonour. Now if so little thought be taken of a wanderer, and so little honour, respect, or pity, let us fight with a will for this land, and die for our children and never spare our lives. Abide then, O young men, shoulder to shoulder and fight.<sup>15</sup>

In poems such as these Tyrtaeus further pushes the message that to die for your state is to have lived a good life, and how turning away from one's duty to their state brings shame to one's lineage and dishonor to himself. Tyrtaeus also boasted the concept of *areté*, roughly translated as "the act of living one's full potential," or "living your life to its purpose."<sup>16</sup> Tyrtaeus closely attributed *areté* to dying for one's state or answering the state's call (i.e., to go to war).

This kind of propaganda sought to normalize the veneration of Sparta while simultaneously disregarding the value of an individual's life. Further, those in the military remained voiceless when it came to political decisions such as determining the initiation of war against the Persians; this can be seen in Herodotus's *The Histories* in which greater political leaders such as King Leonidas debated the decisions for the people with other political officials.<sup>17</sup> Leonidas voted with a majority of the council to amass his army of 300 before the Persians, which was a strategic play on the geography of the area as they were defending a small passage; however, in the end, "Leonidas, proving himself extremely valiant, fell in that struggle and with him other famous Spartans."<sup>18</sup> Interesting to note is the cause of Leonidas' peril, Epialtes, who betrayed Leonidas: "Epialtes son of Eurydemus, a Malian, thinking he would get a great reward from the king, came to speak with him and told him of the path leading over the mountain to Thermopylae. In so doing he caused the destruction of the Hellenes remaining there."<sup>19</sup> This betrayal ultimately led to the downfall of the Spartans as once they faced opposition from the flank, they could do nothing. The Spartan's conviction to state and its wishes proves further exemplified in the plaque left at Thermopylae which reads, "Foreigner, go tell the Spartans that we lie here obedient to their commands."<sup>20</sup> Herodotus also notes, "It is said that another of the three hundred survived because he was sent as a messenger to Thessaly. His name was Pantites.

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<sup>15</sup> Tyrtaeus, *Elegy and Iambus* (n.d.), *Perseus Digital Library*, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A2008.01.0479%3Avolume%3D1&force=y> (accessed February 29, 2024).

<sup>16</sup> James H. Shey, "Tyrtaeus and the Art of Propaganda," *Arethusa*, 9 (1976): 5–28, at 5 and 6.

<sup>17</sup> Herodotus, *The Histories*, 342-343.

<sup>18</sup> Herodotus, *The Histories*, 346.

<sup>19</sup> Herodotus, *The Histories*, 343.

<sup>20</sup> Herodotus, *The Histories*, 347.

When he returned to Sparta, he was dishonored and hanged himself.”<sup>21</sup> While the average soldier held intrinsic value to the state due to their utility in battle, ultimately, the soldier suffered the most consequences for having been sacrificed for the greater good. Though the Spartan soldier knew well, life lacking autonomy, it was not exclusively reserved for the military, trickling down to the domestic sphere as well.

The elevated position and privileges of women in Spartan society bolster collectivism under state. Spartan women were highly valued for their abilities to give birth to soldiers for military bolstering. Continuing this theme, they found liberty in education and use of Helot’s for household duties, which allowed enjoyment of greater privileges than other patriarchies. In Cartledge’s work on Spartan wives, she states, “Spartan girl’s education was confined to physical exertions and designed to serve exclusively eugenic ends, that is, to produce a strong mother of healthy infants.”<sup>22</sup> This emphasis on educating women to be responsible for childbearing stood pivotal in creating strong armies and greater glory for the state. As opposed to high class Athenian women Spartan women exercised political influence as shown in *The Histories*. During the Persian Wars Gorgo played a crucial in deciphering Xerxes’s invasion plans being written on wood then covered in wax:

Gorgo, Cleomenes' daughter and Leonidas' wife, discovered the trick herself and advised them to scrape the wax away so that they would find writing on the wood. When they did so, they found and read the message, and presently sent it to the rest of the Greeks. This is the story, as it is told.<sup>23</sup>

Herodotus exemplifies Gorgo’s effect as a higher-class Spartan woman through her ability to influence political decisions directly. Moreover, Spartan women’s position in the *oikos* (household) highlights their role in the economy. As ancient gender historian Sarah Pomroy has observed: “The mother constituted a bridge between private and public.” This manifests in women’s economic freedom within society. Pomroy continues “Spartan women (like Spartan men) can be viewed not as versatile producers, but essentially as owners, managers, and consumers of wealth based on land.” The financial capacities of women indications a greater degree of freedom, contributing to the prosperity of the Spartan economy. While society largely revolved around men women’s position within society left monotonous tasks of the fields and the home to the Helots.

Concerning the use of slaves, Sparta’s utilization of the helots, while at times inhumane, existed largely to benefit the means of the state and allow the Spartan citizen to concern themselves with tasks seen to hold greater importance than those of everyday living, such as household responsibilities or farming. Relationships between the helots and Spartans were tense and violent;

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<sup>21</sup> Herodotus, *The Histories*, 347.

<sup>22</sup> Paul Cartledge, “Spartan Wives: Liberation or Licence,” *The Classic Quarterly* 31 no. 1 (1981): 84-105 at 92.

<sup>23</sup> Herodotus, *The Histories*, 239.

helots far outnumbered the Spartans, and this was cause for bitter and, at times, lethal treatment of the helots at the hands of the Spartans due to fear of an uprising. Harsh treatment and frequent murder of helots at times for reasons as trivial as one's physical stature being seen as too muscular, caused a general distaste for Spartans in the eyes of the helots.<sup>24</sup> A helot was rarely freed and could only be freed by the state, not their individual "owner." Helots could buy their freedom, but this was rare as their wages were minuscule and buying freedom was rarely emphasized unless the state needed of funds.<sup>25</sup> If a helot were freed, they did not attain Spartan citizenship, as the distinction between helots and Spartans was deeply entrenched; rather, if they had performed acts of great service to the empire or its military and were recognized, they would have gained partial autonomy under the status *neodamōdeis*.<sup>26</sup> *Neodamōdeis* could engage in owning wealth, property, and potentially ability to trade but were barred from the right of voting or holding place in public office being that this was reserved for a proper Spartan citizen.<sup>27</sup> While there were other statuses applied to non-Spartiates, such as *nothoi* (bastard son of helot mother and Spartan father), unfree helots remained state-owned.<sup>28</sup> Further helots were no exception to this ongoing theme of state ownership, as noted by Talbert:

Their status is not conveyed satisfactorily by any modern term: "state-serf" possibly comes nearest. At any rate, it's agreed that they did not belong to the individual Spartiate landlords to whom they were somehow assigned and to whom they paid rent in kind; rather, all helots remained property of the Spartan state. It alone could free them.<sup>29</sup>

The state used helots as another tool to maintain freedom and liberty for the people and allocated slaves where they saw most fit to benefit the state.

Helots were largely allocated to the agriculture sphere to support the army of Sparta, allowing Spartans to focus more on military training, though a smaller number were incorporated into the Spartan armies.<sup>30</sup> Spartan citizens enjoyed the private benefits of owning helots, using them to exercise their own individual needs, but total authority over them remained under the state, as noted by Lewis: "According to Ephorus, the helots were slaves serving under special conditions. The master of a helot could neither manumit him nor sell him 'beyond the boundaries.'"<sup>31</sup> To clarify the meaning of "beyond the boundaries," this is to say slave owners could sell helots within

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<sup>24</sup> David M. Lewis, *Greek Slave Systems in their Eastern Mediterranean Context* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), *Oxford Academic*, at (ch. 6), 131, <https://academic.oup.com/book/25688/chapter/193153076>.

<sup>25</sup> Pomeroy, *Spartan Women*, 97.

<sup>26</sup> Lewis, *Greek Slave Systems in their Eastern Mediterranean Context*, 136.

<sup>27</sup> Lewis, *Greek Slave Systems in their Eastern Mediterranean Context*, 136.

<sup>28</sup> Pomeroy, *Spartan Women*, 96-97.

<sup>29</sup> Talbert, "The Role of the Helots in the Class struggle at Sparta," 22-23.

<sup>30</sup> Lewis, *Greek Slave Systems in their Eastern Mediterranean Context*, 142.

<sup>31</sup> Lewis, *Greek Slave Systems in their Eastern Mediterranean Context*, 129.



Spartan society but were restricted from doing so to outsiders. *Eleutheria* can further be seen as bondage to the state in a Helot's eye, as to maintain the Spartan citizen's liberty and autonomy, the Helot's dignity and humanity were sacrificed. Thucydides records an instance of revolt by the helots that can be attributed to treatment previously addressed, "after the earthquake, caused by the secession of the helots to Ithome... ." <sup>32</sup> This in reference to helot's exploitation of an earthquake to revolt and organize at the mountain Ithome, causing Spartans great panic as was their constant fear of Helot revolt, which contributed to continued limiting of helot freedoms and harsh treatment, even killing at mass 2,000 helots at a time to intimidate others in hopes of keeping a docile workforce. <sup>33</sup> As exemplified by the constraints of the helots in Sparta, *eleutheria* reflects a primarily collectivist ideal, however, consideration of alternative evidence stands essential to obtaining a well-rounded understanding of the concept.

From an Athenian perspective the Spartan concept of *eleutheria* leads to political and social decline. In the *Politics* Aristotle criticizes Spartan government: "Again, the license of the Lacedaemonian women defeats the intention of the Spartan constitution, and is adverse to the happiness of the state . . . in those states in which the condition of the women is bad, half the city may be regarded as having no laws." <sup>34</sup> Aristotle condemns the structure of Spartan government, primarily regarding the extensive rights of women. In his view, the freedoms of Spartan women and their inferior nature resulted in the deterioration of society. Aristotle continues to challenge Spartan *eleutheria* by stating, "the legislator wanted to make the whole state hardy and temperate, and he has carried out his intention in the case of the men, but he has neglected the women, who live in every sort of intemperance and luxury." <sup>35</sup> Aristotle depicts Sparta as a lawless state having failed by allowing women social and political opportunity proving collectivism as an ineffective point of government. Though one could agree with Aristotle its important to note that Spartan women's autonomy proved paramount in sustaining Sparta's military strength.

The Spartan oligarchy, religious structure, and austere military system led to a collectivist society demanding sacrifice of personal freedom for independence as a state, and through this, *eleutheria* materialized as a collectivist concept holding an individual's value less than whatever the state saw fit. Even so, the Spartans carried out impressive displays of military power in battles during the Persian and Peloponnesian Wars, and their military remained among the strongest at the time, regardless of their lack of numbers. At its heart, Sparta guarded the liberty and independence of the city-state as a belief that should precede all others among its citizens, further employed through education, religion, and customs. Understanding the employment of *eleutheria* in all Spartan spheres of life and tradition stands pivotal in comprehending not only the function

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<sup>32</sup> Thucydides, *The History of the Peloponnesian War*, Book 3, Ch. 10.

<sup>33</sup> Lewis, *Greek Slave Systems in their Eastern Mediterranean Context*, 135.

<sup>34</sup> Aristotle, *Politics* (ca. 350 B.C.E), *Archive for the History of Economic Thought*, <https://historyofeconomicthought.mcmaster.ca/aristotle/Politics.pdf> (accessed October 13,2023).

<sup>35</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, 41.

of their complex society but to appreciate the key belief that formed one of the most powerful military superpowers in history.

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Indigenous Australians, Climate Change, and the Importance of Environmental Rights:  
How the Torres Strait Eight are Reforming Postcolonial Legislation

Sophie Whitham

September 23, 2022, was the day of a landmark decision by the United Nations Human Rights Committee (UNHRC) in the case of *Daniel Billy et al. vs. Australia*.<sup>1</sup> In what came to be known as the Torres Strait Islanders Petition,<sup>2</sup> a group of Indigenous Australians (commonly referred to as the Torres Strait 8) from the Torres Strait Islands asserted that the Australian government had violated their rights by failing to prevent and mitigate effects of climate change in their environmentally vulnerable homelands. The UNHRC sided with the petitioners who invoked Articles 6, 17, and 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), finding that Australia did not uphold the human rights to life, freedom from arbitrary interference with privacy, and culture, respectively.<sup>3</sup> This affirmed government responsibility in ensuring that citizens' rights also include environmental rights. The concept of environmental rights, while moderately new terminology, has long existed as an extension of human rights. As defined by the UN, it is "the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment."<sup>4</sup> It is applied universally but holds particular significance for indigenous populations of the world and huge implications for global governments. Australia, a country with an extensive history of colonialism and harmful Native-settler relations, is one of the first to be called to accountability on such a scale. They have since been asked by the UNHRC to take action in the form of compensation, communication with those affected, needs assessments, implementation of environmentally protective measures, monitoring the land, and prevention of further harm. This case is contextualized by the strong connections between the environmental rights of Indigenous Australians (including groups from both subcategories of Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders) and the effects of colonization. By denying Native Australians environmental autonomy, their human rights are violated as well. These violations have diminished their influence and ability to engage in traditional, regulatory maintenance of the natural land (Country). Evidence—both contemporary and historical—has shown that the silencing of Indigenous Australian voices is to the detriment of the environment as well as to their various cultural identities. The Torres Strait

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<sup>1</sup>United Nations Human Rights Committee, *Daniel Billy et al. vs. Australia*, CCPR/C/135/D/3624/2019 (2022), [https://climatecasechart.com/wp-content/uploads/non-us-case-documents/2022/20220923\\_CCPRC135D36242019\\_decision.docx](https://climatecasechart.com/wp-content/uploads/non-us-case-documents/2022/20220923_CCPRC135D36242019_decision.docx).

<sup>2</sup>The petition is still ongoing as an effort to get the Australian government to fully and officially adopt the Torres Strait Islanders' demands as a part of the Our Islands Our Home campaign and can be signed at: <https://ourislandsourhome.com.au>.

<sup>3</sup> United Nations General Assembly [UNGA], *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, (New York: UN General Assembly, 1966) <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/ccpr.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup>UNGA, *The Human Right to a Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment*, A/RES/76/300 (2022), <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/76/300>.

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Islanders Petition and UNHRC ruling, however, exhibit a positive potential outlook on future environmental legislation as indigenous populations disproportionately experience the effects of climate change.

As of 2022, Indigenous Australian groups are primarily concentrated in the north and east of the mainland, in the islands above, and on coastlines.<sup>5</sup> These areas are not only significant as ancestral lands, but also for their geologic location lying near or on the equator between the Tropic of Capricorn and Cancer. This region is recently referred to by Christian Parenti as the “Tropic of Chaos,” a place where climate change has an increased presence and intensified onset.<sup>6</sup> For the Torres Strait Islanders, the effects of climate change—namely sea level rise, extreme storms, and flooding—threaten their everyday lives, putting them at risk of forced displacement, community uprooting, and subsequent culture extinction due to the loss of sacred land.<sup>7</sup> The same remains true for all Native Australians, as well as a majority of indigenous populations around the world. Patricia K. Townsend argues in her book about environmental anthropology that while climate change threatens everyone, the distribution of associated risk across the world’s population is uneven due to a combination of political, economic, geologic, and sociological reasons. Furthermore, conflict over natural resources between indigenous people and settlers are exacerbated in the modern day by industry and poverty; where “these groups are asked to bear a disproportionate share of the *risk* associated with industry while at the same time receiving a smaller share of its *benefits*.”<sup>8</sup> Colonial violence of the past never disappeared, nor has it been remedied. Rather, it has evolved into an extensive system of oppression designed to only benefit some while depriving the colonized of their basic human rights. Australia, a capitalist country fully aware of the ramifications of its industry, has largely initiated a policy of empty promises and neglect in regard to environmental protection. As the Australian government and industry leaders actively contribute to climate change, Indigenous Australians shoulder the multifaceted burdens, greatly reducing their quality of life. This is one of the reasons the activism of the Torres Strait 8 and their commitment to protective environmental legislation is so paramount.

The established link between colonization, industrialization, and the violation of indigenous rights is an ongoing study, especially in the field of environmental rights. Unable to be understated are the harmful effects of land privatization and the associated misguided use of the “tragedy of the commons” theory.<sup>9</sup> By assuming that native communities are inherently as greed-

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<sup>5</sup>Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People: Census (2022)*, <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-peoples/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-people-census/2021>.

<sup>6</sup>Christian Parenti, *Tropic of Chaos: Climate Change and the New Geography of Violence* (New York: Hachette Book Group, 2011), 9.

<sup>7</sup>UNHRC, *Daniel Billy et al. vs. Australia*.

<sup>8</sup>Patricia K. Townsend, *Environmental Anthropology: From Pigs to Policies* (Illinois: Waveland Press, 2000), 62.

<sup>9</sup>Garrett Hardin, “The Tragedy of the Commons,” *Science*, vol. 162, no. 3859 (1968): 1243-48.

driven as white, industrialized society and that the lack of individual ownership of land will lead to chaos, those in power (in settler nations) have ironically taken away all indigenous autonomy in not only communally sharing—but *living with* the land in a way that was self-sustaining for its inhabitants and the ecosystem itself. What this has caused is a cyclical kind of violence that depends upon undermining established cultural and societal systems, as well as disrupting relationships between people and the land/environment.<sup>10</sup> Colonization causes displacement, dehumanization, and/or systemic inequality; society develops industry and urban settlements without allowing indigenous participation or input; industrialization contributes to climate change; and indigenous populations disproportionately affected by climate change due to lack of autonomy, energy rights, adequate healthcare, political voice, etc. experience damaged or uprooted cultural identities because of the degradation of Country. As explained by Amelia Telford of the Seed Mob Indigenous Youth Climate Network: “It’s our communities that are hit first and worst, not only by the impacts of climate change but the impacts of extractive, polluting and wasteful industries that are devastating our country and fueling the climate crisis.”<sup>11</sup> For Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders, this environmental violence based on years of colonialism and racism absolutely must be remedied for the sake of their health and wellbeing, to honor and protect the strong identities and ideals of past generations, and to show proper reverence to the Earth.<sup>12</sup> In order to achieve these culturally significant obligations, the land they stand upon has to be properly preserved, a right that the UNHRC fully recognizes in their ruling. Especially since the particular effects of climate change the Torres Strait Islanders are experiencing relate to preventable and/or adaptable harm caused by sea level rise and global warming, this foundational step in environmental legislation has the potential to make huge progress if applied to more countries around the world.

There is consensus among worldwide indigenous leadership that land and the environment hold particular importance and that preservation of it is integral for their lifestyles, as specified in many parts of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).<sup>13</sup> This document, drafted by the Working Group on Indigenous Populations (WGIP), highlights the importance of autonomy over land, redressing past injustices, revitalization of culture, and

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<sup>10</sup>Kyle Whyte, “Settler Colonialism, Ecology, and Environmental Injustice,” *Environment and Society*, vol. 9 (2018): 125-44.

<sup>11</sup>Lowitja Institute, *Leadership and Legacy Through Crises: Keeping Our Mob Safe (Close the Gap Campaign Report 2021)* (Melbourne: Close the Gap Campaign Steering Committee, 2021), 29, [https://www.lowitja.org.au/content/Document/CTG\\_Report\\_2021\\_FINAL\\_WEB.pdf](https://www.lowitja.org.au/content/Document/CTG_Report_2021_FINAL_WEB.pdf).

<sup>12</sup>Australian Human Rights Commission, *Transforming Power: Voices for Generational Change (Close the Gap Campaign Report 2022)* (Sydney: Close the Gap Campaign Steering Committee, 2022), 8, [https://humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/document/publication/2022\\_close\\_the\\_gap\\_report.pdf](https://humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/document/publication/2022_close_the_gap_report.pdf).

<sup>13</sup>United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, A/RES/61/295 (New York: UNGA, 2007), [https://social.desa.un.org/sites/default/files/migrated/19/2018/11/UNDRIP\\_E\\_web.pdf](https://social.desa.un.org/sites/default/files/migrated/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf).

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accessibility to basic human rights. Another instance of indigenous-led discussion regarding the topic is the Kari-Oca 2 Declaration, issued during the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development Rio+20. Speaking as a united front, leaders of various indigenous groups condemned the impact of imperialist globalization in exploiting and damaging the Earth, reaffirmed rights to self-determination, and emphasized that the land and first peoples are inextricably linked in survival due to their distinct relationship and culturally ingrained knowledge systems regarding management, conservation, and sustainability.<sup>14</sup> In 2022, before the UNHRC ruling, the Torres Strait 8's own Yessie Mosby stated that: "We must look after our island, the way it has looked after us. The bosom of this land is our mother, and the water surrounding it is our father. We have to protect them, our islands our home."<sup>15</sup> Mosby's hopes are clear: protection, commitment, gratitude, and respect towards the land and its First Peoples. Although these vocal pleas of indigenous groups have largely been ignored in the past and today, the Torres Strait Islanders Petition's role as a precedent for restorative and protective legislation in addressing environmental injustices is exigent. In the fight for indigenous equality, this case operates as concrete evidence of environmental rights, an active culmination of activist efforts, and as a possible reference point for many future rulings.

With cultural and social ties in mind, scientific and observational evidence has concluded that the environment also benefits from Indigenous Australian management. A major example of this comes in the form of controlled burning. Studies of clan estates have shown that ecological integrity is highly maintained, especially in areas of biological diversity, supporting endangered or range-restricted species, preventing threatening processes like late-dry season wildfires, and keeping out invasive species.<sup>16</sup> In his study on global environmental history, I. G. Simmons testifies to this particular relationship Native Australians share with the environment: "Not only was it a particular human-managed ecology but an economy in the sense that rights of usage flowed from its deployment, and emotional ties to the land resulted."<sup>17</sup> Links can be drawn between culture and environment through the exemplary partnership of Indigenous Australians and land management. Both parties benefit, with one receiving resources and cultural gratification and the other being managed in a self-sustaining way. Conversely, there is evidence of harm and environmental degradation associated with the lack of indigenous input and the improper

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<sup>14</sup>"Kari-Oca 2 Declaration," delivered at Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 2012, <https://www.ienearth.org/kari-oca-2-declaration/>.

<sup>15</sup>Yessie Mosby, "River Voices - Zenadh Kes," filmed March 21, 2022, 6:22, <https://youtu.be/GIMRle9A6gQ?si=sbHIuMywMINI26x8>.

<sup>16</sup>D. Yibarbuk, P. J. Whitehead, J. Russell-Smith, D. Jackson, C. Godjuwa, A. Fisher, P. Cooke, D. Choquenot, and D. M. J. S. Bowman, "Fire Ecology and Aboriginal Land Management in Central Arnhem Land, Northern Australia: A Tradition of Ecosystem Management," *Journal of Biogeography* vol. 28, no. 3 (2001): 325–43 at 340.

<sup>17</sup>I. G. Simmons, *Global Environmental History: 10,000 BC to AD 2000* (Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 32.



application of it. According to research retrieved from the 2021 Close the Gap Campaign Report, increasingly devastating droughts, uncontrolled bushfires, flash flooding, and extreme storms have destroyed land and infrastructure: causing mass displacement of people and wildlife alongside record amounts of air pollution in Australia.<sup>18</sup> With such disasters reaching levels beyond catastrophic, traditional land management by Native Australians previously effective in maintaining a balance between people and earth is no longer able to scale up, nor appropriately apply in every instance.<sup>19</sup> In other words, the issues of the modern climate crisis are unprecedented in Indigenous Australians' responses because their sustainable way of living was never the cause of it, nor did they ever historically have to address such human-caused extremes. The significance of this is that it represents the causal relationship between colonization, industrialization, and indigenous population decrease with that of environmental degradation. This also explains why the UNHRC ruling places such heavy blame and responsibility on the Australian government for its non-management of environmental concerns and ignorance towards associated issues experienced by Native groups.

Environmental rights, along with *cooperation*, are needed in order to protect vulnerable indigenous populations of Australia and the world, as well as to develop successful bicultural remedial plans. A merging of technologies, ideas, practices, and observations is more likely to be successful in addressing the scale of today's environmental crisis—which first requires that the government dedicate efforts to listening to, preserving, and protecting indigenous voices. It is not that indigenous people are born with an innate sense of ecological wisdom; it is *knowledge* learned and experienced firsthand in traditional cultural practices passed down through generations. It is a spiritual attachment gained from living with and among the natural world. The Earth is respected because it is and has been an integral part of their lifestyles. Interactions with nature are rooted in collective identities—indigenous or not.<sup>20</sup> In that sense, environmental rights like those specified by the UNHRC are just as important in efforts to protect cultural diversity, implement new standards of law, and preserve the natural world.

Unfortunately, Australia's rejection of the UNDRIP as well as a general lack of action or leadership regarding the climate emergency represents an absence of accountability,<sup>21</sup> a reluctance to restore environmental autonomy, and a disconnect in respecting the basic human rights of the

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<sup>18</sup>Lowitja Institute, *Close the Gap Campaign Report 2021*, 26.

<sup>19</sup>Marc Wohling, "The Problem of Scale in Indigenous Knowledge: A Perspective from Northern Australia," *Ecology and Society* vol. 14, no. 1 (2009), 6-7.

<sup>20</sup>Kay Milton, "Cultural Theory and Environmentalism," in *The Environment in Anthropology: A Reader in Ecology, Culture, and Sustainable Living*, ed. Nora Hadnn and Richard R. Wilk (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 351-54 at 354.

<sup>21</sup>United Nations Digital Library voting record of initial decision: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/609197?ln=en>. Australia later endorsed the Declaration, but never formally adopted or implemented it, from AHRC: [https://humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-10/implementing\\_undrip\\_-\\_australias\\_third\\_upr\\_2021.pdf](https://humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-10/implementing_undrip_-_australias_third_upr_2021.pdf).

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native populations whose roots to the land may date back to more than fifty-thousand years ago.<sup>22</sup> This is why the Torres Strait Islanders had to resort to appealing to the UNHRC; all domestic remedies had been exhausted. Whereas individual, native-led movements towards environmental autonomy have been allowed to grow and the incorporation of indigenous ecological knowledge (IEK) has become more valuable,<sup>23</sup> the Parliament of Australia has yet to provide an official government voice for Indigenous Australians. The Uluru Statement From the Heart has become the basis of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander civil rights efforts, as it proposes for a First Nations Voice and representative body to be added to the Australian Constitution. It notes that:

. . . sovereignty is a *spiritual notion: the ancestral tie between the land, or ‘mother nature,’ and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who were born therefore, remain attached thereto, and must one day return thither to be united with our ancestors.* This link is the basis of the ownership of the soil, or better, of sovereignty. It has never been ceded or extinguished, and co-exists with the sovereignty of the Crown.<sup>24</sup>

It was rejected by the government upon its release and in the 2023 referendum.<sup>25</sup> While it emphasizes land sovereignty and by extension the cultural importance of connection to the environment, it also highlights the dilemma of how Indigenous Australians can have their environmental rights respected if even their most basic political and civil rights are not yet met. In this instance, a hierarchical view of human rights must be consolidated in order to truly grasp that environmental rights *are* basic human rights for Indigenous Australians. The government must do more than just safeguarding basic human rights while only recognizing environmental welfare.<sup>26</sup> The two should be intertwined at the forefront in order properly to represent indigenous groups, their lifestyles, and their cultural heritages. The UNHRC ruling and the articles the petition was invoked under encapsulate this necessity by explaining how transgressions against environmental rights have negatively impacted the life functions of the Torres Strait Islanders.

The argument against the Uluru Statement is also the most prevalent voice of opposition against indigenous rights, restorative environmental justice, and native land titles: Australian

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<sup>22</sup>Richard Broome, *Aboriginal Australians: Black Responses to White Dominance 1788-2001* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2002), 13.

<sup>23</sup>Some examples include but are not limited to: Close the Gap Campaign, Native Title groups and Registered Native Title Body Corporates (RNTBCs), Our Islands Our Home Campaign, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research (AIATSIS), Reconciliation Australia, Lowitja Institute, etc.

<sup>24</sup>The Uluru Dialogue, *The Uluru Statement From the Heart* (Northern Territory: First Nations National Constitutional Convention, 2017), <https://ulurustatemdev.wpengine.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/UluruStatementfromtheHeartPLAINTEXT.pdf>.

<sup>25</sup>Australian Electoral Commission Tally Room, *National Results: Referendum* (2023), <https://tallyroom.aec.gov.au/ReferendumNationalResults-29581.htm>.

<sup>26</sup>Kristin Shrader-Frechette, “Individualism, Holism, and Environmental Ethics,” in *The Environment in Anthropology*, ed. Haenn and Wilk, 336-47 at 343.

national sovereignty and constitutional integrity. Daniel Wild and Morgan Begg of the Institute of Public Affairs assert that the addition of an indigenous Voice to Parliament is a violation of racial equality and “risks establishing a parallel system of representative government based on race.”<sup>27</sup> While concerns about racial divides and further polarization among government bodies and voter bases are valid, it seems both unfair and unreasonable to expect Native Australians to continue tolerating the injustices they have experienced since the colonization of the land. If the idea of granting special concessions to groups that have experienced and continue to experience the worst of humanity—racism, greed, apathy, destruction—is “radical,” then there is hardly a need for the concept of justice at all. Claims that such specifications for Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders are unneeded since they are inherently included as Australian civilians under the Constitution completely undermine their historical struggles and paint the multi-generational effects of settler violence as something natural or ordinary, able to just be forgiven and forgotten. The laws of a country and its active practices are often different: reports from Close the Gap, the Australian Human Rights Commission, and many other indigenous human rights organizations have highlighted the glaring, multilayered inequalities between indigenous and non-indigenous populations in Australia. Equality under the law may be guaranteed, but it has yet to take effect for a majority of indigenous populations. At the root of the opposing argument is also a belief that “basic needs of humans . . . are not culturally contingent,”<sup>28</sup> which is not only untrue, but uninformed as well, especially in reference to peoples like Native Australians whose cultural identities, ties to their lands, and environmental rights are absolutely paramount to their well-being and survival. The Torres Strait Islanders Petition and UNHRC decision affirm this, concluding that reformation of the law is more than necessary to address the cultural impacts of not just climate change, but the government’s role in upholding human rights legislation in a postcolonial era.

Australia and the world have much larger strides to take in establishing environmental rights and indigenous autonomy. Colonization and environmental degradation cannot be reversed, but by making efforts to communicate with, honor, amplify, incorporate, and acknowledge indigenous populations, achieving a truly multifaceted perspective and plan of action to uplift our earth and *all* of its people are within reach. The validity of the Torres Strait 8’s argument for environmental rights is thus more than proven. While climate change rampages on unchecked, fueled by industrial systems over which indigenous populations and the working class have limited control, the burden of responsibility almost entirely belongs to the government. As more and more marginalized communities on the social, economic, and geological fringes of society suffer from the all-encompassing adverse effects of the climate crisis, those in power have more than an obligation to set standards and implement procedures that will mitigate and remedy those effects. Environmental rights—whether relating to how governments guarantee health and safety for

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<sup>27</sup>Morgan Begg and Daniel Wild, “Indigenous Voice Counterpoint: a Violation of Racial Equality,” *The Sydney Morning Herald* (2019), <https://www.smh.com.au/national/indigenous-voice-counterpoint-a-violation-of-racial-equality-20190603-p51u3u.html>.

<sup>28</sup>Begg and Wild, “Indigenous Voice Counterpoint.”

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civilians or how individuals responsibly manage their own land—are absolutely necessary. The Torres Strait 8 and other Indigenous Australians signify the fight for climate justice, land rights, and a developing, cooperative, indigenous-led trend for postcolonial legislation that is worthy of replication worldwide. Although Australia cannot solely be held responsible for the climate crisis, they must also do their part as an individual country—as all countries should—in remedial management according to UN standards of environmental law newly applied in the Daniel Billy et al. vs. Australia case.

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**History Essays  
by Upper-Level Students**





Deep Roots:  
Medieval Witchcraft and its Folkloric Origins  
Creek Arthur

Medieval witchcraft has been a topic that draws in scholars, history enthusiasts, and the common person alike, but one thing stands in the way of fully understanding this phenomenon: a lack of evidence from one side. When researchers find a mountain of sources from clergy leaders, theological scholars, and popes themselves, but little to no writings from laypeople or even those persecuted relating to witchcraft, many doubt how “real” witchcraft trials and accusations were. Some historians theorize that the inquisitors invented the idea witchcraft. Michael Bailey, a leading medievalist, explains this idea in his book *Battling Demons*.<sup>1</sup> Others, such as Carlo Ginzburg, another leading medievalist, believe that the origins of witchcraft root far back into pagan religion and folklore.<sup>2</sup> These diverse arguments maintain validity so long as historians lack sources about witchcraft aside from theological accusers. The idea of witchcraft most likely emerged from a slow transition from pagan religions and folklore (both locally and widespread) to folklores mixing in with Christian mythology and demonology to eventual demonization by the Catholic Church.

Witchcraft and elements of witchcraft exist in writings before the medieval period. Ancient civilizations even had pagan goddesses who ruled over magic. Ancient Egypt had Isis, the goddess of magic and knowledge.<sup>3</sup> Ancient Greece associated Hecate (sometimes spelled Hekate) with witchcraft as well as well-known elements of witchcraft, such as the moon and necromancy.<sup>4</sup> Still within Greek mythology, in *Medea* by Euripides, Medea worshiped Hecate and practiced what medieval scholars would have called witchcraft. She curses her husband Jason, kills her children, and poisons Jason’s bride as well as poisoning the bride’s father in the process.<sup>5</sup> Michael Bailey, though a modern medievalist, assigns the term “witch” to Medea and too another figure of Greek mythos: Circe, a temptress who lured men to her and in turn would kill them.<sup>6</sup> Coming later, in C.E. 61, the Romans attacked the Isle of Anglesey. Tacitus wrote, “between the ranks dashed women, in black attire like the Furies, with hair dishevelled, waving brands. All around, the Druids,

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Bailey, *Battling Demons Witchcraft, Heresy, and Reform in the Late Middle Ages* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1971).

<sup>2</sup> Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980).

<sup>3</sup> Geraldine Pinch, *Egyptian Mythology: A Guide to Gods, Goddesses, and Traditions of Ancient Egypt* (Oxford University Press: 2002), 151.

<sup>4</sup> Richard Cavendish, *The Powers of Evil in Western Religion, Magic, and Folk Belief* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1975), 62.

<sup>5</sup> Euripides, *The Medea*, trans. by Rex Warner, in *The Complete Greek Tragedies*, vol. 1, ed. David Greene and Richmond Lattimore (University of Chicago Press: 1960), 95.

<sup>6</sup> Michael Bailey, “From Sorcery to Witchcraft: Clerical Conceptions of Witchcraft in the Later Middle Ages,” *Speculum*, vol. 76 no. 4 (October 2001): 960-990, 962.

lifting up their hands to heaven, and pouring forth dreadful imprecation . . . They deemed it indeed a duty to cover their altars with the blood of captives and to consult their deities through human entrails.”<sup>7</sup> All of these examples of magic come before the Western Roman Empire collapsed, and some long before the Roman Empire was even established. All these depictions of magic involved women, which holds some significance considering that the late medieval period often targeted women in witchcraft trials. Looking at these depictions of magic, they align well with the medieval idea of witchcraft. It could be just a coincidence, but history tends to influence the present, so that means these depictions of magic throughout Classical writings could have influenced what the idea of medieval witchcraft would become. Especially in the writing by Tacitus, considering how his writing is the closest to the medieval period, some of that druid culture may have wandered into local medieval culture.

Witchcraft has been mentioned in medieval European writings throughout history. Before the 1300s, most theological scholars associated magic and sorcery more with the pagan Roman goddess Diana, rather than with the Devil (though he was not omitted from their complaints). Rarely did these texts use the term “witchcraft,” but they described practices that would be synonymous with witchcraft in the latter centuries of the Middle Ages. Regino of Prüm, in *Canon Episcopi* (906 A.D.), claimed not only that “*sortilegium* and *maleficium* . . . was invented by the devil,”<sup>8</sup> but also that women “ride upon certain beasts with Diana.”<sup>9</sup> For brief context, *sortilegium* refers to the practice of divination and *maleficium* refers to harmful magic. This writing from Regino of Prüm demonstrates the association of existing pagan religious practices with the Devil. Burchard of Worms complains about magicians and oracles, in the *Corrector sive Medicus* (1008-12 A.D.), making associating with them punishable by varying degrees. “[S]ome women, turned back after Satan, seduced by illusions and phantoms of demons, believe and affirm: that with Diana, a goddess of pagans, and an unnumbered multitude of women, they ride on certain beasts and traverse many areas of the earth and the stillness of the quiet night, obey her commands as if she were their mistress, and were called on special nights to her service.”<sup>10</sup> Once again, this writing that came from a religious figure associated an older pagan religion with the Devil. Another document still, *The Golden Legend* written by Jacobus de Voragine in 1270, tells the life of St. Justina. St. Justina lived in the late 3<sup>rd</sup> century, dying in 304.<sup>11</sup> Her story includes a man named

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<sup>7</sup> Tacitus, “The Roman Assault on the Isle of Anglesey (61 A.D.),” in *Complete Works of Tacitus*, trans. Alfred John Church, ed. William Jackson Brodribb and Sara Bryant (New York: Random House, 1942), chpts. 29-30.

<sup>8</sup> Regino of Prüm, “A Warning to Bishops: the *Canon Episcopi* (ca. 906),” in *Witchcraft in Europe 400-1700: A Documentary History*, ed. Alan Charles Kors and Edward Peters, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 60-63 at 61.

<sup>9</sup> Regino of Prüm, “A Warning to Bishops: the *Canon Episcopi* (ca. 906),” 62.

<sup>10</sup> Burchard of Worms, “The *Corrector sive Medicus* (ca. 1008-1012),” in *Witchcraft in Europe 400-1700: A Documentary History*, ed. Alan Charles Kors and Edward Peters, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 63-67 at 65.

<sup>11</sup> Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese, “St. Justine of Nicomedia,” Accessed April 8, 2023, <http://ww1.antiochian.org/node/16769#:~:text=Justina%20of%20Nicomedia,->

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Cyprian, who “. . . had been a magician from childhood: when he was seven years old, his parents consecrated him to the devil.”<sup>12</sup> All of these writings mention magic via the Devil and demons long before the inquisitors, weakening the argument that the concept of witchcraft was a 15<sup>th</sup>-century inquisitorial invention. Another important thing to note is that while the earlier writings (in 906 and 1012) mention Diana, the goddess of pagans, Jacobus de Voragine only mentions the Devil and demons in his 1270 writing.

Medieval scholars, much like modern-day historians, attempted to explain whence witchcraft originated. The *Malleus maleficarum*, a compilation of witchcraft practices and legal proceedings written in 1487, mentions elements of witchcraft originating long before even the birth of Jesus Christ. The authors, Heinrich Kramer and Jacob Sprenger, even mention “witches who lived in the olden times, about 1400 years before the Incarnation of Our Lord.”<sup>13</sup> They further their claim by explaining Incubi and Succubi, demons who modern medieval witches worked with and who forced themselves upon these “olden” witches. They assert that “. . . no one who reads the histories can doubt . . . that Incubus and Succubus devils have always existed.”<sup>14</sup> These two assertions, coming from the first known compilation of witch’s beliefs that Christians used for centuries afterwards, hold a significant amount of merit to support the argument that witchcraft was not simply a late-medieval idea. Kramer and Sprenger were not the first to assert that witchcraft is an older system. Around 1120, Hugh of St. Victor wrote the *Didascalicon*, in which he attempts to give a basic overview of magic, the main types of magic, and magic’s history. He claims that “the first discoverer of magic is believed to have been Zoroaster.”<sup>15</sup> As a prophet, Zoroaster’s teachings make up Zoroastrianism, a monotheistic Middle-Eastern religion that emphasizes the constant battle between good and evil.<sup>16</sup> The only problem is that scholars do not know when Zoroaster lived. Even so, “At present [1991], the majority opinion among scholars probably inclines toward the end of the second millennium [BCE] or the beginning of the first,

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Commemorated%20on%20October&text=The%20holy%20Virgin%20Martyr%20Justina,in%20the%20late%20thir  
d%20century.

<sup>12</sup> Jacobus de Voragine, “The Life of St. Justina, from *The Golden Legend* (1270),” trans. William Granger Ryan (Princeton, 1993), in *Witchcraft in Europe 400-1700: A Documentary History*, ed. Alan Charles Kors and Edward Peters, 2nd ed., 81-86 at 83.

<sup>13</sup> Heinrich Kramer and Jacob Sprenger. “The *Malleus maleficarum* (1487),” trans. Montague Summers (London, 1928), in *Witchcraft in Europe 400-1700: A Documentary History*, ed. Alan Charles Kors and Edward Peters, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 180-229 at 196.

<sup>14</sup> Heinrich Kramer and Jacob Sprenger, “The *Malleus maleficarum*,” 197.

<sup>15</sup> Hugh of St. Victor, “The *Didascalicon* VI.15 (Appendix B) (ca. 1120),” trans. Jerome Taylor (New York, 1961), in *Witchcraft in Europe 400-1700: A Documentary History*, ed. Alan Charles Kors and Edward Peters, 2nd ed., 67-70 at 68.

<sup>16</sup> Douglas A. Fox, “Darkness and Light: the Zoroastrian View,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, vol. 35 no. 2 (June 1967), 129-137, 129.

although there are still those who hold for a date in the seventh century [BCE].”<sup>17</sup> No matter either of these claims, this puts the origins of magic hundreds of years before the birth of Christ. Both Kramer and Sprenger and Hugh of St. Victor agree that witchcraft first arose at some point before the birth of Christ, which aligns with the argument that the medieval idea of witchcraft may have originated in pre-Christian pagan or folkloric roots.

Medieval theological scholars differentiated between magic associated with local folklore and magic associated with demons and the Devil. Some people, usually conquered peoples, worshiped and practiced their local folklores and traditions alongside Christianity. Authorities considered this “low magic.” Others worshiped demons and devils, turning their back against Christianity. This was called “high magic.”<sup>18</sup> Once again, there is demonstration of both folkloric and Christian elements within theological beliefs on witchcraft and magic. In time, church authorities would distinguish between folk magic and the belief and practice of witchcraft, which carried far more severe penalties.

For much of the Middle Ages, witchcraft and heresy were not synonymous. Heresy could be punished by life in jail or even death, but not witchcraft. The clergy received responsibility for keeping witchcraft at bay. Regino of Prüm, in the *Canon Episcopi*, warns that “Bishops and the officials and clergy of bishops must labor with all their strength so that the pernicious art of *sortilegium* and *maleficium*, which was invented by the devil is eradicated from their districts, and if they find a man or women follower of this wicked sect to eject them foully disgraced from their parishes.”<sup>19</sup> However, when Pope Gregory XI decreed that witchcraft was inherently heresy, inquisitors could legally put witches on trial.<sup>20</sup> This permission would later be confirmed by Pope Innocent VIII in 1484 in his papal bull, *Summis desiderantes affectibus*: “[D]esiring . . . to remove all impediments by which in any way the said inquisitors are hindered in the exercise of their office, and to prevent the taint of heretical pravity, . . . do hereby decree, by virtue of our apostolic authority, that it shall be permitted to the said inquisitors in these regions to exercise their office of inquisition and to proceed to the correction, imprisonment, and punishment of the aforesaid persons [witches] for their said offenses and crimes.”<sup>21</sup> The fact that inquisitors had to be given specific instruction whether or not they could persecute witchcraft shows that they did not invent the concept of medieval witchcraft. For inquisitors to even want to go after witches, the idea of

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<sup>17</sup> Bruce Lincoln, *Death, War, and Sacrifice: Studies in Ideology and Practice* (University of Chicago Press: 1991), 149-150.

<sup>18</sup> J. Michael Raley, “The Meaning of Witchcraft,” HIS260J: Medieval Witchcraft, class lecture at Hanover College, IN, January 17, 2023.

<sup>19</sup> Regino of Prüm, “A Warning to Bishops: the *Canon Episcopi* (ca. 906),” 61.

<sup>20</sup> Pope Gregory XI, “Letter of August 14, 1374,” in *Quellen und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des Hexenwahns und der Hexenverfolgung im Mittelalter*, ed. Joseph Hansen (Bonn : C. Georgi, 1901), 15-16 (doc. 23). Trans. J. Michael Raley.

<sup>21</sup> Pope Innocent VIII, “*Summis desiderantas affectibus* (1484),” *Witchcraft in Europe 400-1700: A Documentary History*, ed. Alan Charles Kors and Edward Peters, 2nd ed., 177-180 at 179.

witchcraft needed to have been established, even more so for papal authority to have decided that witches were enough of a threat to give the inquisitors permission to put the witches on trial.

Finally, the most important late medieval documents on witchcraft include Johannes Nider's *Formicarius* (1435-38) and the above-mentioned *Malleus maleficarum*. Many scholars, including Michael Bailey, argue that the idea of witchcraft started with Nider and the *Formicarius*. The *Formicarius* ties together many elements of previous witchcraft documents prior to the publication of the *Malleus maleficarum*. Nider describes witches shapeshifting into animals, flying, consuming infants, and controlling the weather.<sup>22</sup> The most significant point of the *Formicarius*, though, is that it led to the eventual writing of the *Malleus maleficarum*. Like the *Formicarius*, the *Malleus maleficarum* chiefly accuses women of witchcraft, including having two sections that are titled "Why it is that Women are chiefly addicted to Evil Superstitions" and "Why Superstition is chiefly found in Women."<sup>23</sup> This lines up with most pre-Christian depictions of magic mainly show women practicing some type of wicked or magical art. So, some sort of correlation exists between pre-Christian and medieval depictions of magic.

Images that align with theological scholars' depictions of witchcraft come from pre-medieval, and even pre-Christian culture and literature. In fact, early medieval scholars included Diana, the goddess of pagans, within their depictions of magic, of course alongside the Devil and demons. Eventually, though, Diana phased out of the literature on witchcraft, instead the Devil and demons being the sole cause of witchcraft. Medieval authorities on witchcraft claim that the practice came hundreds of years before Christ himself. The medieval concept of witchcraft must have developed at least from some element within pagan and folkloric culture, or else these elements would not have come through in medieval documentation, especially the *Malleus maleficarum*. Moving further, the understanding of the demonization of existing cultural religions and folklores by the medieval Catholic Church provides insight into the persecutory rhetoric that would follow Christian culture into the Renaissance and well afterward.

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<sup>22</sup> Johannes Nider, "The *Formicarius* (1435-38)," in *Witchcraft in Europe 400-1700: A Documentary History*, ed. Alan Charles Kors and Edward Peters, 2nd ed., 155-59 at 158.

<sup>23</sup> Heinrich Kramer and Jacob Sprenger. "The *Malleus maleficarum*," 181.

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Civil and Political Rights in Venezuela:  
Democracy in Venezuela during Nicolas Maduro's First Presidential Term 2013-2018

Maria Godoy

The deterioration of the state of civil and political rights in Venezuela did not start under Nicolas Maduro's government. Indeed, Hugo Chavez's regime catalyzed a more authoritarian government. Some examples of these violations include Chavez's interference with the right to property by the expropriation of domestic enterprises, the violation of freedom from discrimination by pushing the Lista Tascón—the list that caused workplace discrimination and the unjust employment dismissal of individuals as it exhibited Venezuelans who voted against Chavez in the 2004 recall referendum<sup>1</sup>—or the censorship of media that spoke against the government such as Radio Caracas Television. Chavez's addition of Chavista government officials in the legislative and judicial branches, the centralization of powers in the executive branch, and a military system full of strong government supporters served as inspiration for Maduro to introduce a government system where only one party can take part.<sup>2</sup> Chavez's policies were the beginning of an era of distrust in the country's political system, and Maduro strengthened these feelings for Venezuelans. While Chavez partially took over the political powers, his successor excelled at making his party the total authority of the country.

Chavez's constitutional reform of 2007 eroded checks and balances with the elimination of the Senate and increased presidential power by establishing longer and unlimited terms of office. The amended constitution demonstrated a danger to the practice of human rights, despite having a newly detailed section on their protection.<sup>3</sup> The changes in the Constitution are something that Maduro has, evidently, taken advantage of to this day. Even before the state of human rights worsened over the years, these changes were an omen of the current situation of Venezuela: a country that was corrupted by politicians who only focused on their own interests and power, with no respect to the dignity of their citizens.

Venezuela began to be considered one of the most authoritarian countries in the world once Maduro arrived at the Palace of Miraflores, a status that persists to this day. He has emulated Chavez's human rights violations in many ways, and over time the humanitarian situation became even more aggravated. Maduro's government has been in charge of perpetuating several human rights violations and has ignored the fundamental principles of democracy: violations such as unjust deprivation of lives, harsh prison conditions, arbitrary detentions and arrests, inhumane

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<sup>1</sup> Human Rights Watch, *A Decade Under Chávez: Political Intolerance and Lost Opportunities for Advancing Human Rights in Venezuela*, 2008, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2008/09/18/decade-under-chavez/political-intolerance-and-lost-opportunities-advancing-human>.

<sup>2</sup> Javier Corrales and Michael Penfold, "The Less Competitive, More Authoritarian Regime," in *Dragon in the Tropics: Venezuela and the Legacy of Hugo Chavez* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2015), 179.

<sup>3</sup> Maxwell A. Cameron and Flavie Major, "Review: Venezuela's Hugo Chavez: Savior or Threat to Democracy," *Latin American Research Review* 36, no. 3 (2001): 257.

treatment of detainees, denial of a fair trial, unlawful raids, censorship and restriction on expressions, repression of peaceful assembly, political discrimination, limited political participation, corruption, and lack in transparency in elections and government.<sup>4</sup> Impunity prevails for those who commit crimes against the political opposition, and the political opposition is persecuted and ostracized from participating in the government. To retain its power, the Venezuelan government represses its political opposition through the use of authoritarian methods and “constitutional” methods, erasing the state of democracy in the nation.

The presidential election was held on April 14, 2013, a month after the death of Chavez. Members of the political opposition were already announcing the victory of the candidate Henrique Capriles Radonski after the polls closed; however, Nicolas Maduro claimed a win in the election with a victory margin of 1.59%. The day after, Capriles accused the election of being fraudulent, and demanded a vote-on-vote audit. The National Electoral Council (CNE) initially accepted the audit on April 18. Following this, the opposition made more demands to include in the audit on April 25, to which the CNE declined on April 27.<sup>5</sup> The CNE’s dismissal of all the proof shown by the opposition candidate illustrates that the council did not respect the integrity of the elections, and how this request may have represented a threat to the victory of Maduro.

On April 15, he organized a nationwide casserole protest and promoted street mobilization to the CNE to protest peacefully for the post-election audit. Not only did the newly elected president accuse Capriles of attempting to overthrow the government, but other government officials accused him of terrorism and instigation of violence.<sup>6</sup> The Venezuelan government’s strategy to discredit the political opposition consisted of exaggerating their opponents’ intention when they sought democratic means: they made criminal accusations to political leaders whenever a protest or a constitutional, lawful process proposed by the opposition took place, even if the political leaders were not guilty of it. In addition, the accusations are paired with fabricated evidence if a trial ever takes place. Government representatives constantly used dehumanizing language to leaders of the political opposition and protesters as well, expressing themselves with qualifiers such as “violent, fascists, coup plotters, murderers and sectors that hate and despise the [Venezuelan] people.”<sup>7</sup> Chavista-Madurista officials used this type of language to demonize their opponents and present them in a way to show the public that they are at fault for the chaos caused during the demonstrations. For Maduro loyalists, the usage of this language also displays how

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<sup>4</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Venezuela 2018 Human Rights Report*, 2019, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2018-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/venezuela/>.

<sup>5</sup> Ryan Mallett-Outtrim, “Venezuela’s Supreme Court Rules Capriles’ Appeal Against 14 April Electoral Results ‘Inadmissible,’” *Venezuelanalysis*, August 9, 2013, <https://venezuelanalysis.com/news/9917/>.

<sup>6</sup> Civilis Derechos Humanos, *Situación de Derechos Humanos En Venezuela En El Marco de La Elección Presidencial Del 14 al 30 de Abril de 2013* [Human Rights Situation in Venezuela under the Presidential Elections Framework from April 14 to April 30, 2013], 2013, [www.civilisac.org/informes/contexto-abril-2013-en-derechos-humanos](http://www.civilisac.org/informes/contexto-abril-2013-en-derechos-humanos).

<sup>7</sup> *Situación de Derechos Humanos en Venezuela* [Human Rights Situation in Venezuela].

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anyone that opposes the government and “violently” protests against it deserves a less humane threat, hence justifying their human rights violations.

Although the calls for protest by the political opposition were intended to be peaceful and a solicitude of fairness in the electoral process, the Venezuelan regime tried to smear the political opposition; repressed anyone who tried to protest against the government and the election results; and falsely classified the attempts to have a fair and democratic process as unlawful. In early May, Capriles filed a lawsuit with the Supreme Court to invalidate the legitimacy of the presidential election, presenting a list with election irregularities that was over 180 pages.<sup>8</sup> The Supreme Court dismissed the case and fined him 10,700 Bolivares (\$1,500) for the offensiveness of his claims towards the court and government and declared that there was a failure to provide sufficient evidence to prove the irregularities and fraud.<sup>9</sup> This shows, undoubtedly, the decay of democracy in Venezuela in the early 2010s. The government’s seizure of judicial power became evident with this case, since the Chavista loyalists were in control of the Supreme Court. Capriles was punished for an action that was legal, and the Supreme Court acted in favor of Maduro despite all the proof given for the case. Capriles’ fine for the offensiveness of his claims also represents how the government tried to silence political dissent through “legal” means so it did not interfere with Maduro's tyranny.

The general opposition to the results of the 2013 election along with the discontent of the people with the humanitarian and economic conditions of the country led to protests in 2014. The protests took place between February and May, and 43 lives were taken during these months. In these protests, *colectivos*—a state-sponsored paramilitary group—allegedly had a role in the deaths of 52% of civilians during the demonstrations, including the killing of 22-year-old marketing student and model Genesis Carmona.<sup>10</sup> Up to 2021, the people responsible for her death remained unpunished,<sup>11</sup> and it is unclear to this day if they have been convicted for these crimes. Similarly, the 24-year-old marketing student Bassil Da Costa was shot and killed by the Bolivarian National Intelligence Service (SEBIN) officers in one of the February demonstrations. The Public Ministry charged 8 officers for the homicide of Da Costa, yet they were later released.<sup>12</sup> These students became symbols of the Venezuelan protest against the Madurista regime, and their cases

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<sup>8</sup>Rafael Romo and Catherine E. Shoichet, “Venezuelan Opposition Contests Presidential Vote in Country’s High Court,” *CNN*, May 2, 2013, <https://www.cnn.com/2013/05/02/world/americas/venezuela-elections-lawsuit>.

<sup>9</sup> Mallett-Outtrim, “Venezuela's Supreme Court Rules Capriles' Appeal Against 14 April Electoral Results ‘Inadmissible.’”

<sup>10</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Venezuela 2014 Human Rights Report*, 2015, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2014/wha/236724.htm>.

<sup>11</sup> Raul Castillo, “El Recuerdo de Génesis Carmona, la Joven Asesinada en 2014 por Colectivos Paramilitares” [The Memory of Génesis Carmona, the Young Girl Killed in 2014 by Paramilitary Colectivos], *El Diario*, February 19, 2021, <https://eldiario.com/2021/02/19/genesis-carmona-asesinada-2014-colectivos-paramilitares/>.

<sup>12</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Venezuela 2014 Human Rights Report*, 2.

demonstrate how the government failed in its duty to protect civilians. It shows how the government offers impunity to those who operate against their regime as well.

Members of the Venezuelan armed forces acted with excessive violence towards unarmed protesters during these demonstrations, engaging in abuses that included: beatings; the use of tear gas against multitudes; the use of firearms and rubber bullets; and the deliberate shooting of rubber bullets at close range against unarmed people who were already detained. During the 2014 demonstrations, 3,306 civilians were detained, suffering from arbitrary detentions in which they would have no communication with law officials or family members for more than 48 hours. Additionally, law enforcement officials tortured many of these civilians.<sup>13</sup> Once more, the crimes done by law enforcement officials and colectivos were not punished. The government failed to address the human rights violations caused by its law enforcement officials, and they enjoyed impunity from all the abuses they committed; the government encouraged attacks against civilians for the sake of protecting the government from a “coup” instead of condemning its public officials.

Many politicians from the political opposition were imprisoned unjustly for their participation in the 2014 protests. Leopoldo Lopez, the former governor of the city of Chacao in Caracas, was accused of arson; instigation; homicide; conspiracy; damage to public property, and terrorism. Lopez turned himself in during one of the pacifistic demonstrations in February 18, 2014, and the next day he was only charged with arson, instigation, and conspiracy. Despite having offered evidence from “the testimonies of forty-one eyewitnesses, three journalists, one cameraman, four videos, fifteen press releases, and four press conference recordings,” all the proof provided by Lopez was rejected.<sup>14</sup> In September 2015, Lopez was sentenced to 14 years in prison. In October 2015, one of his prosecutors admitted that “the evidence . . . was non-existent or fabricated.”<sup>15</sup> As one of the strategies to maintain less competition, the Chavista-Madurista governments have continuously barred their political opponents from running for office, demonstrating political bias to those who challenge their hegemony in the country.

Furthermore, Hugo Chavez’s administration had previously violated Lopez’s political rights. Along with 271 Venezuelans, Lopez was accused of corruption and funds mismanagement and was subsequently banned from running for office in 2008.<sup>16</sup> In 2011, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights determined that his political disqualification from seeking public

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<sup>13</sup> Kenneth Roth, *Informe Mundial 2015: Venezuela* [World Report 2015: Venezuela], Human Rights Watch, 2015, <https://www.hrw.org/es/world-report/2015/country-chapters/world-report-2015-venezuel>.

<sup>14</sup> *Cronología del Caso Leopoldo López* [Chronology of the Leopoldo López Case], Acceso a la Justicia, 2021, <https://accesoalajusticia.org/cronologia-del-caso-leopoldo-lopez/>.

<sup>15</sup> Human Rights Watch, “The Shattered Case Against Leopoldo López,” <https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/12/02/shattered-case-against-leopoldo-lopez>.

<sup>16</sup> Tamara Pearson, “Venezuelan Opposition Politician Lopez Barred for Breaking the Law, Not for Politics,” *Venezuelanalysis*, October 19, 2011, <https://venezuelanalysis.com/news/6566/>.

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office was unjustified; however, the Supreme Court maintained its ruling.<sup>17</sup> Actors of the international community have repeatedly shown their disapproval of this ruling and have pointed out the violations done by the Venezuelan government of their own constitution and international law, yet the government denies it and refuses to be compliant with them. The Chavista government barred Lopez from running for office with the aim of eliminating any political dissidents, and this aim repeats with the Madurista government arresting him under false claims.

A different instance of unjust disqualification from running for office is the case of Maria Corina Machado. In 2014, after joining the Panamanian delegation to be able to speak in the General Assembly of the Organization of American States, Machado was expelled from the National Assembly on the premise of being a “traitor to the country” just months before the parliamentary elections. In 2015, she was banned from running for public office for a year. In 2023, it was revealed that she had been banned for 15 years instead, coincidentally after winning the primary election of the political opposition with more than 90% of the votes.<sup>18</sup> The practice of disqualifying political opponents from holding any office position seems to be a pattern in the Chavista-Madurista regime, particularly with opposition leaders that have major support from the Venezuelan people.

Demonstrations came back in 2016 when the political opposition protested the same issues as before: the aggravation of the humanitarian and economic situation of the country and the lack of democracy. Food and medicine shortages, a rise in criminality, and ongoing human rights violations were prevalent this year. Again, the Venezuelan government had infuriated its people by ignoring their calls for a just constitutional process, as the opposition handed in a petition to have a referendum recall and obtained 1.8 million signatures from the electorate when they initially needed only 200,000 signatures.<sup>19</sup> A week before continuing to the second phase of the referendum recall, the CNE suspended the referendum, and government officials claimed that there was massive fraud in this process. Madurista government officials claimed that they “would stick to the Constitution, without allowing them [the opposition] to try to deceive our people again.”<sup>20</sup> Even though most of the Venezuelan population does not support Maduro’s government and would have proceeded with the recall referendum process, the government keeps making false claims to prevent the opposition from defying the government in social, judiciary, and political ways. The

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<sup>17</sup> Daniel Bases, “Chavez Rival to Run Despite Venezuela Court Ruling,” *Reuters*, October 18, 2011, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-venezuela-opposition/chavez-rival-to-run-despite-venezuela-court-ruling-idUSTRE79H6JA20111019>.

<sup>18</sup> Inés Santaerulelia, “María Corina Machado, Razones (o Sinrazones) de su Inhabilitación Política” [María Corina Machado, Reasons (or Lack of Reasons) of Her Political Disqualification], *EL PAÍS*, October 24, 2023, <https://elpais.com/america/2023-10-24/maria-corina-machado-razones-o-sinrazones-de-su-inhabilitacion-politica.html>.

<sup>19</sup> Sebastián Acevedo, “Venezuela: el CNE Paraliza el Referendo Revocatorio a Nicolás Maduro” [Venezuela: The CNE Suspends the Referendum Recall of Nicolás Maduro], *BBC*, October 21, 2016, <https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-america-latina-37723172>.

<sup>20</sup> Acevedo, “Venezuela.”

government affirms their backing of the constitution although there are consistent violations of it as well. Thus, Venezuelans are unable to exercise their right to participate freely in the political system.

Furthermore, the Venezuelan government took all the power from the political opposition after the victory of their coalition, the Democratic Unity Roundtable (MUD), in the parliamentary elections of 2015. After nullifying the majority of the legislature passed in the National Assembly, transferring the budget oversight powers to President Maduro and engaging in other methods to make them unable to participate in the political system, the Supreme Court seized lawmaking powers from the National Assembly in 2017. Additionally, Maduro convened a Constituent Assembly in which members of the opposition had no participation and which Venezuelans had no right to reject.<sup>21</sup> Over the years, the Venezuelan regime discretely would form more approaches to possess more power and divert it from the opposition, however, their attempt to have absolute power over all the government branches without letting others participate in their political process became a reality. The creation of the Constituent Assembly represented the ultimate fall of a state of democracy in Venezuela, as no government officials from the opposition could have a say in the government, nor did the Venezuelan people; it represented the official entering of a non-official one-party system. Chavez already tried to centralize all the powers in his government with constitutional changes, and now, Maduro achieved his goal of retaining all the powers not only by preventing others from having a legislative say but making changes in the Constitution through the new assembly.

The regional elections were held in 2017, and Nicolas Maduro's government won in 18 out of 23 states.<sup>22</sup> Irregularities during the elections were denounced: a lack of international observers, voter intimidation, unexpected changes in the locations of voting centers without prior notification, vote buying, and limited access to voting machines in opposition-supporting areas.<sup>23</sup> Maduro's government employed voting suppression strategies to receive more support and was unfairly advantaged with the support of all members of the CNE. As a result, the CNE members did not fulfill their duty of overseeing the elections properly to have results that accurately reflected Venezuelan people's wants.

To gain voting support, Venezuelans were told that they would face employment termination or lose access to food supply at state-regulated prices.<sup>24</sup> The government social

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<sup>21</sup> Nicholas Casey, "Venezuela's New, Powerful Assembly Takes Over Legislature's Duties," *The New York Times*, August 18, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/18/world/americas/venezuela-constituent-assembly-maduro.html>.

<sup>22</sup> Arundhati Roy, "US: Venezuela Elections 'Neither Free nor Fair,'" *Deutsche Welle*, October 17, 2017, <https://www.dw.com/en/us-says-venezuela-vote-neither-free-nor-fair/a-40978262>.

<sup>23</sup> Freedom House, *Venezuela: Freedom in the World 2018 Country Report*, 2018, <https://freedomhouse.org/country/venezuela/freedom-world/2018>.

<sup>24</sup> Tamara T. Broner, "Venezuela: The Constituent Assembly Sham," *Human Rights Watch*, July 31, 2017, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/07/31/venezuela-constituent-assembly-sham>.

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program for food supply is the Local Committees for Supply and Production (CLAP). It was created to alleviate the food crisis but was considered unsatisfactory to the nutritional needs of the Venezuelan people.<sup>25</sup> Hence, the government plays with the needs of the people to achieve their political goals and fails to give its people social help and an adequate standard of living.

The protests that resulted from the discontent of Venezuelans with Leopoldo Lopez's situation, the establishment of the Constituent Assembly, and the disregard for the referendum recall in 2017 demonstrated the increase of violence and human rights abuse. Between April and September, the protests had a death toll of 136 people and at least 102 were killed by colectivos or security forces.<sup>26</sup> After the demonstrations, security forces would conduct illegal raids with excessive force for political repression purposes. They would enter residential buildings and houses without arrest warrants and mentioning names, looking for any individual that had been involved in the protests. The security forces would destroy locks or forcibly open doors, destroy surveillance cameras, and take valuable items from the places of residence. They would also verbally or physically threaten the residents of these sites.<sup>27</sup> Repressive methods as arbitrary detentions, use of force on civilians, raids, and torture have been used since 2014, with the only difference that there was a rise in violence in 2017. The government uses these strategies to silence opposition supporters by intimidating them into not expressing any type of discontent with the government, since the consequences for it get gradually worse.

Not unexpectedly, freedom of speech has been jeopardized in the country. In 2017, the Constituent Assembly introduced the Law Against Hatred, a law in violation of 7 articles of the Constitution. Its 20th article imposes 10 to 20 years prison sentences to "whom publicly (...) encourages, promotes or incites hatred, discrimination or violence against a person or group of people."<sup>28</sup> Following the establishment of the law, two firefighters were detained "on charges of 'instigating hate'" after posting a comical video comparing Maduro to a donkey on social media, and a hospital worker was arrested for taking a picture of a women in labor in the waiting room, as it portrayed Venezuela's health crisis.<sup>29</sup> The law is vague in matter and fails to offer a definition of hatred, giving the government the opportunity to classify as hatred any messages against

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<sup>25</sup> United Nations, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Human Rights Violations in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela: a Downward Spiral With no End in Sight*, 2018, <https://www.ohchr.org/es/documents/country-reports/human-rights-violations-bolivarian-republic-venezuela-downward-spiral-no>.

<sup>26</sup> *Venezuela: Freedom in the World 2018 Country Report*.

<sup>27</sup> Amnesty International, *Venezuela: Nights of Terror: Attacks and Illegal Raids on Homes in Venezuela*, 2017, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr53/7285/2017/en/>.

<sup>28</sup> "Ley Contra el Odio Viola 7 Artículos de la Constitución" [Law Against Hatred Violates 7 Articles of the Constitution], *El Nacional*, November 15, 2017, [https://www.elnacional.com/noticias/politica/ley-contra-odio-viola- articulos-constitucion\\_211662/](https://www.elnacional.com/noticias/politica/ley-contra-odio-viola- articulos-constitucion_211662/).

<sup>29</sup> *Venezuela 2018 Human Rights Report*, 10.

Maduro's ruling and targets leaders of the political opposition when expressing their objections on human rights violations and breaking of constitutional law.

In May 2018, Maduro celebrated a victory in the presidential election. The opposition called for a boycott in this year's elections, and the majority of voters did not participate in it. The Venezuelan people were manipulated into voting for Maduro: after voting many would visit the Red Spot, booths where they had to present a special identity document to receive food assistance. Workers would track the names of the voters that came, and claimed that "there was no effort to pressure voters or link a pro-Maduro vote to future food deliveries."<sup>30</sup> Even if the government claims not to be trying to persuade voters into casting a ballot for them, it was a strategy that makes vulnerable Venezuelans fear for their food income because these benefits could be taken away if they do not show their support to Maduro's regime. In a similar manner, Maduro was advantaged during the elections because of the banning of opposition members from running from office in the past, only leaving him with weak opponents during the presidential race.

Unfortunately, Venezuela became an authoritarian state, and it has stayed that way up to now. The government succeeded in taking over all authority of the state and used legislature and repression to be able to do it. From offering impunity to repressors, slandering the opposition, using excessive violence to keep civilians away from revolting, unfair trials and detentions, political censorship, manipulating elections how they please, to seizing all the existing powers in the government branches: the state of democracy in Venezuela had been destroyed almost in its totality, and Venezuelans' attempts to revolt against the Chavista-Madurista hegemony became pointless after countless tries of expressing their political dissent and being plainly dismissed. The humanitarian crisis became even worse the years following Maduro's reelection, especially with the pandemic. Venezuela became a hopeless nation, waiting for freedom in the future.

Nevertheless, presidential elections will be held in 2024, and many Venezuelans have shown their support to the opposition candidate Maria Corina Machado, who won the primary opposition election with more than 1.4 million votes, almost 93% of all the votes cast. Maduro has referred to this election as a "farce,"<sup>31</sup> and despite resistance of the regime to a new form of government in the country, many Venezuelans have regained their optimism in having a democratic country again. Venezuela waits for a brighter future after the next election, and Maduro is not expected to be part of it.

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<sup>30</sup> Flora Charner, Paula Newton, and Natalie Gallón, "Venezuela Presidential Elections: Nicolas Maduro's Victory Denounced as a Sham," *CNN*, May 21, 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/05/20/americas/venezuela-elections/index.html>.

<sup>31</sup> Regina G. Cano, "Former Lawmaker Maria Corina Machado Dominates Opposition's Presidential Primary in Venezuela," *PBS*, October 23, 2023, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/former-lawmaker-maria-corina-machado-dominates-oppositions-presidential-primary-in-venezuela>.



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## The Benjamin Templeton Scholars Program: From a “Legacy” of Social Justice and Civil Rights to the Dustbin of History

Jace R. Lichtefeld

In 2011, Hanover College organized and named a scholarship program for Benjamin Templeton, allegedly its first Black student. The program recruits and retains undergraduate students passionate about social justice and campus change.<sup>1</sup> In 2023, the program was renamed the Social Justice Leadership program, which has the same goal of recruiting students who have a passion for diversity, human rights, or social justice.<sup>2</sup> Hanover College, with its Benjamin Templeton Scholars Program, has tried to highlight its commitment to diversity. Hanover College only had one student of color graduate in 2007, leading President Sue DeWine and the Vice President for Enrollment Management, Jon Riester, to brainstorm how to increase diversity at the College.<sup>3</sup> DeWine and Riester used their knowledge of the first African American to attend Hanover College to influence the creation of the Benjamin Templeton Scholars Program. The group acknowledged that they needed another staff member focusing on diversity to help the program’s development. This commitment led to the group hiring Monica Green Johnson to assist in developing The Benjamin Templeton Scholars program, and she became the program’s first director.<sup>4</sup> The program took many years to develop, and the creators wanted to highlight diversity. Hanover College named its new program after a Black student with a complex history with the College to highlight its commitment to diversity. This act represents Hanover’s more profound culture of performative actions and rewriting history to paint the College and its legacy in the best light since the program’s inception.

### **Benjamin Templeton: The Myth**

Hanover College was founded in 1827 by Reverend John Finley Crowe and is currently a liberal arts college.<sup>5</sup> Benjamin Templeton, a formerly enslaved individual freed in his former master’s will, came to Hanover College’s Preparatory Department after dealing with racist attacks at Ripley College.<sup>6</sup> Templeton attended Hanover College’s Preparatory Department in 1833 and 1834 just

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<sup>1</sup> Hanover College, “A Historical Perspective on Equity and Diversity at Hanover College,” History of Diversity and Equity, 6 April, 2023, <https://www.hanover.edu/studentlife/diversityequityinclusion/history/>. Para. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Hanover College, “Social Justice Leadership Program Application,” Admission - Hanover College, [https://explore.hanover.edu/register/sjlp24?\\_ga=2.131237769.782547051.1704680242-1242564171.1661272494](https://explore.hanover.edu/register/sjlp24?_ga=2.131237769.782547051.1704680242-1242564171.1661272494), accessed 9 January, 2024.

<sup>3</sup> Sue DeWine, “Origins of The Templeton Scholars at Hanover College,” 25 August 2021. Hanover College, Hanover, Indiana, 1.

<sup>4</sup> DeWine, “Origins of The Templeton,” 1.

<sup>5</sup> Hanover College, “A Historical Perspective on Equity,” Para. 1.

<sup>6</sup> Ann Hagedorn, *Beyond the River: The Untold Story of the Heroes of the Underground Railroad* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2002), 60-64.

six years after it was founded.<sup>7</sup> This reveals that Hanover College might have always strived to be an inclusive space for everyone and this goal was achieved early in the history of the College. When Crowe founded the College, he wanted to “educate both whites and Blacks for the ministry,” and admitting Templeton to the Preparatory Department was a strong way to reach this goal.<sup>8</sup> After two years at the Preparatory Department, Templeton entered Indiana Theological Seminary, which was associated with Hanover College, in 1836.<sup>9</sup> Templeton did not graduate from the Indiana Theological Seminary and instead left for personal reasons.<sup>10</sup> It does not appear that Templeton faced issues similar to what he experienced at Ripley College at Hanover College. But he did leave Hanover College around the same time that Hanover’s Presbyterian officers and other officials were frustrated with the creation of an Anti-Slavery Society on campus.<sup>11</sup> After leaving the Indiana Theological Seminary, Templeton went to the Lane Theological Seminary in Cincinnati to finish his studies and became a preacher before passing away in 1858.<sup>12</sup> In 2015, Benjamin Templeton was awarded a posthumous Bachelor of Arts degree from Hanover College.<sup>13</sup> This was one hundred and seventy-nine years after he left Hanover but four years after the first cohort of Benjamin Templeton Scholars arrived on campus.

### **The Program’s Beginnings**

The Benjamin Templeton Scholars Program had its first cohort class start in the Fall of 2011 but the idea of the program and its potential problems did not start with them. While recruiting for this class and others, President Sue DeWine wanted to ensure this group did not only focus on racial diversity but also included “diversity in terms of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, ableism, religion, or any other trait used to marginalize peoples throughout the nation.”<sup>14</sup> This definition leaves out a critical category for diversity: class or socioeconomic status. This category appears to be left out of the consideration for Benjamin Templeton Scholars. When the first group was

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<sup>7</sup> Hanover College and Indiana Theological Seminary, *A Catalogue of the Officers and Students of Hanover College and Indiana Theological Seminary, 1833-36*, Hanover College, Hanover, Indiana.

<sup>8</sup> Hanover College, “A Historical Perspective on Equity,” Para. 1, 2.

<sup>9</sup> Hanover College and Indiana Theological Seminary, *A Catalogue of the Officers*.

<sup>10</sup> Hanover College History Department, “Benjamin Templeton, Hanover Student, 1833-1835 - - Learning in Black and White” Hanover College,” Hanover College, <https://history.hanover.edu/texts/bnw/sub-templeton.php>.

<sup>11</sup> J. Michael, Raley. “Colonization versus Abolitionism in the Antebellum North: The Anti-Slavery Society of Hanover College and Indiana Theological Seminary (1836) versus the Hanover College Officers, Board of Trustees, and Faculty,” *Midwest Social Sciences Journal* 23, no. 1 (2020): 80–117 (Article 9), <https://doi.org/10.22543/0796.231.1030>, at 82.

<sup>12</sup> Jeff Studds, 2020. “Who is Benjamin Templeton?” Zoom Lecture, Benjamin Templeton Scholars Retreat, Hanover College, 3 Oct. 2020; Raley, “Colonization versus Abolitionism,” 81.

<sup>13</sup> Hanover College, “Commencement celebrates Diversity,” *Hanoverian* 23, no. 2 (Summer 2015): 12-13 at 12.

<sup>14</sup> DeWine, “Origins of The Templeton,” 1.

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brought to campus, Monica Green, the program's first director, stated, "There's a requirement for them to be change agents."<sup>15</sup> Building this program places the goal of solving and reducing discrimination onto the individuals facing the discrimination, which is supported by the requirements to be a scholar. No college-age student can be a "change agent" without sufficient support, yet Hanover's support was focused on getting these students onto campus through scholarships.

The scholarship program gave out ten full-tuition scholarships a year, which students received for their four years from 2011-2022, with the program shifting to a \$2500 scholarship for up to 20 students starting in Fall 2023.<sup>16</sup> The original scholarships provide significant support to scholars by allowing them to only have to cover room and board costs for four years. For a 2025 scholar the scholarship was quantified as "160K to Hanover College," revealing a strong commitment to diversity.<sup>17</sup> While these scholarships offer support, it is not enough for the students to be "change agents" in their projects. The scholars lack clear instructional support and have only volunteer mentors.<sup>18</sup> There are no records of the program bringing individuals working in social justice or advocating for diversity, which would help scholars have a knowledge base for their projects.

The program's first year started with eight women of varying races.<sup>19</sup> These individuals were the foundation for this program's future and they worked quickly to establish themselves on campus with hopes of making lasting change. In the Fall of 2011, five of the eight Templeton Scholars shared their stories to be published in the *Hanoverian*, Hanover College's magazine, and the College connected them to "fulfilling the founder's mission" by being "student leaders committed to the causes of social justice, tolerance, and diversity."<sup>20</sup> The pressure on these students was likely intense. Changing the campus culture and increasing the diversity on Hanover Campus was placed onto eight students and program director Green—a daunting task for a group of virtual strangers.

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<sup>15</sup> Andrew Faught, "Agents of Change" *Hanoverian* 23, no. 2 (Summer 2015): 26-29 on 27.

<sup>16</sup> Jane Stormer, "Great Admission News and Diversity Initiatives" (17 Nov. 2010) *Internet Archive Wayback Machine*, <https://web.archive.org/web/20150925005915/http://blogs.hanover.edu/students/2010/11/17/great-admission-news-and-diversity-initiatives/> (accessed 12 Jan. 2024) Para. 4, 5; Hanover College "Social Justice Leadership Program Application."

<sup>17</sup> Phylcia Ashley, "Louisville Student awarded 160K to Hanover College," WAVE 3 News, Gray Television, Inc. 19, Feb. 2021, <https://www.wave3.com/2021/02/19/louisville-student-award-k-hanover-college/>, para. 6.

<sup>18</sup> Faught, "Agents of Change," 28.

<sup>19</sup> Faught, "Agents of Change," 26.

<sup>20</sup> Hanover College, "Fulfilling the Founder's Mission" *Hanoverian* 20, no. 1 (Fall 2011): 11-13 at 11-12.

## *The Benjamin Templeton Scholars Program*

They had a mission of producing a diversity-related campus-wide event each year, and their first event was ‘Hands Across Hanover.’<sup>21</sup> This event had people sign up to complete random acts of kindness for others and had individuals highlighting their commitment to diversity by putting their names on paper hands.<sup>22</sup> The Templeton Scholars also worked on a campus tolerance pledge at the same time, which the president adopted.<sup>23</sup> Neither of these actions helps students facing issues connected to discrimination. One of the scholars described the event as a “request [for] the Hanover College community to promote tolerance throughout all aspects of their lives.”<sup>24</sup> This request is simply something that is asked but not required.

Campus-wide programs were not the only way the Templeton Scholars Program strived for diversity. Templeton Scholars were involved in many organizations at Hanover that focused on diversity, inclusion, and mentorship, such as the 7th-grade mentors, Kaleidoscope, and Sister-to-Sister.<sup>25</sup> These clubs allowed the Scholars to have leadership opportunities and share their knowledge with others. Creating clubs is a strong way to impact the campus community but none of these organizations are still present on Hanover’s Campus. The Templeton group also helped the College and the surrounding community respond to racially charged local events. One example was the Benjamin Templeton Scholars working with other campus organizations for a peaceful protest on campus in response to a nearby Madison, Indiana Ku Klux Klan rally in September 2014.<sup>26</sup> This event happened at the same time as the protest and allowed for “alternative campus programs supporting diversity and inclusion [with] more than 300 students attending.”<sup>27</sup> The protest shows how the Templeton Scholars can work with the overarching community while creating programs for the campus. This connection with the community has the potential to increase diversity on campus and the surrounding area. But no clear lasting relationship can be found, which begs the question, what is the long-term impact of this program?

To answer this question, one should go back to the projects the first cohort of scholars did before considering these impacts. The second project led to the creation of a simulation-style game. The activity, ‘The Game of Life,’ was suggested by two Templeton scholars who participated in a similar simulation during their experience at the Governor Scholars Program, a summer camp run

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<sup>21</sup> DeWine, “Origins of The Templeton” 2-3.

<sup>22</sup> DeWine, “Origins of The Templeton” 3; Faught, “Agents of Change,” 27.

<sup>23</sup> Author Unknown, “Hanover College Benjamin Templeton Scholarship Program,” 2014, Hanover College, Hanover, Indiana, 3.

<sup>24</sup> Hanover College, “Fulfilling the Founder’s Mission” 13.

<sup>25</sup> Gage Richardson, “Last day for 7th-grade mentor program,” 17 April 2024, *Internet Archive Wayback Machine*, <https://web.archive.org/web/20130608111109/http://blogs.hanover.edu/students/2013/04/17/last-day-for-7th-grade-mentor-program/> accessed 12 January 2024.; “Fulfilling the Founder’s Mission” 13.

<sup>26</sup> Hanover College, “Students, Faculty Participate in Anti-Klan Rally,” *Hanoverian* 24, no. 3 (Winter 2016-17): 4.

<sup>27</sup> Hanover College, “Students, Faculty Participate in Anti-Klan Rally,” 4.



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by the Kentucky government for high-achieving students from across the state.<sup>28</sup> The game had students enter the Lynn Gym and then be assigned specific personal characteristics that impacted their opportunities in the simulation.<sup>29</sup> While this simulation highlights how others may experience discrimination, it is unlikely to create a lasting change. A volunteer at the event described it as a way to “show how different people have different problems in life for reasons they can’t control” and mentioned a discussion led by the scholars after the event.<sup>30</sup> In its defense, ‘The Game of Life’ does push for inclusion and understanding more than the ‘Hands Across Hanover’ pledge. This higher level of inclusion and understanding shows that the program is evolving as it ages, but is it reaching its highest potential?

The Templeton group did another simulation of ‘The Game of Life’ the following year on campus, even presenting the simulation at the National Conference on Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education (NCORE) for 500-600 students in 2014.<sup>31</sup> The repeat of the event shows its success on and off campus by being recognized on a national level, but it does not address the question of whether it truly changes minds. In the final school year (2014-15) of the first cohort of Benjamin Templeton Scholars, they worked to ensure they had one last project to influence Hanover College. The group created a cement wall filled with negative terms for the campus to destroy.<sup>32</sup> This event was based on something done in 2011 called “Wall for Hate,” which President DeWine stated: “was such a strong symbol of Unity.”<sup>33</sup> This may highlight unity but does nothing to help the students who see and hear those words in their dorms and classrooms.

The first cohort of the Benjamin Templeton Scholars Program graduated in 2015, and the school ensured their commitment to diversity was strongly highlighted. The *Hanoverian* describes the “picture-perfect setting,” then immediately goes on to highlight that the class of 2015 was the most diverse class in Hanover College History.<sup>34</sup> This fact might sound impressive until one

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<sup>28</sup> Gage Richardson, “Status update – 3/4/2013” 6 March 2013, *Internet Archive Wayback Machine*, <https://web.archive.org/web/20130606015053/http://blogs.hanover.edu/students/2013/03/06/status-update-342013/> (accessed 12 January 2024), Para 4; Kentucky State Government “Welcome to Kentucky Governor’s Scholars Program,” Governor’s Scholars Program, <https://gsp.ky.gov/Pages/index.aspx> (accessed 12 January 2024).

<sup>29</sup> Dakota McCoy, “Let’s Play Rugby” 18 March 2013, *Internet Archive Wayback Machine*, <https://web.archive.org/web/20150922063841/http://blogs.hanover.edu/students/2013/03/18/lets-play-rugby/> (accessed 12 January 2024), para 8.

<sup>30</sup> McCoy, “Let’s Play Rugby,” para 9.

<sup>31</sup> Gage Richardson, “2013 Benjamin Templeton Scholar Retreat,” 5 November 2013, *Internet Archive Wayback Machine*, <https://web.archive.org/web/20150924002655/http://blogs.hanover.edu/students/2013/11/05/2013-benjamin-templeton-scholar-retreat/> (accessed 12 Jan. 2024), Para 8; “Hanover College Benjamin Templeton Scholarship Program” 4.

<sup>32</sup> DeWine, “Origins of The Templeton Scholars at Hanover College,” 3.

<sup>33</sup> Sue DeWine, “Cherishing Hanover,” *Hanoverian* 23, no. 2 (Summer 2015): 2-4 at 4.

<sup>34</sup> Hanover College, “Commencement Celebrates Diversity,” 12.

remembers that in 2007, Hanover College only had one person of color graduate, and the source provides no information on how diverse “most diverse” is defined.<sup>35</sup> The phrasing of this statement is very deliberate. Hanover College underscores how this claim is positive, whereas giving the number of students would likely be less impressive. Furthermore, Benjamin Templeton was given a posthumous Bachelor of Arts degree at this graduation ceremony.<sup>36</sup> Why would Templeton be given an award? The history around him leaving Hanover did not appear to be negative, so this raises the question of what is missing in the story of Benjamin Templeton.

### **Benjamin Templeton: The Man**

Benjamin Templeton was born to Pompey and Tarak Templeton in Spartanburg District, South Carolina in 1809.<sup>37</sup> Templeton and his family were freed in their master’s will in 1813, and consequently his older brother became the fourth African American college graduate in 1828.<sup>38</sup> Templeton’s brother’s success in education likely led to his desire to get a college degree and become a minister. Templeton first went to Ripley College, where he was a target of racist attacks, before coming to Hanover College’s Preparatory Department in 1834.<sup>39</sup> Templeton returned to the preparatory academy the next year but never formally enrolled in Hanover College.<sup>40</sup>

Regardless, Templeton’s lack of formal enrollment to Hanover College did not stop college officials such as John Riester and President DeWine from stating he was “the first African American to attend Hanover College.”<sup>41</sup> This line is repeated in both Hanover marketing and in external discussions referencing the program. While describing the Benjamin Templeton Program, Louisville, Kentucky’s WAVE news stated Templeton is “the first African American who attended Hanover College.”<sup>42</sup> Despite these claims, he did not graduate or attend Hanover College, as shown by how he is listed in the *Catalogue of the Officers and Students of Hanover College and Indiana Theological Seminary*.<sup>43</sup> He is listed as Benjamin Templeton, and then there is a blank line next to his name where the College he graduated from would be listed.<sup>44</sup> Templeton also did not graduate from Indiana Theological Seminary and left Seminary right after College officials became

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<sup>35</sup> DeWine “Origins of The Templeton,” 1.

<sup>36</sup> Hanover College, “Commencement Celebrates Diversity,” 12.

<sup>37</sup> Hagedorn, *Beyond the River*, 60.

<sup>38</sup> Hagedorn, *Beyond the River*, 60.

<sup>39</sup> Hagedorn, *Beyond the River*, 62-63; Hanover College and Indiana Theological Seminary, *Catalogue of the Corporation*, 1833.

<sup>40</sup> Hanover College and Indiana Theological Seminary, *Catalogue of the Officers*, Feb. 1834.

<sup>41</sup> DeWine “Origins of The Templeton,” 1.

<sup>42</sup> Ashley, “Louisville Student awarded 160K to Hanover College,” para. 1.

<sup>43</sup> Hanover College and Indiana Theological Seminary, *Catalogue of the Officers*, 1835-36.

<sup>44</sup> Hanover College and Indiana Theological Seminary, *Catalogue of the Officers*, 1835-36.

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frustrated with the Anti-Slavery Society Templeton helped form.<sup>45</sup> It is likely that Templeton left Hanover, Indiana, due to his college's lack of support for the Anti-Slavery movement and failure to defend the group's right to protest. Templeton attended Hanover Academy, but he was never a student at Hanover College despite the College's insistence on his being the first Black student to attend Hanover College.

Hanover College likely points to Templeton as the first Black student since the school does not have a good history with diversity. Without Templeton, the College had no positive representation of American Black diversity until its first Black graduate, Alma Gene Prince, in 1951.<sup>46</sup> Thus Benjamin Templeton cannot be cited as an example of Hanover College's commitment to diversity. When one looks deeper at The Benjamin Templeton Scholars Program, the same can be found.

### **Performative Action**

One of the goals of the Benjamin Templeton Scholars Program was to increase diversity at Hanover College. The first project of the 2015 cohort was 'Hands Across Hanover' was very performative and did not make them change agents. A tolerance pledge does nothing to change what is said or seen on campus. A student can see the tolerance pledge with signatures, return to their dorm, and see slurs written on a whiteboard. These events are very surface-level in increasing diversity and inclusion. On paper, it highlights inclusion, but it lacks action. Writing one's name on a hand, signifying one's connection to diversity, does not lead to a more diverse campus since nothing has changed. The campus is the same, with or without these names listed. This project has had no lasting result or impact on Hanover College.

The second and third project from the cohort has the same troubles. The school Newspaper, *The Triangle*, described the first event as:

The Benjamin Templeton Scholars of Hanover College hosted a life size version of 'The Game of Life' in Lynn Gym this past Saturday. Students walked around a giant game board, attempting to become successful by receiving an education, earning money, and starting a family. Students were given a nametag and were assigned a certain economic class, gender, and ethnicity. Students were unaware of their stereotype and were treated differently based on their stereotype.<sup>47</sup>

The lack of awareness of their "stereotype" in the game may have helped them build the connection that treating people based on factors they cannot control is bad but does nothing to help them treat people less differently based on these factors. This simulation requires the participants to think deeply for any change to happen. While the game did end with a presentation about how the students were discriminated against and how this discrimination is present in the real world, there

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<sup>45</sup> Raley, "Colonization versus Abolitionism," 82.

<sup>46</sup> Hanover College, "A Historical Perspective on Equity," Para. 3.

<sup>47</sup>Rudy Uhde, "Hanover Students Learn About Discrimination Through Giant Board Game," *The Triangle*. 15 March 2013. Hanover College, Hanover, Indiana. 3.

is no illustration of people's minds being changed.<sup>48</sup> The article quotes a student who stated, "It seems like a great experience," highlighting that he did not gather anything from this experience, but believing others must have.<sup>49</sup> A student blogger discussed his experiences at 'The Game of Life' and had similar mentions of no lasting impact.

Dakota McCoy '15 attended the event, and his life did not seem significantly affected by it, connecting to the Benjamin Templeton Scholars Program and creating performative events. The next day, McCoy went and played rugby, and in his blog post, he spent 299 words discussing rugby and only 182 words discussing 'The Game of Life.'<sup>50</sup> McCoy did not mention anything he learned from the simulation; instead, he summarized the premise of the game but connected his mental processes with his rugby game.<sup>51</sup> This lack of connection reveals that this program is unlikely to have a lasting impact on McCoy and others who attended the event. McCoy is more likely to remember his hurt ankle from the weekend due to its impact on his life than the simulation game. While McCoy was not the only student in attendance at the event, his experience was not necessarily unique and matched interviews of students in *The Triangle*. When the Templeton group repeated the simulation of the 'The Game of Life' the following year on and off campus, its success marked through recognition on a national level.<sup>52</sup> However, it does not negate the performative nature.

In the final school year (2014-15) of the first cohort of Benjamin Templeton Scholars, they worked to ensure they had one last project to influence Hanover College. The group created a cement wall filled with negative terms for the campus to destroy.<sup>53</sup> This destruction is a prime example of performative action. Acknowledging dispiriting terms and destroying them does nothing to reduce the number of times they are said on campus and instead forces marginalized groups to show off their trauma for the benefit of the school. Even more so, the scholars consented to this event and saw terms that may hurt them, but the rest of the campus did not, meaning students might relive their traumatic experiences in a location they were not expecting. This act is performative because it did nothing to impact or change the system in which these words were allowed to be spoken. Hanover College has not been subtle in its desire to rewrite its history connected to diversity.

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<sup>48</sup> Uhde, "Hanover Students Learn About Discrimination," 3.

<sup>49</sup> Uhde, "Hanover Students Learn About Discrimination," 3.

<sup>50</sup> McCoy, "Let's Play Rugby."

<sup>51</sup> McCoy, "Let's Play Rugby," para 3, 4, 9 & 10.

<sup>52</sup> Gage Richardson, "2013 Benjamin Templeton Scholar Retreat," 5 November 2013, *Internet Archive Wayback Machine*, <https://web.archive.org/web/20150924002655/http://blogs.hanover.edu/students/2013/11/05/2013-benjamin-templeton-scholar-retreat/> (accessed 12 January 2024), Para 8; "Hanover College Benjamin Templeton Scholarship Program" 4.

<sup>53</sup> DeWine, "Origins of The Templeton Scholars at Hanover College," 3.

### Program Changes but Performative Still

With the graduation of the first Templeton Scholars, two things changed about the program and the College as a whole. The first change was that President Sue DeWine retired in 2015.<sup>54</sup> She was a champion for the program, and the loss of her shifted how the program works and how it is supported on campus. Monica Green left the school and the program in 2015.<sup>55</sup> Her leaving started the rotating circus of six different directors in four years, with the appointment of David J. (D. J.) Walch Jr. ending the cycle in 2019.<sup>56</sup> The chaos of the organization did impact the scholars, but some projects were written about after Green's departure. This did not prevent the few projects from still being performative. Sierra Nuckols '18, a white woman, had a transformative experience in South Africa, which led to her creating a Community Food Box Project to help with food deserts in her hometown.<sup>57</sup> She got old newspaper boxes from NUVO, had the boxes painted by incarcerated people, and placed them filled with food around Indianapolis.<sup>58</sup> While these actions help the local community, they do nothing to solve the systemic problems of food insecurity. Nuckols's project could have worked toward improving the systemic problems by advocating in the political system or partnering with another organization. Overall, her project had a positive impact but did little to reduce the systemic issues, proving that this was a performative project.

The next mention of the Benjamin Templeton Scholars Program in Hanover College publications is in 2018, and by that time, the program director had changed four times.<sup>59</sup> Tad Kaufman '21 received the "Realizing the Dream" award, highlighting his work as a Benjamin Templeton Scholar and serving in diverse clubs.<sup>60</sup> Kaufman's mention of the Benjamin Templeton Scholars Program was just simply that. A statement that he is one shows that Hanover College ensures the Benjamin Templeton Scholars Program is directly tied to diversity but does little to improve it. The same year, Sierra Nuckols '18 is mentioned as winning "the 2018 College Career Center Consortium's Paul W. Gabonay Volunteer Service Award" for her Community Food Box Project.<sup>61</sup> This achievement is impressive. The text highlights that Nuckols expanded her project in her hometown to help more individuals with food insecurity.<sup>62</sup> Once again, this project provides

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<sup>54</sup> DeWine, "Cherishing Hanover," 2.

<sup>55</sup> D. J., Walch, Jace Lichtefeld, Barb Sims, Vicky Hidalgo, & David Harden, "Timeline of Directors" 2021, Hanover College, Hanover, Indiana.

<sup>56</sup> Walch et al. "Timeline of Directors" 2021.

<sup>57</sup> Hanover College, "One Can Make a Difference" *Hanoverian* 24, no. 3 (Winter 2016-17): 11-13 on 11.

<sup>58</sup> Hanover College, "One Can Make a Difference," 12-13.

<sup>59</sup> Walch et al. "Timeline of Directors" 2021.

<sup>60</sup> Hanover College, "Kaufman Earns 'Realizing the Dream' Award," *Hanoverian* 26, no. 2 (Winter 2018): 9.

<sup>61</sup> Hanover College, "Nuckols Receives State-Wide Volunteer Service Award," *Hanoverian* 26, no. 1 (Summer 2018): 5.

<sup>62</sup> Hanover College, "Nuckols Receives State-Wide Volunteer" 5.

temporary relief for individuals, which is necessary. However, lasting change only happens if paired with a goal of systemic change, which Nuckols' project does not have. Templeton Scholar projects that lack a sense of systematic change but appear to make a difference are a consistent part of the program. However, one project can be highlighted as pushing for systemic change.

### **Systemic Change**

One example of a Benjamin Templeton Scholar pushing for systemic change is Samuel Pyle '20. This shows that while the Scholar projects could not push past being performative in nature, at least one could. Samuel Pyle was born in Sierra Leone and lived in a war-torn country suffering from hunger and devastation.<sup>63</sup> A family from Oldham County, Kentucky adopted him in 2013.<sup>64</sup> Pyle did not forget where he came from, and upon entering Hanover College, he started Looking Back Moving Forward (LBMF), which aids children in Sierra Leone.<sup>65</sup> Pyle, with his club, brought a best-selling author to campus, and when Hanover College wrote about Pyle, they did not mention he was a Benjamin Templeton Scholar.<sup>66</sup> This shows that even the College is questioning the value of Templeton Scholars on their campus. Pyle's project is an example of a Templeton-adjacent project leading to systemic change. Similarly to Nuckols' project, LBMF helps with the immediate problem of food insecurity, but Pyle goes further by hosting summer camps to push for women's equality.<sup>67</sup> LBMF and Pyle are working to disrupt the cycle of women not having access to sports and education. The next time Pyle's club, now a nonprofit 501©(3), is mentioned, his connection to the program is revealed but as a way to underscore that the program "supports diversity, human rights, and social justice."<sup>68</sup> Pyle likely got support for this club because he was a Templeton Scholar. However, nothing on his website or the articles about his nonprofit states that anyone in the program was significantly helpful. Pyle is working to create systemic change by providing summer camps and educational programs to children in Sierra Leone. He is doing that *as* a Templeton Scholar but not *because* he was a Templeton Scholar.

### **Templeton (Program) Drops Out**

In recent years, Hanover College has started to shift its focus on diversity and inclusion away from the Benjamin Templeton Scholars Program, underscoring Hanover's history of rewriting history for its benefit. The surface-level commitment to the program and diversity is waning. The College is trying to rewrite its history with diversity again by not mentioning the Benjamin Templeton Scholars Program. In 2021, the *Hanoverian* published an article entitled "Climate Change:

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<sup>63</sup> Samuel Pyle, "The Heart Behind the Mission," Looking Back Moving Forward, <https://www.lbmfgo.org/about>, Accessed 12 January 2024, Para. 1.

<sup>64</sup> Samuel Pyle, "The Heart Behind the Mission," Para. 5.

<sup>65</sup> Hanover College, "Looking Back and Moving Forward Hosts Best Selling Author," *Hanoverian* 26, no. 1 (Summer 2018): 10.

<sup>66</sup> Hanover College, "Looking Back and Moving Forward," 10.

<sup>67</sup> Pyle, "The Heart Behind the Mission" Para. 7.

<sup>68</sup> Pam Platt. "Let's Make a Difference" *Hanoverian* 27 (Winter 2019): 11-13, on 13.

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Hanover Strives to Create a More Just Campus;” the Benjamin Templeton Scholars Program was not mentioned in the article.<sup>69</sup> Sam Piacente ’22 was interviewed in the *Hanoverian* article, but his introduction mentions him as the president of Hanover Kings and Queen, now Hanover Royalty, and not a Templeton Scholar.<sup>70</sup> D. J. Walch, the Director of the Benjamin Templeton Scholars Program since December 2019, confirmed that Piacente was a scholar.<sup>71</sup> The “Climate Change” article is not the first time the Benjamin Templeton Program has not been mentioned, but it is the largest. The exclusion of a program that was used as a critical highlight of diversity and inclusion on campus since 2011 speaks volumes about the impact the program has had on the College in the ten years. The impact is not noticeable, emphasizing the performative nature of the program and the scholar projects.

Aside from those in the program, students know nothing about it, and even scholars cannot name projects completed by the program. Lana Wooley ’26 was asked about their experiences with the program, and they could not “tell you what the projects were about last [2022/2023] year.”<sup>72</sup> No historical records log the projects from the Benjamin Templeton Scholars Program. Wooley suggests that the program would benefit from focusing on one or two projects with the hopes of systemic change, but the projects from 2011-2015 show that a group focus does not inherently lead to systemic change.<sup>73</sup> The lack of mention of even performative projects from the scholars demonstrates that this program is seen as a failure or at least something to no longer celebrate.

There is one project on the Hanover Campus that can be tied to the Benjamin Templeton Scholars Program, but the project’s goal has evolved, and one looks in vain for any mention of the program or the scholars who started it.<sup>74</sup> This is the rainbow closet for the Hanover College Queer community, which provides clothing and undergarments for transgender individuals. It was started before Ashley Gordon’s ’25 time by a Templeton Scholar, and that is the extent of what she knows about the project despite her being a scholar and serving as the LGBTQIA+ center coordinator.<sup>75</sup> The lack of records again highlights that Hanover College is trying to hide or at least avoid connections to the Benjamin Templeton Scholars Program. Their performative connection to the program has been lost.

Information about the scholar projects can no longer be found in the *Hanoverian*, which is designed for a wider audience than Hanover Students. Instead, it is featured exclusively in the

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<sup>69</sup> Hanover College, “Climate Change: Hanover Stives to Create a More Just Campus,” *Hanoverian* 28, no. 3 (2021): 6-7.

<sup>70</sup> Hanover College, “Climate Change,” 6.

<sup>71</sup> D. J. Walch, Conversation with the Author, 2023.

<sup>72</sup> Lana Wooley, Conversation with the Author, 2024.

<sup>73</sup> Lana Wooley, Conversation with the Author, 2024.

<sup>74</sup> Ashley Gordon, Conversation with the Author, 2024.

<sup>75</sup> Ashley Gordon, Conversation with the Author, 2024.

Hanover College Student Newspaper, *The Triangle*. In 2018, Hanover College students were abruptly faced with ‘Hurting Words’ hung in the Withrow Activities Center, a common hangout space on Hanover College’s Campus, and asked, “How do these words make you feel?”<sup>76</sup> While it appears no one in relation to this project was aware, this display was very similar to the ‘Wall of Hate’ project. This project did lead to systemic change despite commenters reservations since it led to the Bias Incidents Report Team (BRIT), now known as the Community Alliance and Resource Team (CART), returning.<sup>77</sup> Another Templeton Scholar Project highlighted in *The Triangle* is a Neurodiversity Gallery as an upcoming event highlight, which hosted artwork focused on Neurodiversity.<sup>78</sup> Jessica Rieskamp described her event as a way to highlight that “having autism or Down syndrome or other variances should not be seen as a ‘dis’ability.”<sup>79</sup> This view is very able-bodied focused since the word disability is not a negative. Instead of Rieskamp’s project highlighting neurodiverse individuals, it once again puts them in a neurotypical world by saying they are not disabled, just special. These two projects only highlighted in *The Triangle* reveal a hidden strength of the Benjamin Templeton Program and a hidden weakness, but their lack of mention in College materials reveals that Hanover College is trying to distance itself from the Benjamin Templeton Scholars Program.

This is mirrored by the mention of Benjamin Templeton Scholars in the *Hanoverian* but excluding their connections to the program, showing again that Hanover history is being rewritten to paint Hanover College in a better light. The first was Samuel Pyle, during the first time his club was discussed.<sup>80</sup> The next was a sports award given to Andrew Littlefield ’22 in 2019, so not mentioning a social justice program might make more sense, but it is still of note.<sup>81</sup> The next Templeton Scholar, Jace Lichtefeld ’24, referenced in the 2021 *Hanoverian*, mentions the program only as a name drop and builds no connection to diversity or inclusion by not explaining the “Benjamin Templeton Scholarship.”<sup>82</sup> A young author, Gabriel Ratcliffe ’22, wrote and published a book in 2021 about his complex relationship and understanding of “the tumultuous events of

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<sup>76</sup> Daniel Johnson, “Confronting Hate on Campus and Beyond ... A Word on the ‘Hurting Words’ Campaign,” *The Triangle*, March 2018, Hanover College, Hanover, Indiana, 18.

<sup>77</sup> Johnson, “Confronting Hate on Campus,” 19.; Hanover College, “Consumer Info,” <https://www.hanover.edu/about/consumerinfo/> (accessed 8, March 2024) Para. 11.

<sup>78</sup> Geneva Dischinger-Smedes, “Upcoming Event Spotlight Neurodiversity Gallery,” *The Triangle*, 13 February 2019, Hanover College, Hanover, Indiana, 2.

<sup>79</sup> Dischinger-Smedes, “Upcoming Event Spotlight Neurodiversity Gallery,” 2.

<sup>80</sup> Hanover College, “Looking Back and Moving Forward,” 10.

<sup>81</sup> Hanover College, “Littlefield selected HCAC baseball freshman of the year,” *Hanoverian* 27, no. 1 (Summer 2019): 30.

<sup>82</sup> Hanover College, “Jace Lichtefeld ‘24,” *Hanoverian* 28, no. 3 (2021): 11.



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2020, especially the COVID-19 pandemic and the death of George Floyd.”<sup>83</sup> This book could have been highlighted as a way Templeton Scholars can lead to change by sharing their stories and expertise, but that connection was not made. Manny Otchere-Danso ’25 was focused on during the College’s “The College Tour” show in 2022, but his connection to the program was not mentioned.<sup>84</sup> If Hanover College had concrete projects from the Benjamin Templeton Scholars Program to highlight, “The College Tour” would have been a time to show how the projects lead to lasting change on campus or in the surrounding community. This was not possible since that progress does not exist. Two Scholars, Andi Spring ’23 and Wyatt Warner ’23, were promoted during the 190th commencement and the 86<sup>th</sup>-annual Honors Convocation in 2023, but their connection to the program was not mentioned, even with Warner winning an award connected to community service.<sup>85</sup> D. J. Walch, the current director, confirmed that all people mentioned above are Benjamin Templeton Scholars.<sup>86</sup> This lack of mention or surface-level mention of the program reveals that Hanover College and the Benjamin Templeton Program are trying to distance themselves from it. The performative action of diversity connected to this program is no longer warranted. The restructuring and renaming of the program illustrates this distance.

In 2023, Hanover College launched the Templeton Social Justice Leadership Program.<sup>87</sup> The program has changed its name, and it is more institutionalized with the appointment of Sara Patterson as “the inaugural Linda ’73 and Mark Baron Professor of Social Justice Education.”<sup>88</sup> This directly ties another college official to the program’s success, hopefully leading to more systemic changes on Hanover College’s campus. It also helps connect the program to Hanover since it ties directly to new courses coming to the College. Current scholar Lana Wooley ’26 has been excited about the speakers the program has started to bring to meetings and is hopeful this can lead to the program developing systemic change.<sup>89</sup> While Benjamin Templeton is still honored in this new program name, Templeton is not always included in the title, as shown through the application page for future scholars.<sup>90</sup> When the program was fundraising for its new social justice leadership internship with a concert from Ben Sollee, it was called “Hanover’s Social Justice

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<sup>83</sup> Hanover College, “Ratcliffe, Kummer, Continue Line of Hanoverian Authors,” *Hanoverian* 29, no. 1 (2021): 7; Gabriel Ratcliffe, *Roaring 20: A Walk with Black Sun*. Independently Published, 2021.

<sup>84</sup> Hanover College, “Prime Time!” *Hanoverian* 29, no. 2 (2022): 12-13.

<sup>85</sup> Hanover College, “190th Commencement,” *Hanoverian* 30, no. 1 (2023): 4-5. on 4; Hanover College, “86th Annual Honors Convocation,” *Hanoverian* 30 (Summer 2023): 6.

<sup>86</sup> D.J. Walch, Conversation with the Author, 2023.

<sup>87</sup> Hanover College, “Patterson Named First Baron Professor of Social Justice Education,” 2023. <https://www.hanover.edu/about/news/2023/patterson-named-first-baron-professor-of-social-justice-education/>. para 4.

<sup>88</sup> Hanover College, “Patterson Named First Baron,” para. 1.

<sup>89</sup> Lana Wooley, Conversation with Author, 2024.

<sup>90</sup> Hanover College, “Social Justice Leadership Program Application.”

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Leadership Program” instead of the Templeton Social Justice Leadership program.<sup>91</sup> The shift reveals that Hanover College might be turning away from the performative nature of the original program.

This new program is just beginning, and only time will tell whether or not it will flounder like the Benjamin Templeton Scholars Program did, or if it will rise above its predecessor. Overall, the Benjamin Templeton Scholars Program, despite high aspirations, failed to lead to systemic change or progress on Hanover College’s campus. Instead, the program generated multiple performative projects with this performative nature slowly being hidden to reduce the connection to the College before the new launch.

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<sup>91</sup> Hanover College, “Concert Supports Social Justice Leadership Internships,” *Hanoverian* 30, no. 2 (Winter 2024): 5.

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Shinobi to Ninja:  
How Historical Reality Shaped Modern Myth

Lydia Query

Amidst the tumultuous era of feudal Japan, ninjas acted in the shadows, spinning the historical narrative of one of the most influential nations ever seen. It is no secret that they have a profound presence in the modern era, even in the West. Ninjas appear in all sorts of media, ranging from non-fiction military tactic guides to some of the most popular animated children's shows. However, several issues are brought to light when asking these two questions: what are the origins of ninjas, and how did they become so widespread? After tracing the evolution of ninjas back to the source, the Sengoku Period, the situation starts to become dire; discrepancies between historical records and modern understanding of ninjas appear almost instantly. The passage of time distorted everything from the clothing, weapons, and tactics of ninjas. Now, the ninja image is so distanced from historical reality that it is more appropriate to claim their defining features are not authentic, but modern myth.

Even the term “ninja” is a modern fabrication. Historically, the pronunciation of the word 忍者 is *shinobi no mono*, which means “the one who sneaks.”<sup>1</sup> British historian Stephen Turnbull, the leading academic authority on all things related to Japanese military history, analyzes the use of the word ninja as opposed to shinobi in his article, “The Ninja: An Invented Tradition?”:

Outside Japan the use of the word ninja rather than *shinobi no mono* has predominated, probably because ninja [slips] readily off the Western tongue. Interestingly, there has been a trend in recent years among ninja enthusiasts to prefer the term *shinobi no mono* or just *shinobi* on the grounds that the frequency of their use in historical accounts confirms their authenticity. The word ninja is then reserved for the exaggerated popular development found in comic books and movies.<sup>2</sup>

The simplification of the word ninja is not incorrect per se, as it is just an alternative reading of the characters. However, it caters to a Western audience who, for lack of better words, were too lazy to learn the proper pronunciation. Moving forward in this essay, the use of the word shinobi will always refer to historically accurate warriors, while the word ninja will refer to the exaggerated interpretation of a stealthy assassin well-known today.

In addition to etymology, the groundwork of the larger historical context that surrounds the Sengoku and Tokugawa periods is necessary to properly analyze both material and textual primary sources. Nancy Stalker is a Japanese scholar with a focus on nationalism, imperialism, and more. She is the author of *Japan: History and Culture from Classical to Cool* and highlights

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<sup>1</sup> Joel Levy, *Ninja: The Shadow Warrior* (New York: Sterling Publishing Company, 2008), 12.

<sup>2</sup> Stephen Turnbull, “The Ninja: An Invented Tradition?” *Journal of Global Initiatives: Policy, Pedagogy, Perspective* 9, no. 1 (2014): 9–26, 13.

there that the Sengoku Jidai, 1467–1568, was a “time of civil war, with battles fought at many levels of society.”<sup>3</sup> During this period, different warrior classes became firmly established and started to take shape, and then Tokugawa Ieyasu, one of the three Great Unifiers of Japan, ushered in an era of peace. The warrior class lost their sense of purpose (due to the lack of war), were left to their own devices, and subsequently began to develop different values. It was during this time that Yamamoto Tsunetomo (a retired warrior who fought during the Sengoku Period) wrote the concept of *Bushido* down in the *Hagakure*. A plethora of other texts developed during this time, including the ultimate shinobi/ninja triad of manuals that includes *The Shinobi Hiden*, *The Shoninki*, and *The Bansenshukai*. These pieces should be taken with a grain of salt, as with any other literary-historical source, because many were written by authors with an agenda. However, they are some of the only written materials we have of shinobi that have also been translated into English. As time unfolded, the ideas and truths regarding shinobi were transformed exponentially because of people who desired to romanticize the past.

There are many aspects of the shinobi identity that have changed but none are more obvious than the appearance they take. As masters of disguise and deception, shinobi used a variety of methods to conceal themselves during the war-torn Sengoku period. Generally, they would wear certain types of clothes that depended on the nature of the mission they were executing; espionage was one of, if not the most important, responsibilities for a shinobi. To appear “invisible” during operations, shinobi often concealed themselves as common folk to hide in plain sight. A disguise in the form of a *komusō*, a flute-playing beggar, was favorable and convenient for a spy.<sup>4</sup> Taking advantage of the *komusō* attire was a technique extremely beneficial to shinobi—*komusō* had the special privilege of being able to travel the country freely, which was typically only available for the aristocratic elite. The *Buke Meimokusho*, a warrior manual written around 1806 says, “They travelled in disguise to other territories to judge the situation of the enemy, they would inveigle their way into the midst of the enemy to discover gaps, and enter enemy castles to set them on fire, and carried out assassination, arriving in secret.”<sup>5</sup> For a shinobi with the task of traveling into enemy territory undetected, the *komusō*’s ability to move freely was indispensable. However, if the situation made it impossible to don the uniform of a *komusō*, a more subtle guise in the form of an average farmer or villager would still provide that camouflage effect. Or, if they were scoping out the enemy’s position, the disguise of a woodcutter in the forest could also prove advantageous. The *Buke Meimokusho* writes, “Their duties were to go into the mountains and disguise themselves as firewood gatherers to discover and acquire the news about an enemy’s territory.”<sup>6</sup>

During this era and up until the westernization of Japan, the outward appearance of an individual would immediately indicate to an observer what social and political class they belonged

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<sup>3</sup> Nancy K. Stalker, *Japan: History and Culture from Classical to Cool* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2018), 112.

<sup>4</sup> Stephen Turnbull, *Ninja AD 1460–1650* (London: Osprey Publishing, 2012), 8.

<sup>5</sup> Stephen Turnbull, *Ninja AD 1460–1650*, 17.

<sup>6</sup> Stephen Turnbull, *Ninja AD 1460–1650*, 27.



## Query

to. For example, poor clothing and hair indicated that someone was of a lower class. On the other hand, ornate fabrics and lavish hairstyles would signal that they were important figures and that they needed to be treated with a certain amount of respect. Nonetheless, espionage was not the only duty of Shinobi (arguably). Assassinations and night raids were in the shinobi repertoire, and their clothing changed drastically when performing those operations. For missions like these, shinobi most likely often opted to wear an ensemble of navy-blue peasant clothes. *The Shoninki*, written by Master Masazumi Natori, illustrates that, “The clothes you wear should be brown, black, or dark blue. The environment can assume the most varied appearances and you should choose the most appropriate color in order to blend in with it. Clothing like a raincoat (*ama-baori*) or a cape (*kappa*) will allow you to skillfully alter your appearance.”<sup>7</sup> Generally, it is believed that in real missions, dark blue would have been the color of choice. If a mission took place during the night, the moonlight would expose a shinobi wearing all black. Nevertheless, the fictitious notion of shinobi wearing black would continue through the present day.

With the introduction of new values and innovations during the reign of the Tokugawa Shogunate period, the typical clothing of a shinobi disappeared. Replaced with the attire of the stereotypical modern-day ninja this image persisted. When the Sengoku Period ended, and the Tokugawa Shogunate ushered in an era of peace, Bunraku puppet theater became ingrained into Japanese culture around the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Many of the stories that would have been told, including the *Heike Monogatari*, or *The Tale of the Heike*, reminisced great battles. The *Heike Monogatari* was a catalyst that marked the beginning of the celebration of warrior culture as a whole in Japan. The events of the *Heike Monogatari* occurred in the late 12<sup>th</sup> century, but the story did not get penned until 1371. Like classical Greek epic, the *Heike Monogatari* is an oral retelling that details the conflict between the Taira and Minamoto clans. While samurai culture appears persistently in the *Heike Monogatari*, since it tells the story of the Genpei War (a bloody conflict that saw the rise of the samurai as a warrior class), shinobi are represented as well. The *Heike Monogatari* reads, “. . . He provided himself with a long dagger which he put on under his long court dress, and turning aside to a dimly lit place, slowly drew the blade, and passed it through the hair of his head so that it gleamed afar with an icy sheen, causing all the stare open-eyed.”<sup>8</sup> This excerpt depicts a scene where the character Taira Tadamori prevents an assassination attempt by using a ninja ability. If and when, a scene like this is played in Bunraku theater, it is implied “that to dress a character in black is to indicate to the view that he cannot see that person” according to Turnbull.<sup>9</sup> So, when retelling stories featuring ninjas via the medium of puppet theater, the stagehands would always wear all-black ensembles; these people were known as Kuroko.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Masazumi Natori, *Shoninki: The Secret Teachings of the Ninja: The 17th-Century Manual on the Art of Concealment*, trans. Jon E. Graham (Rochester, VT: Destiny Books, 2010), 26.

<sup>8</sup> Stephen Turnbull, *Warriors of Medieval Japan* (London: Osprey Publishing, 2007), 145.

<sup>9</sup> Turnbull, *Ninja AD 1460–1650*, 17.

<sup>10</sup> John W. Turner, “History and Sustainability of Bunraku, the Japanese Puppet Theater,” *Education About ASIA* 23, no. 1 (2018): 51–54.

Artists celebrated and romanced these extremely stylized images of Kuroko throughout Japan's history in several mediums. Even the legendary ukiyo-e artist, Hokusai (painter of *The Great Wave off Kanagawa*) illustrates ninjas in this fashion.<sup>11</sup> However, Hokusai was following in the footsteps of an artist who already imagined ninja in this way. Turnbull notes that "The earliest pictorial reference to a ninja in black is a book illustration of 1801, which shows a ninja climbing into a castle wearing what everyone would immediately recognize as a ninja costume. However, it could simply be that it is pictures like these that have given us our image of the ninja rather than vice-versa."<sup>12</sup> This sketch of a ninja established the model for how ninja would be represented in all sorts of media up until the 21<sup>st</sup> century in addition to Hokusai's illustration.<sup>13</sup> The first ninja movie, *Shinobi no Mono*, or as it is known in the West, *Ninja, a Band of Assassins*, debuted in Japan in 1962.<sup>14</sup> *Ninja, a Band of Assassins* set the precedent for how ninjas would be represented in film and other types of media for decades while perpetuating the stereotypical image of a ninja wearing an all-black ensemble.

While clothing was one of the most notable aspects of shinobi identity, there is much to gain from analyzing the weapons that they had in their arsenal. Combat was not the main duty of shinobi, but there are a plethora of records detailing the different types of weapons utilized in the line of duty. Surprisingly, the most trusted weapon for a shinobi was the *katana*, the weapon of choice for all samurai.<sup>15</sup> It is most accurate to assert that shinobi were a subclass of the samurai, so, there is a lot of overlap between the two different warriors. Additionally, *The Shoninki* implies that the use of the *wakizashi* was almost as popular as the katana.<sup>16</sup> The wakizashi, simply put, is a shorter katana that would have been more convenient for a shinobi to carry around as opposed to a regular-sized one. However, if the shinobi was wearing the disguise of a *yamabushi* (a warrior monk who had the privilege to carry a weapon in addition to mobility like the komusō), no one would think twice seeing them carry around a regular-sized katana. It may be surprising that shinobi did not utilize many different weapons, however, their primary duty was espionage, not night raids or assassinations.

Even modern-day ninja weapons appear vastly different from those of shinobi. One of the most popular ninja weapons is that of the *Shūriken*, also known as throwing stars. Turnbull says, "There are also no descriptions of the secret operative's personal armoury apart from the sword.

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<sup>11</sup> Katsushika Hokusai, "Ninja by Hokusai," *World History Encyclopedia*, Last modified May 30, 2019, <https://www.worldhistory.org/image/10813/ninja-by-hokusai/>.

<sup>12</sup> Turnbull, *Ninja AD 1460–1650*, 17.

<sup>13</sup> Turnbull, *Ninja AD 1460–1650*, 13.

<sup>14</sup> *Ninja, a Band of Assassins*. Daiei Motion Picture Company. 1962. *IMDb*. <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0164882/>.

<sup>15</sup> Turnbull, *Warriors of Medieval Japan*, 161.

<sup>16</sup> Stephen Turnbull, *Ninja: Unmasking the Myth* (Barnsley: Frontline Books, 2018), 127.

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Shūriken, the spinning ‘ninja stars’, are totally absent.”<sup>17</sup> However, despite this, modern media depicts ninjas with a wide variety of weapons in their arsenal. In the 1981 movie, *Enter the Ninja*, weapons like Shūriken and nun chucks are used in abundance. Even one of the film’s promotional posters integrates the shuriken into the design.<sup>18</sup> Fictitious weapons such as these have maneuvered their way into modern ninja media as they provide an entertaining experience. At the same time, the gap between ninja and shinobi grows even wider.

In addition to weapons, shinobi utilized several types of tools to aid them during their reconnaissance missions. A majority of these tools were practical, and never used for combat purposes. The *Bansenshukai* (*Ten Thousand Rivers Flow into the Sea*) is a manual from the 17<sup>th</sup> century written by a man named Fujibayashi Yasutake, who was probably from a notable Iga family, a region where *ninjutsu* is thought to originate from along with the Koka. These men took it upon themselves to preserve the tactics, weapons, and tools of the shinobi, known as *shinobi no jutsu*.<sup>19</sup> Along with the *Shinobi Hiden* and *The Shoninki*, *The Bansenshukai* is the third book of the shinobi manual triad that preserves the tactical knowledge passed down from each generation of shinobi. Illustrations and directions related to various shinobi are examined in *The Bansenshukai*. Of those, the *mizugumo*, or water spider, is a seat that floats in water.<sup>20</sup> Occasionally, the water spider is also described as a device that is to be worn on both feet to cross not bodies of water, but swampy terrain.<sup>21</sup> *The Shoninki* also provides a list of essential tools for a shinobi, and they are as follows: “A straw hat (*amigasa*), a rope with a hook attached to one end (*kaginawa*), stones for engraving (*sekibitsu*), medicine (*kusuri*), a piece of cloth (*san shaku tenugi*), and material for making fire (*tusketake*). The details concerning the use of these tools are transmitted secretly (*okuden*).”<sup>22</sup> These devices support a shinobi to help him perform his essential duties (i.e., reconnaissance) by supporting either their movement or camouflage capabilities.

Of course, it is always important to include women and the roles that they played throughout history. Many people hold the misconception that female ninjas are known as *kunoichi*. However, that can be attributed to the misreading of the word, 女, which simply is another expression for “woman”. The historical term that refers to a female warrior, 女武者, can be transliterated in English as *onna-musha*.<sup>23</sup> No ancient Japanese author ever suggested that onna-

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<sup>17</sup> Turnbull, *Ninja: Unmasking the Myth*, 119.

<sup>18</sup> *Enter the Ninja*. Golan-Globus Production. 1981. *IMDb*. <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0082332/>.

<sup>19</sup> Fujibayashi Yasutake, *The Book of Ninja: The First Complete Translation of the Bansenshukai – Japan’s Premier Ninja Manual*, ed. Antony Cummins, trans. Yoshie Minami (London: Watkins Publishing, 2013), 11-12.

<sup>20</sup> Yasutake, *The Book of Ninja*, 11-12.

<sup>21</sup> Turnbull, *Ninja AD 1460–1650*, 21.

<sup>22</sup> Natori, *Shoninki: The Secret Teachings of the Ninja: The 17th-Century Manual on the Art of Concealment*, 26.

<sup>23</sup> Rochelle Nowaki, "Women Warriors of Early Japan," *Hohonu 2015 Academic Journal*, vol. 13 (2013): 63-68, 63.

musha ever played the role of a shinobi, it is quite the opposite. Instead, these women were frequently characterized as samurai. Most illustrations depicting female warriors opted to show them wearing the iconic *yoroi* armor.<sup>24</sup> However, unlike regular samurai, the weapon of choice for onna-musha was the *naginata*.<sup>25</sup> Depicting onna-musha in this distinctive fashion remains consistent until the modern day once the transition to kunoichi (a pop-culture icon), began.

Even though there is a lack of concrete historical evidence pointing to the existence of kunoichi (female ninja warriors), they are still extremely widespread in modern media. Turnbull concludes that this misunderstanding can be narrowed down to an excerpt in *The Bansenshukai* where a phrase reads “久ノ一術,” or *kunoichi jutsu*.<sup>26</sup> Turnbull explains, “[This] is commonly taken to mean the activities of female ninjas, even though there is no suggestion of this in the original. It is to the 1950s novelist Yamada Futarō that we owe the elaboration of the meaning of kunoichi from ‘female’ to ‘female ninja’.”<sup>27</sup> Whether he knew it or not, Yamada Futarō altered the course of the representation of women as ninjas forever. Of course, this is not to say that the inclusion of women into the ninja narrative is a bad thing, it can (and should), be argued the opposite. However, historically, shinobi women did not exist, at least from what scholars can extrapolate from various texts. Instead, it is more appropriate to assert that the female warriors of feudal Japan were so exceptional that they deserved to be studied in their own unique category.

The discrepancies between shinobi and ninja exponentially grew over time until they developed more differences than similarities. The changes in clothing, weapons, tools, and even the role of women widened the divide between shinobi and ninja. Unfortunately, textual evidence that does survive from the Tokugawa era (i.e., *The Shinobi Hiden*, *Shoninki*, and *The Bansenshukai*) must be carefully read as their respective authors were already romanticizing war stories. The lack of a war-torn state brought about peace, but once authors were left to their own devices, these stories lacked authenticity. In essence, the transformation of the shinobi/ninja identity reflects not only historical evolution but also the very human desire to romanticize the past. As scholars continue to navigate between layers of myth and reality, it is evident that the legacy of these elusive figures captivates people worldwide, transcending cultural boundaries and even time.

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<sup>24</sup> Stephen Turnbull, *Samurai Women 1184-1877* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2010), 19.

<sup>25</sup> Turnbull, *Samurai Women 1184-1877*, 20.

<sup>26</sup> Turnbull, *Ninja: Unmasking the Myth*, 125.

<sup>27</sup> Turnbull, *Ninja: Unmasking the Myth*, 125.

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## Seppuku: Motivations for Ritualist Suicide

Luke Scherer

As you kneel on a mat, you gain your composure. Your second readies their sword. Picking up a short dagger, you take your last breath as you plunge the knife into your stomach and rip across from left to right. As the knife slides across your belly, your second takes a swing, and their sword severs your head. You have just committed a form of ritualistic suicide from Japan called *seppuku*. As defined by Nancy K. Stalker, seppuku is “ritualistic suicide through disembowelment.”<sup>1</sup> This definition is generic as there are many ways to commit seppuku. Although suicide is taboo in Western societies, the vocabulary used to refer to seppuku can be taboo in Japan. There is another term for this act called *hara-kiri*. Directly translated as “cut stomach,” *hara-kiri* is rarely used in Japan as it is viewed as vulgar.<sup>2</sup> The term *hara-kiri* is primarily used to address Western audiences, as shown by Robert Christopher’s usage of the term. He states, “I have used [*hara-kiri*] because it is familiar to Americans.”<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, Andrew C. Rankin claims that *hara-kiri* is so exotic to Japanese people today that the word is viewed as an import from the Western world.<sup>4</sup> Acknowledging how modern Japanese people do not appreciate the term *hara-kiri*, this paper opts for the socially acceptable and polite term—seppuku.

Ritualistic suicide can be found in all corners of Japanese history. Although it is assumed to have been imported to Japan, seppuku is a tradition that is distinctly Japanese. First recorded around the late Heian period, scholars assume that the practice was of a practical nature. Being captured in war was not only highly frowned upon, but it also meant almost certain torture or death. G. Cameron Hurst claims that people began by throwing themselves off a horse headfirst with a sword in their mouth. Later, disembowelment became preferred as it became associated with the honor of baring their entrails and allowing those to see how pure they were.<sup>5</sup> It appeared again at the fall of the Kamakura Bakufu, where Regent Hojo Takatoki and two hundred of his vassals killed themselves.<sup>6</sup> The practice only grew with the rise of the samurai class during the Sengoku period, and it peaked in popularity during the Tokugawa Bakufu, where the practice was issued as a form of capital punishment.

The Meiji Restoration brought dramatic changes to Japan in an effort to westernize the nation. Point four of the Charter Oath eliminates “evil customs of the past” to appease the Western

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<sup>1</sup> Nancy K. Stalker, *Japan: History and Culture from Classical to Cool* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2018), 132.

<sup>2</sup> Andrew Rankin, *Seppuku: A History of Samurai Suicide* (New York: Kodansha International, 2011), 24.

<sup>3</sup> Robert C. Christopher, *The Japanese Mind: The Goliath Explained* (New York: Leiden Press, 1983), 74.

<sup>4</sup> Rankin, *Seppuku*, 26.

<sup>5</sup>G. Cameron Hurst, “Death, Honor, and Loyalty [sic]: The Bushido Ideal,” *Philosophy East and West* 40, no. 4 (October 1990): 511–27 at 520.

<sup>6</sup> Stalker, *Japan*, 85.

World.<sup>7</sup> Subsequently, seppuku was removed as a form of capital punishment and was outlawed. Just because it became illegal, however, does not mean it disappeared. While national feelings around the practice dramatically changed during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the last person to commit seppuku was Mishima Yukio in 1970.<sup>8</sup> Present in Japanese history for centuries, seppuku is a window into the implications of Bushido ideals and the codification of ritual into law. While historians can agree on the definition and general history of seppuku, there is a schism rooted in the foundational motivations behind an individual or group of individuals taking their own lives. A self-motivated perspective of seppuku bases itself on the idealized practices of Bushido—the way of the warrior—in which self-disembowelment is an honorable thing that is necessary. On the contrary, some historians push back on the self-motivated perspective by emphasizing how the Tokugawa Bakufu used seppuku as a penalty in which samurai were ordered to commit suicide. While understanding the nature of an individual's decision to commit seppuku is relevant, the motivation to commit seppuku is insignificant at the macro level as both sides have placed prestige on suicide. The two perspectives give greater context for understanding how the Japanese used propaganda during WWII to idealize samurai, and both are responsible for normalizing suicide in modern Japan.

The first perspective on the motivations of seppuku is presented by Inazō Nitobe (1862-1933). His account of the motivations of seppuku is detailed in his book, *Bushido: The Soul of Japan* (1st edition, 1900). Born into Meiji Japan, Nitobe was a scholar of Western cultures. He studied in Hokkaido and America, became a Christian and championed the Western world in Japan.<sup>9</sup> In his efforts to help the West understand Japanese culture, morals, and religion, Nitobe wanted to write a book about what Japanese morals are rooted in—bushido. Nitobe states, “In my attempts to give satisfactory replies to M. de Laveleye and my wife, I found that without understanding feudalism and Bushido, the moral ideas of present Japan are sealed volumes.”<sup>10</sup> Nitobe is attempting to appease Western questions about Japan’s moral code while having a detached understanding of Japan's life. Due to Nitobe's disconnect from Japanese society, Hurst describes him as “in almost every way imaginable, Nitobe was the least qualified Japanese of his age to have been informing anyone of Japan’s history and culture.”<sup>11</sup> Critically, Hurst acknowledges the negative aspects of the main champion of bushido to illustrate Nitobe’s motivation for writing the piece. Reaching his target, Nitobe’s book was very popular in the West, resulting in it being translated into many languages, reprinted many times, and having ten

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<sup>7</sup> Stalker, *Japan*, 217.

<sup>8</sup> Stalker, *Japan*, 283.

<sup>9</sup> Hurst, “Death, Honor, and Loyalty,” 512.

<sup>10</sup> Inazō Nitobe, *Bushido: The Soul of Japan*, 10th ed. (New York: Kodansha USA, 2012), 19-20.

<sup>11</sup> Hurst, “Death, Honor, and Loyalty,” 511.



editions.<sup>12</sup> This idealized form of bushido had major ramifications on the Japanese government's decisions during WWII.

Bushido is commonly translated as “the way of the warrior.” It is a moral code that was utilized to stress societal values of loyalty, fidelity, filial piety, and most importantly, an acceptance of death. Nitobe compares bushido to the likes of European chivalry by detailing how they are both rooted in feudalism and dependent on the belief in a higher being.<sup>13</sup> Within Japan, these knightly principles are characterized in the *Hagakure*. The *Hagakure* is recognized as a foundational text for bushido. It begins, “I have found the way of the samurai is death.”<sup>14</sup> Beginning the foundation of a belief system by exclaiming that its most rudimentary tenet is an acceptance of death reduces the fear that death holds on society. As outlined in the *Hagakure*, the presence and acceptance of death led these samurai to be able to face death head-on and not flinch when they are challenged by it.<sup>15</sup> Accepting the teaching of bushido results in death being glorified and found honorable.

Understanding seppuku through the lens of bushido is key to grasping the cultural significance the practice held for the samurai of the time. The premise is outlined by Nitobe: “I will open the seat of my soul and show you how it fares with it. See for yourself whether it is polluted or clean.”<sup>16</sup> Seppuku maintained honor in the face of defeat. Even if a samurai lost, those who defeated him could judge his purity by his commitment to his cause. Nitobe explains, “The high estimate placed upon honor was ample excuse with many for taking one’s own life.”<sup>17</sup> Most of bushido’s principles point to honor. For a samurai, it is honorable to serve their master. It's honorable to die for their master, and in doing so, it is honorable to commit seppuku.

Committing seppuku is an honor that enlightened the samurai class. But when can a social norm be considered self-motivation? Addressing this very question, Nitobe uses the example of literary minds versus the samurai. To summarize, those who study literary works are obsessed with modifying their lives to the principles that society deems valuable. On the other side, those who enact the teachings become one with the lesson.<sup>18</sup> Nitobe argues that at some point in enacting the teachings of bushido, they are no longer a societal pressure; instead, they become personal decisions that people make. Furthermore, the *Hagakure* details, “There is no need to think of loyalty and filial piety. In bushido, there is nothing but *shinigurui* (throwing themselves into it as if there were no turning back). Loyalty and filial piety are already fully present on their own accord

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<sup>12</sup> Nitobe, *Bushido*, 13.

<sup>13</sup> Nitobe, *Bushido*, 38.

<sup>14</sup> Tsunetomo Yamamoto, *Hagakure: The Book of the Samurai*, trans. William Scott Wilson (Tokyo: Kodansha International; New York: Harper and Row, 1979), 1.

<sup>15</sup> Yamamoto, *Hagakure*, 2.

<sup>16</sup> Nitobe, *Bushido*, 106.

<sup>17</sup> Nitobe, *Bushido*, 106.

<sup>18</sup> Nitobe, *Bushido*, 42-43.

in the state of *shinigurui*.”<sup>19</sup> Thus, the *Hagakure* argues that the principles that samurai believe are so ingrained in them that they act before thinking. Nitobe and the *Hagakure* stress that bushido is a moral code, not just a societal value.

As Japan progressed into a modern country during the Meiji period, Saigo Takamori (1828-1877) was disillusioned with the new government that he helped create. Leading the failed Satsuma Rebellion, Saigo tried to avenge the rights and privileges that the samurai class had lost to the newly Westernized government. Credited with being the last samurai, Saigo died in the rebellion, and with him died the samurai class and ways of life. His death was so symbolic that legends arose to fill in his missing heroism. Mark Ravina postulates that, although it was unlikely that Saigo committed seppuku, the legends that arose around it have muddled the true accounts of his death.<sup>20</sup> Ravina utilizes the accounts of autopsies and witnesses to the death to rationalize that because he suffered from a shattered femur, hydrocele, and advanced heart disease, he would be unable to perform the ritual properly. Furthermore, Saigo was reported not to have suffered any abdominal wounds, but he was beheaded.<sup>21</sup> Ravina’s understanding of Saigo’s death poses the question: Why would it be portrayed as seppuku?

It ultimately comes down to Saigo being the last samurai. The end of the samurai class and their way of life cannot end in a dishonorable way. To preserve Saigo’s honor and the honor of the class, his death needed to be portrayed as seppuku, and it is even recorded in many encyclopedias as fact. These biographies were accounted for during the rise of Japanese nationalism in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. They stressed values like loyalty, calmness, and honor.<sup>22</sup> To preserve the end of an era and capture its values, Saigo Takamori’s death needed to be one of honor, even if he did not actually commit seppuku. By preserving his image, the nationalist movement captured his honor and gave him a legendary death.

Contrary to the self-motivated position, seppuku was used as capital punishment. Not just limited to the Tokugawa period, but during this time, seppuku became enshrined in law as a means of capital punishment. If one is ordered to do something by an authority figure, is that self-motivated by internal values? No. This perspective is primarily focused on those who are ordered to commit seppuku and the complexities that are found within that.

To observe the commitment people had to seppuku, historians look at the instruments used to puncture their abdomen. Though traditionally performed with a dagger or short blade, the stomach cut would fade from practice throughout its usage as legal punishment. Replacing the blade, the samurai began using a paper fan. To some, this fan was treated symbolically as a blade, but to the traditional samurai, it was an appropriation of seppuku. A first-hand account from Yamaoka Shunmei was published in 1772, and it states:

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<sup>19</sup> Yamamoto, *Hagakure*, 2.

<sup>20</sup> Mark J. Ravina, “The Apocryphal Suicide of Saigō Takamori: Samurai, ‘Seppuku’, and the Politics of Legend,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 69, no. 3 (August 2010): 691-721 at 692.

<sup>21</sup> Ravina, “The Apocryphal Suicide of Saigō Takamori,” 700.

<sup>22</sup> Ravina, “The Apocryphal Suicide of Saigō Takamori,” 701.

In the old days, suicide by stomach-cutting was a spectacular technique, one that warriors considered and studied carefully to familiarize themselves with its nuances... Today there are so many rules for cutting the stomach. An assistant is always present, and sometimes the dagger plays no part whatsoever, a paper fan being placed upon the tray instead; as soon as the man picks up this fan, off comes his head from behind. Since the stomach is not cut, how on earth can we call this ‘seppuku’? It is no different from an ordinary beheading.<sup>23</sup>

This account details how the traditional perspective on seppuku required cutting the stomach instead of a symbolic cut. Not only did it require cutting their stomach, but it glorified it by highlighting how spectacular it was and how dignified and refined the people who committed it were. It was something for those who studied it and had full intentions of actually cutting themselves. The rise of paper fan seppukus was shamed and characterized by people unwilling or unable to cut themselves. Occurring 181 years before Yamaoka’s condemnation of fan-based seppukus was the death of Sen no Rikyū (1522-1591). Figure 1 illustrates Rikyū’s death poem and portrait during his seppuku.<sup>24</sup> The image depicts Rikyū with a fan in his hands. Toyotomi Hideyoshi ordered Rikyū to commit seppuku since Rikyū challenged his cultural prestige as one of the greatest tea masters of the age. Rikyū did not feel he was capable of stabbing himself, so he used a fan.<sup>25</sup> He was not committing seppuku willingly; his hand was forced, so he chose the least painful method, the fan. Rikyū is an example of how paper fan seppuku was used when being ordered to commit suicide. The unwillingness to stab oneself is demonstrated throughout the Tokugawa period, in which seppuku was legalized as a punishment and fan-based seppuku became increasingly popular.



Figure 1. Artist Unknown. Portrait of Sen no Rikyū with his Death Poem. Early 17<sup>th</sup> Century. Color on Silk Scroll. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Mary Cheney Cowles Collection, Accession Number 2020.396.20. <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/845141> (accessed October 27, 2023).

The rise of seppuku in the Tokugawa period was important to proceduralize and regulate the samurai class. This second perspective is outlined by Eiko Ikegami in her book titled *The Taming of the Samurai*. Ikegami is a historian primarily focused on the various routes that Eastern nations take into modernity. Her book on the samurai was published in 1995 and received international praise, ultimately leading her book to be described as a classic in college classrooms for its

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<sup>23</sup> Rankin, *Seppuku*, 143.

<sup>24</sup> Artist Unknown, *Portrait of Sen no Rikyū with his Death Poem*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Mary Cheney Cowles Collection, Accession Number 2020.396.20, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/845141> (accessed October 27, 2023).

<sup>25</sup> *Portrait of Sen no Rikyū*.

culminating coverage of the samurais' impact on Japanese history and development.<sup>26</sup> In her book, Ikegami shares her interpretation of the samurai's motivation to commit seppuku. Predominantly focusing on the Tokugawa period, her perspective captures the traditional bushido-inspired approach while also capturing the larger group of individuals who are ordered to commit seppuku as a means of capital punishment, like Sen no Rikyū from the earlier example.

Ikegami explains her interpretation by explaining how the Tokugawa Bakufu was trying to compartmentalize the samurai. Coined the "Bonsai Approach," she describes:

The new patterns of proceduralization eventually reduced the samurai's honor culture by shrinking it to fit within the confines of a bureaucratic and procedural code...The samurai were also vulnerable to arbitration from above; after all, they were trapped in the economic toils of the Tokugawa system, separated from their original land tenure and forced to live in castle towns, like the bonsai in a pot.<sup>27</sup>

Ikegami demonstrates that during the premodern period, the Tokugawa government was systematizing the samurai to fit their practices into their new legal codes. In this process, the shogun tried to incorporate aspects of their honor culture into the system but had to limit it by ritualizing the practices. Described as a violent culture, the samurai way of life needed to change during the Tokugawa period because the government was maintaining legal stability and peace. To preserve the honor of the samurai, the Tokugawa reserved seppuku as the only form of capital punishment for the samurai class and *daimyo*.<sup>28</sup> This causes seppuku to gain a new meaning, being the way of a warrior to display their honor and now, a pawn in Tokugawa's penal code. Ikegami captures this idea in the statement, "The act of seppuku not only signified the honor of the accused individual but embodied the authority of the state as well."<sup>29</sup>

The codification into the penal code caused seppuku to be ritualized, and in doing so, the practice was made more palatable. The practice was transformed to have the *kaishaku* act quicker. The *kaishaku* is the second: the person who would stand behind the individual and decapitate him. Ikegami details how the incorporation of the second ultimately led the practice to become more of a decapitation than a self-disembowelment. Furthering her argument, she discusses that as Tokugawa society progressed, there were fewer self-inflicted wounds and an increase in the incorporation of wooden, symbolic daggers or fans. Self-inflicted wounds began to gain a negative connotation called "belly of mortification" and deemed outside of the code of etiquette of the Tokugawa. Because the practice was modified to the extent of removing the act of self-disembowelment, Ikegami claims, "The Tokugawa samurai ordered to end his life by seppuku was

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<sup>26</sup> Eiko Ikegami, *The Taming of the Samurai: Honorific Individualism and the Making of Modern Japan*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 242; "Eiko Ikegami," Faculty Website at the New School for Social Research. <https://www.newschool.edu/nssr/faculty/eiko-ikegami/> (accessed November 27, 2023).

<sup>27</sup> Ikegami, *The Taming of the Samurai*, 242.

<sup>28</sup> Ikegami, *The Taming of the Samurai*, 253.

<sup>29</sup> Ikegami, *The Taming of the Samurai*, 254.

not killing himself to keep his honorable name clear of the shame of suffering defeat in battle; it was not an enemy but most likely his master who was commanding his death.”<sup>30</sup> She is claiming, like the case of Sen no Rikyū and Yamaoka Shunmei’s commentary on fan-based seppuku, that those who use tools other than the traditional knife to self-inflict a wound are being ordered to commit suicide when they would rather live. Those of the higher classes did not have an option; they were required by law to maintain their honor through seppuku.

The bushido-inspired interpretation by Nitobe and the legal punishment perspective by Ikegami can be examined through *The Tale of the 47 Rōnin*. This text is one of the most popular stories from the Tokugawa period, as it quickly became a classic. It was developed into plays, dramas, and eventually films. One of the most notable adaptations of this story is from the Kabuki theaters, called *Chushingura (The Treasury of the Loyal Retainers)*.<sup>31</sup> The tale is one of loyalty, honor, and vengeance, culminating in 46 of the 47 Rōnin committing seppuku. Becoming a legend, the story captures the bushido principles of vengeance and honor, while the true story is one of hesitation and legal punishment. To quickly synopsise an undisputed version of the story, Stalker provides a summary in her book *Japan: History and Culture from Classic to Cool*. The premise is that while under Tokugawa rule, Lord Asano Naganori (1667-1701) was at the imperial palace in Edo for his *sankin-kōtai* (alternating attendance). While at the palace, he was receiving etiquette lessons from Kira Yoshinaka (1641-1703). During those lessons, Kira embarrassed Lord Asano, so Asano unsheathed his dagger and struck him. Unsheathing a dagger is not allowed inside the imperial palace, let alone attempted murder, so Lord Asano was ordered to commit seppuku by the end of the day. The Bakufu also confiscated his territory, leaving his samurai masterless. Forty-seven of the masterless samurai, called Rōnin, avenged Lord Asano almost a year later when they stormed Kira’s residence and killed him. Officials debated on the proper course of action because the Rōnin had broken the law, but they did so in a righteous manner rooted in the bushido principles. They were ordered to commit seppuku as a result of their conduct and were buried with their lord in a temple. The Sengaku-ji temple is a common site for pilgrimages today.<sup>32</sup>

As a legend, *The Tale of the 47 Rōnin* is told in a way to fit the narrative of bushido. The story is used as an example of what being a samurai is: their commitment to their lord, bravery, charging into death with no remorse, culminating in honorable suicide. Juliet Piggott captures the distortions and mystifications in her book, *Japanese Mythology*. In the chapter titled “Heroes and Heroines,” Piggott recounts the story of the 47 Rōnin, similar to the previous synopsis, but the mythos includes justification for Lord Asano to attack Kira by saying that Kira was being paid to embarrass and dishonor Lord Asano. After laying the justification for attacking Kira, Piggott writes, “To such behavior there could be only one answer, the preservation of honor by the death

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<sup>30</sup> Ikegami, *The Taming of the Samurai*, 255-56.

<sup>31</sup> Stalker, *Japan*, 157.

<sup>32</sup> Stalker, *Japan*, 157-59.

of the shogun's official."<sup>33</sup> The legends around the story had to provide good justification for the actions to be carried out; the mythos provides a pure rationale. Bushido is the way of the warrior, so to be loyal retainers, the 47 Rōnin had to kill Kira. In their endeavors, principles of chivalry filled the gaps between the factual evidence. For example, Piggott writes, "Eventually [Kira] was found hiding ignominiously in a charcoal storehouse on the premises. Kuranosuke commanded him to commit [seppuku], but this he would not do. So Kuranosuke beheaded him...with the dagger his master had used when killing himself."<sup>34</sup> The only factual evidence after the beheading of Kira was that his head was cut off. There is no evidence that the Rōnin offered Kira seppuku, which he then turned down. Filling in the story with motivations like these provided moral righteousness to the Rōnin. They were acting in accordance with bushido, seeking revenge and receiving vengeance, as illustrated by the death of Kira with the sword that took their master's life. They stayed true to their moral guides and acted in the most noble way, which made them heroes. The mythos leads the 47 Rōnin to be sentenced to seppuku, which they accept willingly. Up to this point, the mythology that Piggott has outlined has filled in the gaps that factual evidence cannot answer, and it has provided a morally righteous motivation to carry out the actions that ensued. It sets the Rōnin on a pedestal in which they are heroes who came to the most honorable fate, seppuku, after avenging their master.

Often left out of summaries and legends are the details that shed light on the reality of the 47 Rōnin. Provided by Ikegami, a detailed account of the testimonies and reports from the Tokugawa government and public opinion sheds a different light on the story. The first is the motivation of Lord Asano to attack Kira. Unlike the corruption story from the mythos, Ikegami records eyewitness testimony saying that Asano had a "personal grudge" that caused him to lose his temper. And ultimately, because Asano failed to kill Kira, the public frowned upon him as he showed *fukaku*, or the failure to follow through and the shameful incompetence of a warrior.<sup>35</sup> While the mythology praises Asano for resorting to the only acceptable action, the reality of the situation was that he got upset and hit Kira, failing to kill him, which ruined his public perception. Furthermore, the actions of the Rōnin are also called into question. The Rōnin waited almost a year after their master's death to enact revenge. Hurst writes, "...who in the *Hagakure* notes that they should have taken their revenge against Lord Kira immediately without any thought of the consequences; such was the essence of his shinigurui form of bushido."<sup>36</sup> The Rōnin's inaction for a year was not in accordance with the principles of bushido, according to the author of the *Hagakure*. The delayed reaction of the Rōnin allowed for contemplation of consequences and planning. Another example of delayed actions by the Rōnin was their seppuku. They did not commit seppuku immediately after killing Kira. The Rōnin were ordered to commit seppuku, and

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<sup>33</sup> Juliet Piggott, *Japanese Mythology* (London: The Hamlyn Publishing Group, 1969), 100.

<sup>34</sup> Piggott, *Japanese Mythology*, 101-02.

<sup>35</sup> Ikegami, *The Taming of the Samurai*, 224.

<sup>36</sup> Hurst, "Death, Honor, and Loyalty," 525.

they waited for their full two-month trial to play out before committing suicide. Hurst states, “But clearly, the authorities could not react with leniency without risking potential anarchy... Therefore, it was decided by the authorities that the [forty-seven Rōnin] should be condemned to death rather than pardoned.”<sup>37</sup> This excerpt reveals that by awaiting the trial, there was a possibility of a pardon, but it was unlikely. Ultimately, the Rōnin were ordered to commit seppuku. Hurst comments, “[Seppuku] was far more likely to be imposed upon one rather than a willful act to demonstrate one’s nobility, honor, or loyalty.”<sup>38</sup> The juxtaposition of this point with the seppuku of the Rōnin sheds light on the reality of the Rōnin’s situation and how they may have wanted to live. Baited to await the trial by the debate of a pardon, the Rōnin were ultimately forced to commit suicide.

Keeping in mind that a pardon was possible and that, under Tokugawa law, seppuku was imposed on individuals, the complexities of the details crack the mythology open. The story is not glossed over with assumptions, and the holes that exist are where the historical debate around motivations arises. The mythology provides a great story to inspire others to act in accordance with bushido, and as previously stated, *The Tale of the 47 Rōnin* quickly became part of popular culture in Japan and caused a resurgence of bushido ideals. The reality of the story pokes holes into its foundation, like with Lord Asano’s motivations. By showing the faults in bushido principles, the heroism of the story is questionable.

As illustrated in *The Tale of the 47 Rōnin*, mythology can lead to false perceptions of events and misinformation. The tales of myths and legends of the honorable samurai may seem insignificant, but these stories were used to inspire the actions of the Japanese during WWII. The self-motivated perspective, driven by the bushido principles, was able to motivate, or coerce, Japanese people into programs like the Kamikaze program. Hurst writes, “Indeed, Nitobe’s *Bushido: The Soul of Japan* became not only an international bestseller, but it served as the cornerstone for the construction of the edifice of ultranationalism that led Japan down the path to a war she could not win.”<sup>39</sup> Nitobe, the author who laid the foundation for the self-motivated perspective, is partially responsible for radicalizing Japanese society. By rekindling bushido principles, Nitobe fueled the ultranationalist propaganda fire.

Additionally, stories like the mythos versions of *The Tale of the 47 Rōnin*, inspired people to gain a spirit of bushido. For those who enlisted in the imperial army, they were led by the bushido principles of charging into death, or they held great shame and guilt about the insufficient commitment and dishonor they would bring to their families. Furthermore, Ikegami writes, “The famous first sentence of the [*Hagakure*], ‘bushido, or the way of the samurai, means death,’ has been used as a slogan by twentieth-century Japanese militarists and ultranationalists because it neatly encapsulates the samurai spirit.”<sup>40</sup> The imperial army uses bushido-inspired propaganda to

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<sup>37</sup> Hurst, “Death, Honor, and Loyalty,” 524.

<sup>38</sup> Hurst, “Death, Honor, and Loyalty,” 522.

<sup>39</sup> Hurst, “Death, Honor, and Loyalty,” 512.

<sup>40</sup> Ikegami, *The Taming of the Samurai*, 286.

promote suicide before surrender. The culminating result of the militarist propaganda was illustrated through the development of the Kamikaze program. The influence of bushido can be seen in this pilot's final letter:

Honorable Mother and Father,

The difficulty of the journey you made to see me was clearly evident in your disheveled hair and in the hollows under your eyes—it made me want to bend my knees and worship before you. In the wrinkles on your brows was vivid testimony of the pains you took to raise me. Words could not express my feelings, and what little I did say was superficial in the extreme. Yet, although acutely conscious of how little time we had, I saw in your eyes and in your gaze all you wanted to say but couldn't. When you took my hand and passed it over your chilblains, I experienced a sense of profound peacefulness unlike anything I have experienced since joining up—like being a baby again and longing for the warmth of a mother's love. It is because I bask in the beauty of your deep devotion that I can martyr myself for you—for in death I will sleep in the world of your love. Washed down with my tears was the sushi you prepared with such loving care, for it was like putting your love to my lips. Though I ate but little, it was the most delicious meal of my life.

Honorable Mother, even if I was never able to fully accept the love you gave me, I received so much wisdom from you. And Father, your silent words are carved deeply into my heart. With this I will be able to fight together with you both. Even if I should die, it will be with a peaceful spirit. I mean this with all my heart.

The war zone is where these beautiful emotions are put to the test. If death means a return to this world of love, there is no need for me to fear it. There is nothing left to do but press on and fulfill my duty.

At 1600 hours our meeting was over. Watching you walk out the gate, I quietly waved goodbye.

Captain Adachi Takuya<sup>41</sup>

Letters like this one show extreme levels of reverence for their parents—filial piety—and exude feelings of being dissatisfied with the dishonor that they have brought to their family; these are all traits reinforced by bushido. But the pilots feel that through the Kamikaze program, they will be able to restore their honor by committing suicide in service of Japan and the emperor. This propaganda that spreads the idealist vision of bushido is what led these pilots to end their lives.

Outside of the scope of war, Japanese society, to this day, has a different relationship with suicide and death in comparison to western audiences. Takie Sugiyama Lebra examines Japan's relationship to suicide in her book, *Japanese Patterns of Behavior*. She details, "American condemnation of suicide makes self-destructing only a desperate submission to despair, but the

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<sup>41</sup> Captain Adachi Takuya, Letter to his Parents, 28 April 1945, in "Last Letters of Kamikaze Pilots," *Manōa* 13, no. 1 (2001): 120–23 at 122.



*Scherer*

Japanese respect for it allows it to be an honorable and purposeful act.”<sup>42</sup> The history of suicide in Japan has created a more positive connotation of it. The less stigmatized view resulted in Japan having one of the highest suicide rates in the world up until the 1960s.<sup>43</sup> The stories told of seppuku and other forms of ritualist suicide, no matter the intentions and motivations of the participants, have ultimately led Japan to have a relaxed notion of suicide and an increased rate of it.

Seppuku is a ritualist form of suicide, also known as hara-kiri, that has been present in Japanese history since the medieval period. The practice was not standardized until it became a legal punishment under the Tokugawa Bakufu. With the rise of the Meiji government, seppuku was outlawed as a form of capital punishment, but the tales of the practice would inspire the next generation during WWII. The motivations of the practice have been split between the bushido-inspired group that claims people committed seppuku for self-motivated reasons. The other group claims that seppuku was the result of societal pressures or governmental enforcement. The presence of suicide in Japanese culture and history has had a numbing effect, as Japanese society has a different connotation of suicide in comparison to the West. No matter the motivations debated between historians, the relationship between Japan and suicide has caused an abnormally high suicide rate up until the 1960s. Seppuku is a cultural phenomenon that is uniquely Japanese and causes problems that the Japanese have had to face. The future is brighter for Japan’s relationship with suicide, as their suicide rate is steadily decreasing.

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<sup>42</sup> Takie Sugiyama Lebra, *Japanese Patterns of Behavior* (Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii, 1976), 190.

<sup>43</sup> Lebra, *Japanese Patterns of Behavior*, 192.

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## **Outstanding Senior History Thesis**

(Winner of Hanover College's 2024 Charles and Dorothy Lynn Prize for the Best Essay in English Submitted in an Upper-Level Course at the College during the 2023–24 Academic Year)



A Forgotten History:  
The U.S.–Mexico Bracero Program

Leslie R. Redus

A joint border and shared history tie the United States of America and the United Mexican States, formerly the Republic of Mexico, together. This shared history is rich and complex, shaped by conflict, migration, trade, and policy. The Bracero Program, which was implemented from 1942 to 1964, is a significant part of these countries' histories, one that is rarely spoken about or seldomly mentioned. The Bracero Program was an era of American history filled with trauma, exploitation, and humiliation for the Bracero workers. The Bracero Program started in the middle of a gruesome war. It forced Mexican men to cross the border to work, with both countries trading men as if they were merely cattle and humiliating these men as if they weren't human. The Bracero Program was a bilateral agreement that primarily served the interests of the governments of the United States of America, the United Mexican States, and the United States agriculture business.<sup>1</sup> This bilateral agreement symbolizes how these countries benefitted from the labor of hardworking men while humiliating them throughout the process, stealing their wages, and how, ultimately, these two governments abandoned these men in the face of profit.

### **Origins of the Bracero Agreement**

On July 23, 1942, the Mexican Farm Labor Program Agreement was formalized by an exchange of notes between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Mexico and the Embassy of the United States of America in Mexico City.<sup>2</sup> This agreement, also known as the Emergency Farm Labor Program, and more commonly known as the Bracero Program (*Bracero* being the Spanish term for farm laborer or arm man), was active for twenty-two years, ending in 1964. The 1942 agreement between these two governments was the first of its kind, as other guest worker programs were informal and not a part of a bilateral agreement.<sup>3</sup> This agreement highlighted many protections for the Bracero workers but would be loosely enforced after the Second World War. Still, never before had the United States and Mexican governments come together for such an agreement, marking this event in history. This bilateral agreement was a collaborative effort for an important cause: the fight for democracy and freedom.

The Braceros (the name for the men who worked in the program) primarily worked in agriculture in the United States, though some also worked in the railroad sector. The agriculture industry, especially during a time of war, is critical for the vitality of a country. How could a

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<sup>1</sup> For this paper, the United States of America will be referred to as the United States rather than America.

<sup>2</sup> *Mexican Agreement, Online Archive of California*,  
<https://oac.cdlib.org/view?docId=hb9j49p4n9;NAAN=13030&doc.view=frames&chunk.id=div00224&toc.id=div00235&brand=oac4>.

<sup>3</sup> Alberto García, "Regulating Bracero Migration: How National, Regional, and Local Political Considerations Shaped the Bracero Program," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 101, no. 3 (August 1, 2021): 433-60 at 436.

country afford to fight a war without resources such as food? But how could a country afford to fight a war without soldiers? With a vast number of able-bodied marching off to fight and die in battle, the United States agriculture industry was in desperate need of workers, people who were hardworking, experienced, and cheap to pay.

Business and money have always been the grease that has kept the wheel spinning; the inception of the Bracero Program is no different. The first push for cheap workers came from Texan farmers during the Spring and Summer of 1941, who petitioned for Congress to use their influence to create a program that imported workers from Mexico.<sup>4</sup> There was a reason that Texan farmers specifically wanted Mexican laborers: and had asked Congress to import workers from South of the United States border. American Southwest farmers had learned in the past half-century before 1942 that Mexican laborers were hard workers and considered them a cheap labor source.<sup>5</sup> Texan farmers were not the only ones who petitioned for Mexican workers during the summer of 1941. In July, Arizona farmers also appealed to the federal government to import workers, with California following two months later.<sup>6</sup> Interestingly, the United States of America was not yet officially occupied with the Second World War in the Summer of 1941, with the attack on Pearl Harbor not occurring until December of that year. Many historians have reported that the Bracero Program came to fruition as a war relief effort, but with Texas, Arizona, and California calling for the importation of workers months before the United States' involvement in the war, it is easy that perhaps this was not the case. Perhaps with the tension around the world due to the war, the United States agriculture business saw this as an opportunity to take advantage of the situation. Or the United States agriculture business merely wanted to get ahead of uncertain times if the United States government decided to go to war.

In February of 1941, though, the United States government had determined that there was adequate labor in the agricultural sector. "The supply of farm labor in the United States for planting and harvesting the 1941 crop would be adequate to maintain production..."<sup>7</sup> With this report, albeit with some serious logistical planning, the United States government judged that the 1941 crop was not in danger. The report mandated that there was an adequate amount of labor for harvesting that crop, though with significant difficulty. The United States government likely felt, in February 1941, that there was no considerable need to call for an importation of labor. As stated previously, during the summer of that year, Texan, Arizonian, and Californian farmers felt differently. In their appeal to Congress, the United States farmers wanted laborers who worked hard and could be paid

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<sup>4</sup> Otey M. Scruggs, "Evolution of the Mexican Farm Labor Agreement of 1942," *Agricultural History* 34, no. 3 (1960): 140-49 at 141.

<sup>5</sup> Scruggs, "Evolution of," 140.

<sup>6</sup> Scruggs, "Evolution of," 141.

<sup>7</sup> Wayne D. Rasmussen, *A History of the Emergency Farm Labor Supply Program* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Agricultural Economics, 1951), *Internet Archive*, <https://archive.org/details/historyofemergen13rasm/page/n4/mode/1up>, 14.

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cheaply. Notably, these farmers wanted a guest worker program similar to an informal one in 1917 and actively opposed any plan that had participation by the Mexican government.

Without the Mexican government's involvement, United States farmers could run the guest worker program however they saw fit, as they did in 1917. These farmers wanted immigration restrictions to become lax, allowing them to obtain Mexican laborers themselves.<sup>8</sup> If the Mexican government became involved, the farmers would be unable to obtain the cheap workforce they desperately wanted. Without government regulation, it would be considerably easier for United States farmers to control and manipulate a population with few legal protections. The Mexican government's involvement in creating a guest worker program was not what the United States agriculture sector wanted; they would be unable to cheaply pay their workers if the Mexican government demanded fair pay and protections. Having workers they could pay cheaply is the primary reason that United States farmers petitioned Congress in the first place.

It seemed that with Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941 and the United States' entry into the Second World War, the United States government had taken the Southwest farmers' petition more seriously. The United States' entry into the war also increased pressure from the agriculture sector, leading the United States government to create a formal guest workers program with the Mexican government. An initial agreement was reached in Mexico City on July 23, 1942.<sup>9</sup> The Mexican government was represented by Ernesto Hidalgo, a Representative of the Foreign Office, and Dr. Abraham J. Navas, a Department of Labor and Social Provision Representative.<sup>10</sup> The United States government was represented by Joseph F. McGurk, a counselor of the American Embassy in Mexico, John O. Walker, an Assistant Administrator of the Farm Security Administration (Department of Agriculture), and David Meeker, the Assistant Director of the Office of Agricultural War Relations (Department of Agriculture).<sup>11</sup> These United States officials were brought on to be part of the agreement on the Mexican government's insistence. The Mexican government requested that any representatives of the United States agencies that were "directly concerned" with this agreement head to Mexico for the agreement to be discussed further.<sup>12</sup> If a formal guest program were established, the Mexican government would likely require specific details in person from those most involved in the operation on the United States side of the border. The Mexican Farm Labor Program Agreement would later be revised at least once, with the final version agreed upon on April 26, 1943.<sup>13</sup> In total, this agreement has seven sections: General

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<sup>8</sup> Scruggs, "Evolution of," 143.

<sup>9</sup> *Mexican Agreement*.

<sup>10</sup> *Mexican Agreement*.

<sup>11</sup> *Mexican Agreement*.

<sup>12</sup> Robert C. Jones and Pan American Union Division of Labor and Social Information, *Mexican War Workers in the United States; the Mexico-United States manpower recruiting program and operation 1942 to 1944* (Washington D.C.: Pan American Union Division of Labor and Social Information, 1945) 1.

<sup>13</sup> *Mexican Agreement*.

Provisions, Contracts, Admission, Transportation, Savings Fund, Numbers, and General Considerations.

### **The Mexican Farm Labor Program Agreement**

Four main points under the General Provisions of the Bracero Agreement make up the foundation of the accord, and most are later expanded upon in the other sections of the agreement. Before the General Provisions were stated, however, a brief paragraph explained why the four main points under the General Provisions were important:

In order to effect a satisfactory arrangement whereby Mexican agricultural labor may be made available for use in the United States and at the same time provide means whereby this labor will be adequately protected while out of Mexico, the following general provisions are suggested:<sup>14</sup>

Out of the two countries, it is quite clear that the United States of America holds more power and influence than the United Mexican States. Mexico, then and now, has been plagued by hard times economically and politically, never quite establishing itself as well as its northern neighbors had. Due to this and the general horrifying violence in the country, many of Mexico's poorer citizens tend to emigrate to the United States. They do so to work for a better life and to sustain themselves and their families economically in a way they would be unable to do in Mexico. Many of these immigrants are desperate, and without a better option, they end up emigrating to the United States, sometimes without proper documentation. These circumstances leave a population of immigrants vulnerable and often exploited by employers and others due to their undocumented status. This is not a recent phenomenon, but it is a cycle that has been in play for over a hundred years, with the United States agriculture business keen on taking advantage of it.

However, with the United States in a war and needing laborers to work in their fields to support said war, the government of Mexico was in a more advantageous position. With this advantage, Mexico could protect its citizens as they worked abroad. This arrangement was one that Southwest farmers did not want. The United States, for all its power, could not afford to have Mexico pull out of this agreement, not when the United States was in the middle of fighting a war. The future relationship between these two countries would depend on how well or poorly the program went. For these reasons, it was essential to define the terms of the Bracero Program thoroughly.

The first significant point under the General Provisions section of the Bracero Program was about the war occurring on the other side of the world. This bilateral agreement was created and formalized while the United States of America was actively engaged in war with the Axis powers. The agreement states that the Braceros, who were sent to the United States to work, were not to be used for military purposes.<sup>15</sup> Although Mexico declared war on the Axis powers in 1942, its primary effort in the war was to support the United States instead of being directly involved in the

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<sup>14</sup> *Mexican Agreement.*

<sup>15</sup> *Mexican Agreement.*



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fighting itself.<sup>16</sup> The United States of America needed labor for agricultural means, and Mexico was able to provide it. The United States was sending its soldiers to fight and die in a war, but Mexico was sending its men to heave and toil in a land known for its discrimination. A land that the Mexican people were all too familiar with. It is this same discrimination that allowed for Braceros to be humiliated and belittled during their time in the United States, with their own country even taking advantage of them.

The Mexican government was well aware of how their citizens fared in the United States when they had gone to work there previously. The First World War had the United States use an informal guest worker program for a time, and even after the war, Mexican labor was used in American fields. But these people were treated disrespectfully and discriminatorily, and word had gotten back to the Mexican government. This treatment likely brought upon the second point under the General Provisions clause. In his journal article, “Evolution of the Mexican Farm Labor Agreement of 1942,” Otey Scruggs stated that Mexican nationals who previously worked in the United States had returned to Mexico and spoken of their mistreatment in the United States.<sup>17</sup> The word of their citizens held great weight among the people of Mexico and even their government for a time. The United States has had a comprehensive history of racial discrimination against minorities, and there have been times when southern states discriminated against Mexicans and Mexican Americans while also trying to benefit from their cheap labor.

This discrimination is the reason why the Mexican government wanted to send workers to the United States with protection being promised first. As such, the Braceros working under the program would subsequently be protected under Executive Order No. 8802. This Executive Order, signed by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt on June 25, 1941, declared the following:

Now, therefore, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the statutes, and as a prerequisite to the successful conduct of our national defense production effort, I do hereby reaffirm the policy of the United States that there shall be no discrimination in the employment of workers in defense industries or government because of race, creed, color, or national origin...<sup>18</sup>

This Executive Order was made to benefit all who worked in the defense industry and those who worked toward the nation's defense, such as the Braceros who worked in a wartime relief effort program. This Executive Order would also enable African Americans to advance in industrial employment during the war. That, along with the President's Fair Employment Practice Committee, tight labor markets, civil rights organizations, and labor unions, would facilitate racial

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<sup>16</sup> Scruggs, “Evolution of,” 145.

<sup>17</sup> Scruggs, “Evolution of,” 142.

<sup>18</sup> Franklin D. Roosevelt, “Executive Order 8802” (1941), National Archives Catalog, <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/300005>, para. 3.

advancement in the United States.<sup>19</sup> The Mexican Farm Labor Program Agreement cited this Executive Order to protect Mexican laborers from abuse or discrimination in the United States as they worked under the Bracero Program. Still, an Executive Order mandating protections for people can only last so long, especially when racism is thrown into the situation.

The disparity in wealth between the United States and Mexico likely motivated the Mexican government to seek the third point under the General Provisions clause. The Mexican economy before, during, and after the Second World War depended heavily on external forces, such as trade with the United States or reliance upon foreign companies.<sup>20</sup> The Mexican government could not afford all the program costs with this reliance upon foreign forces. Under the Bracero agreement, Mexicans would be guaranteed transportation, living expenses, and repatriation.<sup>21</sup> According to the Bracero Agreement, this point was made in concession with Article 29 of the Mexican Federal Labor Law.<sup>22</sup> If United States employers wanted Mexican labor, they would be obligated to pay for the Braceros' transportation to the United States and the cost of returning to Mexico. The cost of this program was not solely going to be incurred by Mexico.

The Bracero agreement also had other aspects to protect the Braceros, but these would ultimately fail. According to Ronald L. Mize and Alicia C.S. Sword, in their book *Consuming Mexican Labor: From the Bracero Program to NAFTA*, Braceros would receive their wages but find that illegal deductions were made to cover expenses for room, board, transportation, farm tools, and supplies.<sup>23</sup> When the agreement was being finalized, the United States and Mexican governments decided that the only legal deduction from Braceros' paychecks would be a 10% deduction saved and kept in a bank in Mexico to entice Braceros' return home.<sup>24</sup> But there is evidence in the form of paystubs from the Bracero History Archive that shows illegal deductions had been made against several Braceros. A paystub from 1945 shows that these illegal deductions had been made from nearly the beginning of the program.<sup>25</sup> The 1945 paystub shows a deduction of nearly \$20, with another being \$21.<sup>26</sup> A heavy deduction to these paychecks without explaining where the money had gone. Manuel Montes-Robles' 1964 paystub demonstrates that deductions

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<sup>19</sup> Andrew E. Kersten, "Jobs and Justice: Detroit, Fair Employment, and Federal Activism during the Second World War," *Michigan Historical Review* 25, no. 1 (1999): 76–101 at 76.

<sup>20</sup> Gurcharan Das, "Mexican Economic Growth, 1940-45: Some Lessons," *Economic and Political Weekly* 7, no. 53 (1972): 2529-40 at 2529.

<sup>21</sup> *Mexican Agreement*.

<sup>22</sup> *Mexican Agreement*.

<sup>23</sup> Ronald L. Mize, and Alicia C.S. Swords,

<sup>24</sup> *Mexican Agreement*.

<sup>25</sup> Ismael Nicholas Osorio and E.E. Hadden Packing Co., "Pay stub," *Bracero History Archive*, <https://braceroarchive.org/items/show/802>.

<sup>26</sup> Osorio, "Paystub."

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to pay occurred until the end of the program, with meals and insurance being deducted illegally.<sup>27</sup> Another paystub from California in 1961 shows that nearly \$25 for board is being deducted from a bracero's paycheck.<sup>28</sup> These paystubs prove that these deductions occurred throughout the program's time and were not an isolated incident. These Braceros were being taken advantage of throughout the twenty-two years of this program, with the two governments giving up efforts to protect these men after the Second World War concluded.

Under the General Provisions section, there is no further clarifying statement regarding living expenses. However, there is further detail on living expenses under the Transportation section of the agreement. Clause A states that the employer will pay the Braceros' transportation, living expenses, and general expenses throughout the migratory journey.<sup>29</sup> If United States farmers wanted additional laborers from a foreign country, then the Mexican government determined that their citizens would not incur the cost of the journey. Still, as stated earlier, this did not stop United States employers from diminishing their workers' paychecks to pay for expenses. Clause B, for lodging, states that the Mexican laborers were guaranteed satisfactory accommodations that were up to par with other lodgings for laborers.<sup>30</sup> The Mexican Farm Labor Program Agreement was created to treat Mexican laborers fairly by giving them fair wages and adequate treatment during their time in the United States. But this legislation means nothing to people who are only after their greed, and the Braceros are the unfortunate victims in their way.

Farm laboring is tiring and dangerous, with injuries a common norm. Clause B, under the Transportation section of the Bracero agreement, explained not only lodging but also medical services. Braceros, according to the accord, would receive medical and sanitary services equal to other agricultural workers in the same region.<sup>31</sup> In 2005, Isidoro Ramirez, a Bracero who worked in the 1950s, was interviewed by Steve Velásquez for the Bracero History Project and spoke extensively in Spanish about his life as a Bracero. During this interview, Ramírez talked about an instance when he was injured after he accidentally fell off of a truck.<sup>32</sup> Ramírez noted how he had been taken to a doctor for his injuries and called it a scrape, minimizing the extent of his injuries.<sup>33</sup> It is likely that Ramírez had not wanted to, during the time of the accident and in 2005, blow the situation out of proportion. If a Bracero was seriously injured or impaired, no doubt an employer

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<sup>27</sup> Manuel Montes Robles and Imperial Valley Farmers Association, "Pay stub," *Bracero History Archive*, <https://braceroarchive.org/items/show/1120>.

<sup>28</sup> Guadalupe Cano Quiroz and Santa Barbara Labor Association, "Bracero paycheck stub," *Bracero History Archive*, <https://braceroarchive.org/items/show/810>.

<sup>29</sup> *Mexican Agreement*.

<sup>30</sup> *Mexican Agreement*.

<sup>31</sup> *Mexican Agreement*.

<sup>32</sup> Steve Velásquez and Isidoro Ramírez, "Isidoro Ramírez," *Bracero History Archive*, <https://braceroarchive.org/items/show/142>.

<sup>33</sup> Velásquez, Ramírez, "Isidoro Ramírez."

would want to swap him out for a more non-disabled worker and not be forced to pay hospital bills or be down a worker.

Under the Bracero agreement, repatriation was guaranteed. Repatriation is the act of returning someone to their country of origin. The Mexican Farm Labor Program Agreement stated that Bracero's employer would issue a bond equal to the worker's repatriation costs.<sup>34</sup> The Mexican government, much less its citizens, could not afford to repatriate their citizens after their contract ended. If the United States wanted foreign labor to work their farms, they would be responsible for returning the foreign laborers home. Inserting this stipulation in the Bracero Agreement ensured Mexican citizens were not stranded trying to return home.

### **Recruiting for the Bracero Program**

Though signed in July, the Bracero Program did not truly begin until months later. According to Robert C. Jones, author of *Mexican War Workers in the United States: the Mexico-United States manpower recruiting program and operation 1942 to 1944*, the first Braceros arrived in California to begin working the autumn sugar beet harvest on September 29, 1942.<sup>35</sup> With the war, gaining as many workers as quickly as possible was necessary to minimize agricultural food loss. Had the farm business gained what it had wanted earlier, the Bracero program would have been established for nearly a year by the Fall of 1942. In all, over 4,000 Braceros were brought to the United States for the entirety of 1942, the year the program was implemented.<sup>36</sup> This is a considerable number when considering how little time there was between the end of September and the end of December. This is a vast number of people to recruit, process, examine, and transport across the border during a devastating war in order to put to work.

Despite their frenzy as United States farmers rushed to obtain workers, the United States government wanted a specific group to work as Braceros. The Mexican government had informed rural towns to recruit experienced agricultural laborers with families.<sup>37</sup> The United States and Mexican governments likely believed that married Braceros would be more eager to return home after their contract expired, decreasing the likelihood of Mexican nationals staying in the United States illegally. Experienced Braceros would be in higher demand since they could start working in the United States faster than an untrained Bracero. Local Mexican officials who recruited Braceros were told that participation in the Bracero Program was essential in the fight against the Axis powers.<sup>38</sup> The Mexican President of the time had even called the Bracero Program a “manly act of loyalty to country and progress.”<sup>39</sup> The Bracero Program was Mexico's primary way of

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<sup>34</sup> *Mexican Agreement*.

<sup>35</sup> Jones and Pan American Union Division, *Mexican War Workers*, 3.

<sup>36</sup> Jones and Pan American Union Division, *Mexican War Workers*, 3. Rasmussen, *A History*, 206.

<sup>37</sup> Ana Elizabeth Rosas, *Abrazando El Espíritu: Bracero Families Confront the US-Mexico Border*, 1st ed. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2014) 21.

<sup>38</sup> Rosas, “Abrazando El,” 21.

<sup>39</sup> Rosas, “Abrazando El,” 21.

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fighting the Axis powers, providing their men to be soldiers of the earth rather than soldiers of war.

Newspapers in the United States and Mexico supported the claim that Mexico fully supported the United States and the fight for democracy. The Bracero Program, to United States citizens and the Mexican people, was part of a war effort to defeat the Axis powers. Specifically, the United States public was informed that the Braceros were “volunteer workers.”<sup>40</sup> A United States newspaper from 1945 made it seem as if the Mexican people had jumped at the opportunity to perform hard labor and were glad to do so in the service of another country. This view was not limited to the United States; it was also held in Mexico. “According to one pro-government newspaper, the nation was not ‘simply an exporter of human labor resources.’ Rather, the Bracero Program made Mexico ‘a valuable ally of the democracies in the fight against the totalitarian powers.’ Therefore, ‘these workers must be considered not as immigrants but as Mexican citizens on a mission.’”<sup>41</sup> The sacrifices and hard work that Braceros were making during the war were downplayed in both United States and Mexican publications. Unlike what these newspapers claim, patriotism, democracy, and duty likely had nothing to do with the Braceros’ decision to work in a foreign country.

For many Braceros, the Mexican government’s recruitment and the US’ idea of joining the program as a way to fight for democracy were not the reasons why Braceros went to work in the United States. The Braceros’ belief in economic prosperity and trust in their community members drove their decision. Many Braceros heard about the program and working in the United States from community members, friends, and family who had previously worked in United States agriculture.<sup>42</sup> Ultimately, community members’ experiences when working abroad held more weight for Mexican men than the Mexican government’s recruitment. Even with their community members’ testimonies, their experiences were not the only motivating factor that Braceros considered when applying for the program.

Throughout history, money, or economic prosperity, has always been a motivating factor. A factor to consider carefully when making a decision. Mexican workers had returned to Mexico with stories of how much money one could earn by working in the United States.<sup>43</sup> Since Mexico was actively recruiting family men for the program, it makes considerable sense for money to motivate potential Braceros to decide to enlist in the program. Eventually, Braceros would send

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<sup>40</sup> Jack Starr-Hunt, and Virginia Snow, “Mexican worker making important contribution to American war effort,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, Aug. 12, 1945, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/138425822/?terms=Bracero%20Program&match=1>.

<sup>41</sup> Michael Snodgrass, “Patronage and Progress: The Bracero Program from the Perspective of Mexico,” in *Workers across the Americas: The Transnational Turn in Labor History*, ed. Leon Fink, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. (New York, NY.: Oxford University Press, 2011), 245-266 at 248-249.

<sup>42</sup> Mize, Swords, *Consuming Mexican*, 6-7.

<sup>43</sup> Mize, Swords, *Consuming Mexican*, 7.

around 80-90% of their wages back to Mexico for their families.<sup>44</sup> These wages were not considerably hefty and were being deducted illegally by their employers. Ronald L. Mize, author of *The Invisible Workers of the U.S.-Mexico Bracero Program: Obreros Olvidados*, stated that Mexican men in the Bracero Program barely made enough money to keep themselves and their families afloat but that agricultural work in the United States paid higher wages than in Mexico.<sup>45</sup> The chance of higher wages and being in debt led former Bracero, Vicente Ramírez, to join the program.<sup>46</sup> The Braceros understood that there were better economic opportunities in the north, unaware of all the humiliation, discrimination, and abuse they would face in their journey to the United States and in the labor fields.

Although trust in family and financial stability are the primary reasons many Braceros joined the program, they are not the only reasons. Isidoro Ramírez, a former Bracero who had minimized his injury after falling off a truck, spoke on how enlisting in the Bracero Program was an adventure or an experience someone had during that time.<sup>47</sup> It is likely that Ramírez is part of only a tiny percentage of people who joined the Bracero Program for an adventure, and it was perhaps not a widely felt sentiment.

### **Screening Recruits**

After being recruited from their town, potential Braceros had to be verified. To be selected for the program, these potential Braceros underwent a rigorous screening process. Firstly, these recruits needed to obtain letters of recommendation from local authorities, submit their names to the government as potential Braceros, and arrange transportation to the nearest recruitment center.<sup>48</sup> This was not a cheap process for the recruits since, during the war, the only recruitment center was in Mexico City.<sup>49</sup> Even with these obstacles, potential Braceros trudged on, doing their best to find transportation to a recruitment center. A difficult task, indeed, according to Ana Elizabeth Rosas, in her *Abrazando el Espíritu: Bracero Families Confront the U.S.-Mexico Border*, stated that transportation costs were about 150 pesos, which would be four months of work for a family.<sup>50</sup> To make matters worse, the Mexican government would often move the recruitment centers, making the transportation process harder for the Braceros.<sup>51</sup> The location of the

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<sup>44</sup> Mize, Swords, *Consuming Mexican*, 12.

<sup>45</sup> Ronald L. Mize, *The Invisible Workers of the U.S.-Mexico Bracero Program: Obreros Olvidados* (Lanham: Lexington Books/Fortress Academic, 2016), ProQuest Ebook Central, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/hanover-ebooks/reader.action?docID=4718713>.

<sup>46</sup> Steve Velásquez and Vicente Ramírez, “Vicente Ramírez,” *Bracero History Archive*, <https://braceroarchive.org/items/show/482>.

<sup>47</sup> Velásquez, Ramírez, “Isidoro Ramírez.”

<sup>48</sup> Mize, Swords, *Consuming Mexican*, 5.

<sup>49</sup> Mize, Swords, *Consuming Mexican*, 7.

<sup>50</sup> Rosas, “Abrazando El,” 22.

<sup>51</sup> Mize, Swords, *Consuming Mexican*, 5.

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recruitment centers in Mexico was debated between the United States government and the Mexican government. Which is likely the reason why recruitment centers have moved around.

The Mexican Farm Labor Program Agreement stated that employers were responsible for transporting Braceros. Due to this, and likely wanting as many workers as quickly as possible, the U.S. government wanted the recruitment centers to be along the border to ease the cost of transportation, but the Mexican government wanted the recruitment centers to be close to central Mexico.<sup>52</sup> Whether recruitment centers were along the border or in central Mexico, transportation to those centers was challenging for many Braceros, and that was only the beginning of the screening process.

After arriving at the Mexican recruitment center, Braceros obtained contracts, underwent one of two medical examinations to determine their physical ability, and then headed north.<sup>53</sup> This vigorous selection process aimed to find men who could carry out the job's physical demands and determine if the recruits had any agricultural experience. United States farmers likely had no patience for training their workers to do the job properly, especially during the war. After the war, United States farmers likely became accustomed to efficient workers and did not care to hire green recruits. The Bracero contracts were short and temporary, favoring United States farmers more than the Mexican laborers.<sup>54</sup> The contracting system was imperfect, and the Braceros underwent many hoops. The contract was signed either by the grower or the grower's association, a Mexican government official, a U.S. Department of Labor representative, and the worker himself.<sup>55</sup> Ultimately, all of these signatures and oversight would not be enough to stop the discrimination that Braceros would face in the United States and their own government choosing economic prosperity over their citizens.

### **Heading to the United States**

After the Braceros completed the selection process in Mexico, they were sent up north to be collected by growers. But this transportation process was difficult and would be mortifying for many Braceros. On their journey to the United States and the individual farms where they would be working, the Braceros were herded more like cattle than people by both United States and Mexico officials.<sup>56</sup> In hindsight, this treatment during transportation would be one of the first signs of the mistreatment of the Bracero workers.

Eleuterio Galicia Vega, a former Bracero back in 1958, was interviewed by Michael Abrams in the *Corpus Christi Caller* in 1981. In this interview, Vega recalled a time when he and other Braceros were being transported. His group was locked in the bus with armed guards because

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<sup>52</sup> Mize, Swords, *Consuming Mexican*, 8.

<sup>53</sup> Garcia, "Regulating Bracero," 436.

<sup>54</sup> Mize, *The Invisible*, 59.

<sup>55</sup> Mize, Swords, *Consuming Mexican*, 11.

<sup>56</sup> Mize, Swords, *Consuming Mexican*, 3.

“they were afraid we would escape,” Vega said in his interview.<sup>57</sup> From very early on, these foreign workers were treated not with respect or decency but as cattle or criminals. This mistreatment and disrespect would only get worse for the Braceros. Once arriving in the United States, the Braceros would undergo more examinations and processing. In his interview, Isidoro Ramírez, who signed up to be a Bracero to have an adventure, spoke about how the contractors treated him and his fellow Braceros like cattle.<sup>58</sup>

Original transcription of the 2005 interview:

**Steve Velásquez:** Era duro, era duro. Y, ¿le informaron las autoridades de su salario, las condiciones, la vida, transportación, cosas así en el proceso?

**Isidoro Ramírez:** No, tal vez me adelanto, cuando llegaba uno aquí, había en El Centro, California, el centro de repartición, ahí lo ponían a uno, lo paraban a uno por la pared y llegaban los contratistas como a ir a comprar ganado. Si a uno no le gustaba, lo quitaban y traían a otro. Y ya entonces ahí le decían a qué lugar iba a ir y qué es lo que iba a hacer. Pero no salario, ya tenían ahí el camión, el Greyhound y ya lo transportaban a uno al lugar donde iba y era todo, no había... Allí le decían a uno: “Esta compañía necesita cien o cincuenta, por tres meses o por dos meses”. Y como dicen aquí: “Take it or leave it”. No había otra.

**S. Velásquez:** Y los otros braceros, los otros que estaban esperando para el proceso, ¿estaban hablando sobre los salarios o sobre el trabajo? Ahí entre ustedes, ¿qué sabían?

**I. Ramírez:** Los que tenían experiencia ya que habían venido ya decían historias de que cómo habían trabajado ellos en ciertos lugares y todo, pero no tenían, nadie tenía un choice de agarrar lo que uno quería. Ahí agarraba uno lo que le daban.

**S. Velásquez:** So, ya supiste más o menos...

**I. Ramírez:** Mi hermano y yo estábamos juntos y llegó la lista y hasta aquí y se lo trajeron a él y a mí me dejaron. A él le tocó venirse aquí a Salinas y a mí me mandaron allá a Los Ángeles, así eran el corte que había: “Necesito tanto”. Y no importaba a quién partían o a quién nada, o sea, era uno un esclavo, venía uno como...<sup>59</sup>

Translated Transcription of the 2005 interview:

**Steve Velásquez:** It was tough, it was tough. And did the authorities inform you of your salary, conditions, life, transportation, things like that in the process?

**Isidoro Ramírez:** No, maybe I’m getting ahead of myself, when you came here, there was a distribution center in El Centro, California, where they put you, they

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<sup>57</sup> Michael Abrams, “Bracero Program: What was it like?,” *The Corpus Christi Caller*, September 27th, 1981, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/757821513/?terms=Bracero%20Program&match=1>.

<sup>58</sup> Velásquez, Ramírez, “Isidoro Ramírez.”

<sup>59</sup> Velásquez, Ramírez, “Isidoro Ramírez.”



stopped you by the wall and the contractors [farming employers] came in like they were buying cattle. If they didn't like someone, they took him away and brought in someone else. And then [after being selected] they told him where he was going and what he was going to do. But no salary, they already had the truck, the Greyhound [bus] and they were already transporting you to the place where you were going and that was it, there was not... There they would say to you, "This company needs a hundred or fifty for three months or two months." And as they say here: "Take it or leave it." There was no other way.

**S. Velásquez:** And the other braceros, the other ones that were waiting for processing, were they talking about salaries or the job? There among you, what did you know?

**I. Ramírez:** Those who had experience since they had been here already were telling stories about how they worked in certain places and everything, but they didn't have, no one had a choice to take what they wanted. There you took what they gave you.

**S. Velásquez:** So, you already knew more or less...

**I. Ramírez:** My brother and I were together and the list arrive and they took him and they left me. He had to come here to Salinas and they sent me to Los Angeles, and that's how they cut it: "I need so much." And it didn't matter who they left or anything, I mean, you were a slave, you came as...<sup>60</sup>

Isidoro Ramirez and his brother were not informed of the ongoings during their processing in the United States, their salary, or where they were going. This process was likely terrifying for many Braceros, as many likely did not speak English and would not understand what was happening. For many, this was their first time in the United States, and it would be an experience full of humiliation and terror.

After arriving in the United States, Braceros would undergo a second medical examination. Crecencio of Colima, a Bracero from 1958 to 1963, was interviewed for Ronald L. Mize's *The Invisible Workers of the U.S.-Mexico Bracero Program: Obreros Olvidados*. Crecencio spoke about his experience in the United States processing center and undergoing that second medical examination:

"They would ask for your birth certificate. Where you lived and everything else. Where are you from they would ask us. They would ask us, 'Do you have your birth certificate?' They would take our fingerprints. They would take off our clothes there. They would take off our clothes and fumigate us..."<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Velásquez, Ramírez, "Isidoro Ramírez." Translated by Leslie R. Redus

<sup>61</sup> Crecencio of Colima, quoted in Mize, Ronald L., *The Invisible Workers of the U.S.-Mexico Bracero Program: Obreros Olvidados* Lanham: Lexington Books/Fortress Academic, 2016. ProQuest Ebook Central, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/hanover-ebooks/reader.action?docID=4718713>, 100.

Crecencio of Colima, Isidoro Ramírez, and other Braceros were dehumanized in this process by United States officials. Rossy Vazquez de Bonilla, a son of a former Bracero who gave his father's story to the Bracero History Archive, detailed his father's experience in the processing center. De Bonilla spoke about how his father would minimize being stripped naked and fumigated.<sup>62</sup> De Bonilla's father likely downplayed this experience, minimizing the mortifying experience of having chemicals sprayed on him in 1961. These Braceros were examined thoroughly to determine their health and eligibility and then were fumigated as if they were cattle. How utterly horrifying it must be for these men to enlist to work in another country for better wages, and one of the first experiences in the United States is to be sprayed with chemicals. Still, being fumigated was not Braceros' last appalling experience during the examination process.

In his 2005 interview with Steve Velásquez, Isidoro Ramírez, who enlisted in the program for an adventure, expressed how humiliating the medical examination was, stating that the doctors did the examination in front of everyone, with no privacy.<sup>63</sup> Vicente Ramírez, another Bracero who worked in 1955, spoke on violating these examinations, as Braceros were forced to undergo a rectal exam.<sup>64</sup> How humiliating and emasculating it must have been for these men, whose only goal was to enter the United States to work, to have had to suffer these slights. By the time Vicente Ramírez began his time as a Bracero, the Mexican government likely cared little for their citizens' treatment in the United States. According to Lester D. Langley, by the mid-1950s, the Mexican government chose economic development over social justice for the lower classes.<sup>65</sup> This no doubt would include the Bracero program, considering the demographic of these recruits. Despite the promises of protection the Mexican government had given their citizens, the officials that made up the Mexican government during this time allowed their greed to influence them.

### **Life in the United States**

It is indubitable that most Braceros faced some form of discrimination, humiliation, or degradation during their time in the United States. According to a United States newspaper from 1945, an interior ministry spokesman stated, "No braceros will be sent to states known for their racial discrimination... In both Texas and Arkansas, the Braceros are exploited, being paid salaries inferior to other farm laborers. For this reason, the definite exclusion of both those states from the bracero program continues."<sup>66</sup> This commitment to their citizens' safety would not last. Texas was

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<sup>62</sup> Rossy Vazquez de Bonilla, "Silverio Vasquez Rojas," *Bracero History Archive*, <https://braceroarchive.org/items/show/3308>.

<sup>63</sup> Velásquez, Ramírez, "Isidoro Ramírez."

<sup>64</sup> Velásquez, Ramírez, "Vicente Ramírez."

<sup>65</sup> Lester D. Langley, *Mexico and the United States: The Fragile Relationship* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1991) 48.

<sup>66</sup> "Mexico still says no farm help for Texas." *The Austin American*, May 6, 1945. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/385750556/?terms=Bracero%20Program&match=1>.

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barred from employing Braceros until 1947.<sup>67</sup> As Braceros sent their wages home, the Mexican government likely realized allowing their citizens to work in as many states as possible would be more economically beneficial. The Bracero Program was the third-largest source of hard currency by the 1950s.<sup>68</sup> By allowing states known for their discrimination, like Texas, to regain the privilege of hiring Braceros, the Mexican government demonstrates that it is willing to put profit over the health and safety of some of its citizens.

The situation would not improve for Braceros. These Braceros' lives were horrifying and strange once they had arrived at the camps. Braceros lived in military-styled barracks and mess halls.<sup>69</sup> The living conditions that Braceros had to endure were harsh and inhumane, considering that they were used for hired workers, not soldiers, and especially considering that housing stipulations were part of the Mexican National Farm Labor Program Agreement. They lived differently than other laborers in the United States, with far more restrictions and fear. Braceros' lives were not their own; they were subjected to intense surveillance, unable to file a complaint about their treatment for fear of deportation, and unable to leave jobs due to the contracts they had signed.<sup>70</sup> These workers were stuck with the treatment they were facing, unable to change their circumstances. For as much as they were facing discrimination and abuse, the choice of being forcibly sent home by the termination of their contract seemed a much worse fate to workers. The process of even being chosen to be a Bracero was a long and expensive one. These men would likely return to Mexico in shame, as it would show that they could not provide for their families, a significant cultural point for Mexican men.<sup>71</sup> Providing financial stability was a responsibility that was primarily held by men in Mexican culture, and being unable to do so would be extremely shameful.

In Ronald L. Mize's book, *The Invisible Workers of the U.S.-Mexico Bracero Program: Obreros Olvidados*, Mize states that Braceros were proud of their work and often measured their worth by their wages.<sup>72</sup> Braceros inadvertently played a role in the abuse they faced at American farmers' hands by being proud of their work and basing their worth on those wages. Rather than complain and perhaps get justice, these men would continue working harder and longer hours. What were these complaints worth in the face of poverty and deprivation? Of being unable to provide for his family? These complaints did not matter one bit. Instead, Braceros shouldered their burdens and continued working.

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<sup>67</sup> Mize, *The Invisible*, 10.

<sup>68</sup> Deborah Cohen, "From Peasant to Worker: Migration, Masculinity, and the Making of Mexican Workers in the US." *International Labor and Working-Class History*, no. 69 (2006): 81–103 at 82.

<sup>69</sup> Mize, Swords, *Consuming Mexican*, 5.

<sup>70</sup> Mize, Swords, *Consuming Mexican*, 5.

<sup>71</sup> Cohen, "From Peasant," 87.

<sup>72</sup> Mize, *The Invisible*, 77.

The Mexican Farm Labor Program Agreement ran from 1942 until 1964. What started as a wartime relief effort soon became more prolonged than the war itself. In the words of Ronald L. Mize and Alicia C.S. Swords, authors of *Consuming Mexican Labor: From the Bracero Program to NAFTA*, “the Bracero Program was highly successful in creating a readily exploitable workforce but rarely protected the paltry rights accorded to workers.”<sup>73</sup> The Bracero Program was created for Mexico to support the United States during its fight against the Axis powers and provide Mexican men with economic opportunities. Instead, Braceros endured humiliation, with very little money to show for their efforts, and are barely a memory in the United States. These Mexican men who toiled away in American fields to feed a population that was not theirs did not matter. Who were these men in the face of big business? In the face of profit? 4.5 million Bracero contracts were signed from 1942 to 1964, representing almost 2 million Braceros who worked in the United States.<sup>74</sup> These millions of men have profoundly impacted American history, working hard to feed the United States of America. History will never truly know how different the war would have been for the United States and its allies if the Mexican government had rejected the Bracero Program in 1942.

As a war-time relief effort, one should have expected the Bracero Program to have ended soon after the Second World War ended. The Bracero Program had a 22-year run, ultimately ending in 1964. The Mexican government was vehemently opposed to ending the Bracero program, likely for many reasons. Without the Bracero Program, Mexican officials would no longer be able to pocket Braceros’ savings.<sup>75</sup> Although United States employers illegally deducted expenses from Braceros’ paychecks, the official agreement stipulated that a portion would be saved and kept in a Mexican bank. Mexican officials had access to these savings, often taking it for themselves. With the termination of the Bracero Program, the Mexican government could no longer offer any external job opportunities for their unemployed citizens. The Mexican economy was no longer supported by the wages workers earned in the United States.

The beginning and end of the Bracero program started with the United States. “The bill to terminate [the Bracero Program] unilaterally—Mexico had no say in the matter— passed by a mere seventeen votes...”<sup>76</sup> The Bracero Program started as a wartime relief effort, with the Mexican government eager to provide support to their northern neighbors in their fight against fascism but continued on the insistence of the American agriculture industry and the Mexican government. Yet despite protests, the United States Congress held all of the power to terminate this program, even though the United States first went to the Mexican government to plead for labor. The United States had no qualms to terminate the program without Mexico’s input, likely uncaring how this would affect diplomatic relations between these neighboring countries.

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<sup>73</sup> Mize, Swords, *Consuming Mexican*, 3.

<sup>74</sup> Mize, Swords, *Consuming Mexican*, 3.

<sup>75</sup> Snodgrass, “Patronage and Progress,” 247.

<sup>76</sup> Snodgrass, “Patronage and Progress,” 261.

The Braceros' work for the United States, specifically during the war, was critical. A letter from the American Fruit Growers, Inc., in California, states, "Had the Mexican Nationals not been available during the past year, a large percentage of the crops in which we are heavily interested would never have been harvested, creating an unnecessary loss."<sup>77</sup> Though they were more than essential and were recognized by employers as crucial, the Bracero program is seldom mentioned in American history books when the Second World War is taught. It is even less known that the Braceros were treated inhumanely. How shameful it is that these men had made a considerable impact on our war effort, and their sacrifice is unmentioned.

For many, the decision of creating the Bracero Program and keeping it alive for twenty-two years is another dark stain in American and Mexican history. U.S. Representative John Fogarty, D-R. I. stated that the Bracero Program was a "slave labor program" and believed that the program was harmful to U.S.-Mexico relations.<sup>78</sup> Fogarty is not the only person who believes that the Bracero Program is akin to slavery. Isidoro Ramírez, the Bracero who signed up for an adventure, stated this in his 2005 interview:

Original Transcription of the 2005 interview:

**Steve Velásquez:** Bracero, pero, ¿para usted qué significa el trabajo del bracero?

La vida del bracero.

**Isidoro Ramírez:** La vida del bracero es un, se va a ser esclavo, no Choice. Ahí no había...

**SV:** Sus recuerdos acerca del trabajo del bracero, el haber trabajado como un bracero, ¿son positivos o negativos?

**IR:** Negativos, eso es ser uno un esclavo.<sup>79</sup>

Translated Transcription of the 2005 interview:

**Steve Velásquez:** Bracero, what, what does the work of a bracero mean to you? The life of a bracero.

**Isidoro Ramírez:** The life of a bracero is, is like being a slave, no Choice. There was no...

**SV:** Are your memories about bracero work, having worked as a bracero, were they positive or negative?

**IR:** Negative, that's what it's like being a slave.<sup>80</sup>

Isidoro Ramírez has no positive memories of working in the United States as a Bracero. To him, the life of a Bracero was akin to that of a slave, a modern-day enslaved person, where a worker was not given choices. This sentiment was shared by Audómaro Zepeda, another Bracero who worked in the late 1950s, who said, "Nos trataron mal como esclavos... (They treated us badly like

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<sup>77</sup> Jones and Pan American Union Division, *Mexican War Workers*, 25.

<sup>78</sup> "Bracero Program's End Hurts Mexico," *San Angelo Standard-Times*, May 31, 1963.  
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/788214806/?terms=Bracero%20Program&match=1>.

<sup>79</sup> Velásquez, Ramírez, "Isidoro Ramírez."

<sup>80</sup> Velásquez, Ramírez, "Isidoro Ramírez." Translated by Leslie R. Redus

slaves).”<sup>81</sup> The Bracero Program was implemented with measures meant to ensure the life and prosperity of Mexican men while they worked abroad. But instead, the Mexican and American governments became complacent in the face of abuse that Mexican nationals faced on American soil.

Even with the negatives that came from the Bracero Program, one must acknowledge the legacy it has left behind. After the Bracero Program shut down, its influence was still visible through migration patterns that Braceros established for their younger family and friends to use to establish themselves in the United States.<sup>82</sup> Current migratory patterns from Mexico to the United States (and vice versa) are decades old because Braceros created them so their community members could find job stability and housing.

For Isidoro Ramírez, the most crucial part of the Bracero Program that needs to be known is that it shouldn’t happen again.<sup>83</sup> The United States of America may not acknowledge the work that the Braceros had done, and Mexico may not acknowledge their failure in protecting their citizens, but this does not diminish the contribution of nearly two million men. It is vital to acknowledge the work and sacrifice accomplished by these men, as they played a significant role in supporting the United States during a global war and significantly contributed to the two countries’ economies in the years after. The work Braceros and their families have done afterward, contributing to the Bracero History Archive and sharing their stories, allows others to acknowledge their sacrifice. The United States government and the Mexican government both failed horribly in ensuring the protection of these workers. These men were underpaid, exploited, examined like cattle, subject to abuse and discrimination, and swept off to the side by both their country and the country they worked for. Braceros’ life and work in the United States was not out of a sense of patriotism or duty for democracy but one of economic opportunity to ensure their family’s survival. The Bracero Program benefitted the Mexican government and the American agriculture industry, leaving the Braceros in the dust. The bilateral agreement of 1942 was a failure, unable to instill the promises that were written in the agreement or the Braceros’ contracts, ultimately showing the greed, ineptitude, and cavalier attitudes of two North American countries.

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<sup>81</sup> Mireya Loza and Audómaro G. Zepeda, “Audómaro G. Zepeda,” *Bracero History Archive*, <https://braceroarchive.org/items/show/159>.

<sup>82</sup> Garcia, “Regulating Bracero,” 433.

<sup>83</sup> Velásquez, Ramírez, “Isidoro Ramírez.”

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