

# The Undergraduate Historical and Critical Race & Ethnic Studies Journal

Volume 8, Issue 1



**THE  
UNDERGRADUATE  
HISTORICAL  
AND  
CRITICAL RACE &  
ETHNIC STUDIES  
JOURNAL  
At UC Merced**

Volume 8 ↔ Issue 1 ↔ Fall 2021

**The Undergraduate Historical  
and Critical Race & Ethnic Studies  
Journal at the University of California, Merced**

The Editorial Board (Fall Issue 2021)

Madelyn Lara, Editor in Chief

Arleen Lopez-Soto, Editor

Irene Gonzalez, Editor

Jeremy Paguibitan, Editor

Mahealani La Rosa, Editor

Yohel Salas, Editor

All correspondence should be directed to the editorial board.

Email: [ucmercedhistoricaljournal@gmail.com](mailto:ucmercedhistoricaljournal@gmail.com)

Cover Design by

Madelyn Lara

Published by California Digital Library

All authors reserve rights to their respective articles published  
herein.

## Table of Contents

Letter from the Editor in Chief <i>Madelyn Lara</i>	i
Faculty Forward <i>Romina Ruvalcaba, Assistant Professor of Latin American History</i>	ii
<b>Book Reviews</b>	
<i>Voices of Dissent: An Essay</i> . By Romila Thapar (Kolkata: Seagull Books, 2020). By Vishwajeet Deshmukh	1
<b>Articles</b>	
The Myth of Unproductivity: Leisure and Change in Early Twentieth Century China By Jeremy Paguibitan	7
An Anti-Chinese Agenda: The Acceptance of a Selected Few, 1870 to 1942 By Cynthia Bravo-Zamora	20
The Role of Women in Africa: 5000 BCE-Late Antiquity By Adam Allen	37
Artemisia Gentileschi from Baroque to Neo-Baroque: Reimagining Female Biblical Figures and the Female Gaze By Maya Ramirez	46
Music Heals: Lyrical Consciousness, Volume 1 By Irene Gonzalez	77

## **Letter from the Editor in Chief**

It is with great pleasure that I present the Undergraduate Historical and Critical Race & Ethnic Studies Journal at UC Merced, as a continuation of the 8th volume of the Undergraduate Historical Journal at UC Merced. As a reflection of our joint department's commitment to urgent questions of race, class, and gender in the past and present, this issue stands as a testament to the benefits of collaboration from students across disciplines.

This semester, we as student editors have made the adjustment to hybrid learning after a long and challenging year of social distancing and lockdowns. As we began to adjust to our new normal, with uncertainty flanking every step, we faced many challenges, both academic and personal. However, the events of the last year have strengthened our collective resolve to support the members of our university community. A commitment to our peers was the driving force in the dedication our editorial board displayed towards this publication.

This semester's board was staffed by the wonderful Arleen Lopez-Soto, Irene Gonzalez, Jeremy Paguibitan, Mahealani La Rosa, and Yohel Salas. I cannot thank these amazing editors enough for the work they put in this semester despite all of our challenges. Finally, on behalf of the entire board, I would like to thank Romina Ruvalcaba PhD for serving as our faculty advisor.

Madelyn Lara  
Editor in Chief

## Faculty Forward

This Fall 2021 has been a challenging semester for students, staff, and faculty members. While continuing to be in the midst of a pandemic, we have focused our efforts to create a sense of meaning despite enormous challenges. For this current Volume 8 Issue 1 of the Journal, the editorial team did a wonderful job of selecting research pieces that geographically range from Asia to Africa and thematically focus on art and music. Following a spirit of collaboration and intellectual curiosity, the team also selected a book review written by Vishwajeet Deshmukh, a law student enrolled in Mumbai's renowned Government Law College in India. Deshmukh's review of Romila Thapar's recently published *Voices of Dissent: An Essay*, is not only incisive but also incorporates critical arcs that reflect his understanding of and passion for historical and contemporary Indian social movements across. At a moment when national and international clamor has re-emerged around Indian democracy and freedom of speech, the Journal once again demonstrates the timeliness of its selections. But the Journal is also a central space for advanced undergraduate research. In this issue, we have the honor of presenting the work of five undergraduate students concentrating in the fields of History and Critical Race and Ethnic Studies. Focusing on Chinese regional history, Jeremy Paguibitan and Cynthia Bravo-Zamora respectively analyze the role of leisure in the twentieth century and immigration in the context of nineteenth-century political transformation. Offering a different time and place, Adam Allen analyzes how women in ancient Egypt and Ethiopia shaped the religious, political, and social contours of their civilizations, outlining the implications for gendered politics in subsequent Greco-Roman societies. Framing their critical analyses through, respectively music and art, Irene Gonzalez and Maya Ramirez offer poignant ways to think about questions of justice across categories of colonialism and feminism. Ramirez brilliantly shows how the work of Artemisia Gentileschi was not a reproduction of sexual violence but an affirmation of the politics of feminist activism possible in her context. Irene Gonzalez similarly examines music as a site that brings together a collective critique of settler colonialism, criminal justice industry, and immigration in contemporary politics. Please welcome me in praising the work of our editorial team and our contributors, expression of the critical spirit and life of the mind animating this generation of undergraduates. I would also like to acknowledge Madelyn Lara, lead editor of the Journal whose dedication and commitment have helped keep this hub for undergraduate publications alive and thriving.

Warmly,

Romina Ruvalcaba

Faculty Advisor and Assistant Prof. of Latin American History

***Voices of Dissent: An Essay*. By Romila Thapar (Kolkata: Seagull Books, 2020).**

*Voices of Dissent: An Essay* by Dr. Romila Thapar explores the concept of political dissent in India. Thapar traces the history of dissent from a historical perspective, from ancient India to modern democratic India. In addition, Thapar, a Marxist historian, has established political consciousness by linking the issues of the past with those of the present, thus establishing a crucial link between dissent and dissenters throughout the history of India in a culture that tries to erase them.

The book "*Voices of Dissent: An Essay*" is a product of two Memorial lectures presented by Dr. Romila Thapar, the *Nemi Chand Memorial Lecture* and the *V. M. Trakunde Memorial Lecture*.<sup>1</sup> The essay provides a broad perspective of historical analysis from India's ancient, medieval, and modern history. The book is divided into nine distinct parts set out in a chronological pattern tracing two distinct groups: the dominant group (i.e. a social higher class in society) and the others (i.e. lower social classes). The history of dissent, as stressed by Thapar, starts from the Vedic Period (c. 1750-500 BCE), with the *Dasyah-Putra Brahmana*, or the son of a *Brahman*, born to a *Dasi* (servant) mother, as provided in chapter one. In ancient Indian history, the *Aryans* are described as the Indo-European people who were said to speak an archaic Indo-European language and who were thought to have settled in prehistoric times in ancient Iran and the northern Indian subcontinent. The *Vedic* lore of *Aryans* mentions defensive armour, weapons, chariots and warfare against dark-skinned foes named *Dasas*. The *Dasas* have been referred to as *non-Aryans*, a wealthy cattle raising group of the non-Indo European population. The relationship between the *Aryans* and *Dasa* has a history of its own; the linguistic identity and use of the language of the *Aryans* gave the children of *Dasis* their prized position in ancient Indian society.<sup>2</sup> Thapar tells us about the *Rishi Dirghatamas (Mamateya)*, who married a *Dasi* and whose son was *Rishi Kakshivant* (whose hymns are contained in *Rig Veda*). *Saint Kavasha Ailusha* was also the son of a *Dasi*, as was *Vidura* (a

---

<sup>1</sup> Romila Thapar, *Voices of Dissent: An Essay* (London: Seagull Books, 2020)

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, 10.

significant figure in the *Mahabharata*), the son of *Vyasa* and a *Dasi*. According to Thapar, the *Dasa* culture is the culture of the “other.”<sup>3</sup>

In this section, the concept of otherness is traced through culture. An emphasis is placed on how the history of the dissenters, or the others, has been written from the dominant group’s perspective. Hence, a straightforward narrative becomes complicated as it is diluted with prejudice from the dominant group. The spoken language was a critical requirement of identity in the Vedic times and the available sources came from the dominant group. The primary source from the time was the oldest religious texts of Hinduism, known as *Vedas* which were written in Vedic Sanskrit. To make one’s dissent articulated knowledge of Vedic Sanskrit was necessary, the education of the same was restricted only to members of the dominant classes. The investigation of the other group does become limited to a greater extent.

In chapters two and three, Thapar establishes how a new group consisting of the *Jain*, Buddhists, and *Ajivikas*, collectively referred to as *Shramanas*, became the new “other” in the 16th century of the new India. The dissent of these groups pertained to the interpretation of nonviolence and its justification. Nonviolence remains at the center of the teachings of Buddhists and *Jains*.<sup>4</sup> The texts of *Mahabharata* and *Bhagwad Gita* state that violence was permitted if it was against evil. In toto, the code of ethics was questioned, and the issue of authority was threatened.<sup>5</sup> Thapar goes on to establish similar links with Chandalas. The idea of otherness was broadened through the categories of the lowest strata of the society, which included the *Adivasis*, the lower castes, and the untouchables.<sup>6</sup> The social laws were established based on the identity of a social class during this period. Under chapters 4 and 5, the 15th and 16th century dissenters have primarily been highlighted by the *Bhakti Sant* (*Sant* means a Saint in Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism) and *Sufi Peer* (*Peer* means a spiritual guide in Persian).<sup>7</sup> In addition with certain examples from the *Mughal*

---

<sup>3</sup> Thapar, *Voices of Dissent*, 32

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 56

<sup>7</sup> Thapar, *Voices of Dissent*, 64

courts, especially that of Emperor *Akbar* through practices of introducing new religions in the Court.<sup>8</sup>

Thapar dedicates chapters six through nine of the book to the Indian freedom movement, *Satyagraha*, as the fight against the British colonial empire, and modern nationalism.<sup>9</sup> She discusses accounts of civil disobedience and noncooperative moments, the events of the Quit India movement in the 1940s, and the mutiny in the Royal Indian Navy. These chapters draw out the role of dissent in Modern Indian history to look at how colonial interpretations of India's past still colour our understanding of religion in the subcontinent. This is followed by an examination of Mohandas "Mahatma" Gandhi's *Satyagraha* as a modern movement of dissent—relying heavily on the moral value of a renouncer figure. India's freedom struggle by itself was a form of non-violent dissent against the colonial British powers.<sup>10</sup> Further, the concept of nationalism under the form of *Hindutva* or the concept of *Hindu Rashtra*, which represents the right-wing form of government in India, has been discussed to draw attention to modern democratic problems of extremist governments.<sup>11</sup>

Finally, a dissection of the concept of protest has been provided by drawing inspiration from freedom movements. Thapar in the final chapter moves her analysis to the protests at *Shaheen Bagh* in New Delhi, India, where Muslims, especially Muslim women, came together to protest against the Citizenship Amendment Act "CAA" and the National Register of Citizens "NRC" in India—documenting her personal experiences at the site of protest and with dissent.

Thapar claims to provide a brief history of dissent and protest throughout the scope of India and links to the present circumstances in the Indian democracy, however, she fails to highlight the cases that occurred after the independence of India. The critical events from the 1947 partition of British India into two independent states, India and Pakistan, have not been discussed.

---

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 65.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 102

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 104.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 112.

Subsequently, the protests against Prime Minister Indira Gandhi during the 1975 Declaration of Emergency seem to be missing chapters that need deep deliberation.<sup>12</sup> The treatment of dissenters, especially during the 1975 Emergency, is a crucial part of the historical evidence of the treatment of dissenters in an independent India.<sup>13</sup>

The essay argues an essential perspective on historical interpretations. It is not sufficient for historians to just find evidence of dissent, it is essential to go beyond and understand the circumstances for why such dissent had acceptability and by whom. The essay urges its readership to look at forms of dissent that had a responsive public nature and to examine whether the response had a consistent expression of dissent without any ill intention. The study of dissent is essential in understanding how civilizations evolved and how establishments were questioned and forced to change their outlook towards the outward group. From a sociological standpoint, for social change to occur, social deviance is necessary. This perceived notion of social deviance is interpreted in the form of dissent by several civilizations.

Analysis of judicial dissent is not addressed by Thapar, thus noting that the book provides a limited understanding of dissent in India. While the voices of people classified as others have been highlighted, those who occupied places in top administration roles have not been discussed. The supersession of Justice Hans Raj Khanna on account of his dissenting judgment in the Shiv Kant Shukla (Habeas Corpus Case) is evidence of judicial dissent and its consequence.<sup>14</sup>

The book has excluded the dissent from the judiciary of India through the Supreme Court of India. Though the book claims dissent as an essential factor to democracy, the book ignores one of the essential pillars: judiciary. However, it must be noted that the book does not provide these crucial details because it is not an elaborate account of dissent, rather a comprehensive guide to understanding the discourse in contemporary times. To attain an elaborate academic account on the

---

<sup>12</sup> Gyan Prakash, *Emergency Chronicles* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2019), 305.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 305

<sup>14</sup> Yogesh Mehta. "Judicial Dissent: A Plea to Posterity." *Nirma ULJ* 1, (January 2012): 1.

nature of dissent in the Indian subcontinent throughout history, one should read Ashok Vajpeyi's "*India Dissents: 3000 Years of Difference, Doubt, and Argument.*"<sup>15</sup> The anthology contains essays, letters, reports, poems, songs, and calls to action – from texts ranging from *Rig Veda* to Ambedkar's famous *Annihilation of Caste*; and several prominent figures from the Indian sub-continent. The sheer volume of the book portrays that what Vajpeyi struggles to provide is an armoury of dissenting opinion, rooted in religious and philosophical texts, in the works of writers, politicians, scientists and poets. Thapar's examination is very limited by comparison, due to its lack of content. In conclusion, Thapar's *Voices of Dissent* is an attempt to spark the interest in questioning dissent and she does it by providing instances from ancient India right upto the modern-day India. *Voices of Dissent* is a thought-provoking scholarship.

Vishwajeet Deshmukh

---

<sup>15</sup>Ashok Vajpeyi, ed., *India Dissents: 3000 Years of Difference, Doubt and Argument* (New Delhi: Speaking Tiger Publishing Pvt. Ltd, 2018), 560.

## Bibliography

- Mehta, Yogesh. "Judicial Dissent: A Plea to Posterity." *Nirma ULJ 1*, (January 2012): 1.
- Prakash, Gyan. *Emergency Chronicles*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2019.
- Vajpeyi, Ashok, ed., *India Dissents: 3000 Years of Difference, Doubt and Argument*. New Delhi: Speaking Tiger Publishing Pvt. Ltd, 2018.
- Voices of Dissent: An Essay*. By Romila Thapar (Kolkata: Seagull Books, 2020).

## The Myth of Unproductivity: Leisure and Change in Early Twentieth Century China

By Jeremy Paguibitan<sup>1</sup>

The Republican Era of China, dating from 1912-1950, was one of great social upheavals. From its beginnings in the Xinhai Revolution of 1911, that forced the Qing Dynasty to step down, many reformers promoted the idea that Western modernization was the way to build the new China. Thus, these reformers attacked anything associated with the former Qing Dynasty, attacking leisurely activities in particular as the cause of the dynasty's (and the standing of China's) downfall.<sup>2</sup> However, modernization did not happen as reformers had hoped. The young republic became unstable after the revolution, with a complete breakdown in order happening from 1916-1928, and foreign invasion by Japan during the 1930s-40s. In attempts to modernize the country, government officials and intellectuals attempted to portray leisure as one of the major enemies of this new China.<sup>3</sup> They promoted the idea that people should be joining committees of action and commit to work instead of "wasting" their time in leisure. In the eyes of the government and many intellectuals, it was unfathomable that leisure could be a productive aspect of Chinese society, at least not without heavy reform. However, the attitudes toward leisure by intellectuals and the government contradicted their actions, as they used places such as teahouses and played games to further their various political agendas, thus pointing towards the relative importance of these locations and pastimes as influential forces. There are three activities that are generally associated with the shadier and unproductive side of Chinese society, those being spending time in the teahouse and the related gambling games of mahjong and fantan.

---

<sup>1</sup> The author, being also an editor, recused themselves from the editing process regarding this article. It received no special treatment and was required to conform to all standard requirements.

<sup>2</sup> Maggie Greene, "The Game People Played: Mahjong in Modern Chinese Society and Culture," *Cross-Currents: East Asian History and Culture Review* 5, no. 1 (2016), 27.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

These leisure activities reflected a changing Chinese society both on a local and national level, whether it is through the examination of spectacle, its use in political expression, or how it reflected the state of progress throughout the Republican Era.

Leisure was an area of spectacle in the Republic of China (ROC), due to the sensationalism that the media afforded it, though the context behind the spectacle revealed the importance of such institutions to changing society. Critics of leisure often targeted institutions that were considered shady, though not outright illegal, such as teahouses or forms of gambling, and then connected these institutions to more detestable aspects of society, such as opium smoking or gang activity. These ideas were projected in newspapers. For example, in Nantong, a city in the southeast province of Jiangsu, the newspaper *Xinbao* commonly described teahouse operators as “conscienceless, peremptory, manipulative, or violent.”<sup>4</sup> The newspapers emphasized the instances of violence that took place in these teahouses, and as a result, these stories overshadowed the people who were just trying to make a living in the progressing world. Another example of the spectacle associated with teahouses was a widely publicized incident that happened in 1929 in Chengdu, a city in the southwestern province of Sichuan, the 1929 “Murder at the Oriental Tea Balcony,” involving the death of a teahouse worker by its owner.<sup>5</sup> The violent nature of the story attracted much negative attention, defining the teahouse as a place of conflict and violence. However, by doing so, newspapers also unintentionally showed how the teahouse was an integral part of the social life in communities, and how knowledge of events can

---

<sup>4</sup> Qin Shao, “Tempest over Teapots: The Vilification of Teahouse Culture in Early Republican China,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 57, no. 4 (November 1998), 1009-41.

<sup>5</sup> Di Wang, “Struggling for Livelihood: Social Conflict through the Teahouse in Republican Chengdu,” *European Journal of East Asian Studies* 5, no. 2 (2006), 247.

spread around quickly in the presence of the teahouse. The critiques of the teahouse show how communities were centered around them and other forms of leisure.

The well-known game of mahjong was also sensationalized as being a drain on society, a relic of the Qing Dynasty, associated with the violence and criminality of the teahouse and leisure in general. Mahjong is a 144-tile based game in which people make combinations out of various tile suites in order to make a hand, and is subject to many different local rule sets. Mahjong was a major part of the criticism of the state of leisure in Republican China as evil in part due its widespread, popular nature. Mahjong's supposed threat is visible in statements such as the reason for its 1932 ban order in the province of Kwangtung (Guangdong) in particular. An article in the English language Hong Kong based *South China Morning Post* vaguely reported the reason for the game being banned as being “detrimental to public morals,” a sentiment shared by officials in the neighboring province Kwangsi (Guangxi).<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, this view of mahjong as harmful to public morality is represented in films throughout the era, such as *Little Angel* (1935) which emphasized the moral decay of Republican Chinese society through the usage of mahjong tables in homes visually neglected as a metaphor, representing the supposed lack of morals and work ethic associated with the game.<sup>7</sup> Though in the end, despite a hostile attitude by some forms of media, the game still flourished, with people seemingly undeterred by its depiction, as seen in its survival until the present.

Beyond media, expanding on its association with the teahouse, mahjong was considered a “legal type” of gambling permitted in these establishments, at least in provinces where it had

---

<sup>6</sup> “Ban on Mahjong: Canton’s Prohibition Against Gambling Kwangsi Example Canton, Oct. 29,” *South China Morning Post (1903-1941)*, October 31, 1932.

<sup>7</sup> Greene, “The Game People Played: Mahjong in Modern Chinese Society and Culture,” 16.

legal status.<sup>8</sup> Its association with the establishment portrayed it as an all corrupting vice, both a relic of the past but still relevant because of its pervasiveness. Like the teahouses, mahjong was a tool, used as a critique of societal stagnation in China as a whole, leisurely activities being a scapegoat of which detractors can easily point their fingers to as the major problems with Chinese society without having to tackle the actual problems that these activities supposedly caused, ignoring mahjong's cultural and social importance as the most popular game in China.

This is also seen in another popular gambling game, Fantan. Fantan is a game of chance. Tokens are hidden underneath a covering of some sort by a dealer on a table for fantan. Afterwards, tokens are unveiled after by the dealer, and then set aside by a croupier in stacks of four. This continues until one, two, three, or four tokens are left, the winners being those who bet correctly on how many tokens are left. The bettings takes place before the unveiling of tokens. There are variations of how you could bet, mainly concerned with betting on more than one outcome, albeit with less of a pay off. Criticism of the game of fantan came from people on top of the social hierarchy, with them arguing that it was an evil and destructive game. This critique of fantan can be seen in a 1915 article from the *South China Morning Post*, in which the author describes the moral opposition to the legalization of fantan in Canton, a city in the southern province of Guangdong. In the article, a group made up of men of the upper class petitioned the city government to stop the legalization of Fantan, with their petition stating that “a calamity will be shared not only by all classes of men, but also by women” if this legalization were to happen.<sup>9</sup> In this petition, these leading figures of the gentry emphasized Fantan's negative impact on the morality of society, not particularly going into detail however in how it negatively impacted it.

---

<sup>8</sup> Shao, “Tempest over Teapots: The Vilification of Teahouse Culture in Early Republican China,” 1027.

<sup>9</sup> (Our Own Correspondent), “Fantan in Canton: Petition Against Revival of the Evil Canton, Dec. 23,” *South China Morning Post (1903-1941)*, December 24, 1915.

Further newspaper stories expand on these vague threats, emphasizing the “tragedies caused by heavy gamblers sacrificing the interests of their family to their deadly passion of fantan.”<sup>10</sup> However, there are no records discovered so far that state this as the norm, rather than the exception. Instead of ruining lives constantly like the newspapers purported, fantan provided people with a means to network and socialize in this era, through places such as the *tanguan*, the building where the game was enjoyed. Such newspapers ignore the fact that these places were the cornerstone of many people’s lives, employing “more than 2,000 people in the city” in Canton at the very least.<sup>11</sup> In regards to fantan, the media highlighted the excess of leisure but seemed to reject the fact that these institutions provided a livelihood, that they were important in the daily lives of many people during this era, from customers, employees, and even the government. In Guangdong, according to a 1937 Japanese record, “tens of thousands of former employees of those *tanguan* that had closed their doors due to the prohibition of gambling imposed in October 1936 suddenly swelled the ranks of the unemployed.”<sup>12</sup> Note that this observation came at a time when the Japanese had a considerable presence in the area, with a puppet state set up in North China in conjunction with the Republican government launching “powerful campaigns launched against the Communists”.<sup>13</sup> Despite criticism of the destruction caused, these Fantan houses provided a means of living and normalcy during this unstable era, especially in the early-mid 1930s with the threat of Japan looming in the north and a country disunified, with conflict still rife with communists. Like the criticism of mahjong and teahouse

---

<sup>10</sup> Xavier Paulès, “Gambling in China Reconsidered: Fantan in South China During the Early Twentieth Century,” *International Journal of Asian Studies* 7, no. 2 (July 2010), 179-200.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 186

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 189.

<sup>13</sup> Rana Mitter, “The War Years, 1937-1949,” in *The Oxford Illustrated History of Modern China*, by Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom (Oxford, UNITED KINGDOM: Oxford University Press, 2016), 151-77.

visitation, criticism related to the game of fantan focused on the spectacle of destruction it supposedly caused. A deeper look into these activities reveals how important leisure was during this era to the common populace.

Leisure was a political tool, used by both private citizens and the national government during the Republican Era. Teahouses were an outlet for political expression, with their accessibility making them an important political site in the ROC. On a local level, the teahouse was a place that illuminated the major changes of Chinese society through its customers. Conversations about the dissatisfaction regarding the new “modern” regime were plentiful, with overheard conversation pieces such as one between two old men on the outcome of Xinhai Revolution, “The happiness promised in 1911 has not reached us,” commenting on the failure of the 1911 Xinhai Revolution to provide prosperity, or even a sense of stability.<sup>14</sup> Though not overt political action, conversations such as these inherently painted the teahouse as sites encouraging the exchange of free thoughts in a public space, despite the heavy surveillance by both local and national government. The government in return recognized the potential political capital of leisure, and sought to control this sphere for political clout. In the public sphere, nationalist propaganda filled the tea house as, “government regulations required all teahouses to provide government-selected books and newspapers.”<sup>15</sup> The government designated teahouses as places to promote propaganda, and this contradicts the notion of leisure in general as a waste of time. The tea house functioned as the marketplace of ideas, in which the local community was connected to the larger political discourse pervading the country. The government recognized this connection, and targeted these places, along with other avenues of leisure, to exert their

---

<sup>14</sup> Di Wang, *The Teahouse: Small Business, Everyday Culture, and Public Politics in Chengdu, 1900-1950* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), 233.

<sup>15</sup> Wang, 238.

authority and to influence the discourse to benefit them. Control of leisure was an assertion of the government's legitimacy, by using it to educate and assert its devotion to the morality of the state.

This political expression inherent in the teahouse is replicated in mahjong, one of the most popular national pastimes. Like the teahouse, mahjong provided socialization, and provided a background to political discussion. However, unlike the teahouse, mahjong was both public and private, enjoyed in places such as the teahouse, but also in the safety of one's own home. The ability of mahjong to induce political discourse is present in how Republican intellectual, Wu Han, utilized its private nature; under the guise of hosting mahjong games he "managed to host gatherings to discuss politics and events at his home" despite heavy government surveillance by using the shuffling of tiles to block out noise.<sup>16</sup> Hence, leisure activities provided an avenue for discussing politics in local Republican China, both in public and private spaces even as the nationalist government attempted to assert more personal control in the later years of the republic. Mahjong's flexible nature as a private game allowed discussion of politics with less fear of government surveillance, which also shows why the government interfered so much with the leisurely activities they could access, in order to gain as much political capital as possible in public before people withdrew into private pastimes, where the pleasures and discussions enjoyed there were not as accessible or malleable to the government's will.

If mahjong represented leisurely activities that could not be controlled easily, government regulation of fantan highlighted the aggressive control government officials attempted to exert over leisure where they could. The assertion of the government's will and ideals is especially

---

<sup>16</sup> Greene, "The Game People Played: Mahjong in Modern Chinese Society and Culture," 21.

present in the attempt to regulate fantan, an area where “the authorities were concerned with the stigma represented by *fantan* legalization for their legitimacy.”<sup>17</sup> Once again, leisure was an important area to tackle because of the need to appear as the rightful government, especially in an era as turbulent as the Republican Era. However, despite the fact that banning activities related to it could give the government some authority, it also prohibited them from enjoying the revenue brought in by these institutions. As mentioned before, there was much opposition in Canton to the possible legalization of fantan by the elite. An article from 1917 talking about the presence of fantan in Canton indicated that the opposition failed, and that the lure of revenue brought in by the game was too much for authorities to ignore.<sup>18</sup> The authority that could be gained did not justify the loss of revenue.

However, a 1926 article once again discusses the legalization of fantan once again, with it stating that “the financial administration in Canton is about to legalize fantan gambling in the city again”, indicating that sometime between 1917 and 1926 the city government banned the game again, presumably for moral reasons presented before.<sup>19</sup> Once again, it seems that the allure of profits from fantan were too great to keep up whatever bans they had, and between 1925 and 1931 “... the fantan taxes yielded 68 million yuan of revenue for the province of Guangdong...”, indicating its contribution to society.<sup>20</sup> The pattern of the legalization and illegalization also revealed how the government utilized fantan, and leisure in general, to assert their authority. In this case, the Canton city and Guangdong province administrations flexed their

---

<sup>17</sup> Paulès, “Gambling in China Reconsidered: Fantan in South China During the Early Twentieth Century,” 186.

<sup>18</sup> “Fan-Tan Profits,” *South China Morning Post (1903-1941)*, July 25, 1917.

<sup>19</sup> “Canton Affairs: Finance Problem Bearing Heavily Canton, March 11,” *South China Morning Post (1903-1941)*, March 15, 1926.

<sup>20</sup> Paulès, “Gambling in China Reconsidered: Fantan in South China During the Early Twentieth Century,” 189.

moral authority with a ban on Fantan whenever it was necessary to raise their political capital, and then rescinded it whenever it was deemed possible, having enough political capital. Thus, it was imperative that the government participate in questions of leisure whenever they came up; ‘shady’ activities provided much in the way of revenue and demonstration of moral authority and rightful rule. People at both the local and national government level used leisure for political gain.

As leisure reflected various ways of political reflection, it also reflected various societal changes in the ROC. This is despite criticism of various avenues of leisure as being a useless relic of the past, namely of the Qing Dynasty. The state of the teahouse reflected the larger societal change in one aspect by being a mirror of the state of stability in the ROC. For example, in Chengdu, during the Warlord Era, citizen Wu Yu sent out a servant to check out the situation every so often, and “If the servant reported that the neighborhood teahouses had opened, he felt safe to venture out... .”<sup>21</sup> In this case, the teahouse provided a sense of stability in Chengdu in such chaotic times, and reflected the abrupt and rapid change not only in the city, but through Republican China as a whole. As mentioned above, the teahouse became a space of propaganda during World War II and the Chinese Civil War, reflecting the rapidly changing times. The lack of stability represented in the teahouse correlates with the rise of crime in the later years of the Republic. Records indicate that “In 1947, the Teahouse Guild reported to the police that teahouses suffer an enormous loss’ from theft... .”<sup>22</sup> This rise in theft reflected the increasingly worsening state of the Chinese economy and the faith people had in the state to provide a means of living during the Chinese Civil War of the late Republican Era. The teahouse at this stage, like

---

<sup>21</sup> Wang, *The Teahouse: Small Business, Everyday Culture, and Public Politics in Chengdu, 1900-1950*, 255.

<sup>22</sup> Wang, “Struggling for Livelihood: Social Conflict through the Teahouse in Republican Chengdu,” 262.

its status during World War II, represented the chaotic nature of Chinese society, and signaled the arrival of rapid change, with cemented parts of daily life undergoing massive difficulties and social conflict.

The volatile and disjointed nature of societal change during this time when analyzing it through leisure is especially visible with the status of women during this time. Moving away from the teahouse, Tanguan also reflected societal change, as “the presence of women in *tanguan*, a rare sight in the late Qing, became relatively common during the 1930s.”<sup>23</sup> The presence of people not usually associated with seedy places of leisure indicate in some part, a progressive inclusion and increased status of women into society. However, the association of the movement of women with fantan can be seen much earlier than 1930, with fears of women going to tanguan evolving from negative observations of women going out to restaurants at the present.

<sup>24</sup> On one hand, his fear indicated that there was an already visible increased participation of women in Chinese society during the early years of the Republic, which with the example above, blossomed into their association with tangaun in the 1930s. The increased presence of women in the tanguan, and by extension leisure in general, reflects the increased participation of women in Republican Chinese society, not just confined to the household despite the wishes of men. On the other hand however, it reflected social conflict and displayed issues and obstacles to such change in participation, seen with the negative reaction to the movement of women.

Questions of social conflict, and the uneven nature of social change in China can be further seen in the popularity of mahjong amongst women in the ROC. In contrast to fantan, and its public nature in Tanguan, mahjong could be a more private affair, as stated before. As stated

---

<sup>23</sup> Xavier Paulès, “Gambling in China Reconsidered: Fantan in South China During the Early Twentieth Century,” 15.

<sup>24</sup> (Our Own Correspondent), “Fantan In Canton: Petition Against Revival of the Evil Canton, Dec. 23.”

above with mahjong being utilized for political purposes, Mahjong provided an outlet to express modern societal issues within the household and culture. One of the stories that came out from private mahjong gatherings was that one of the participants "... was stuck at home with a husband who refused to let her work... ." <sup>25</sup> Mahjong gave avenues to these women to voice their discontentment with their lack of social participation and reward promised in the 1911 revolution, namely the promise of more rights for women. This is similar to the previously mentioned conversation between old men about the 1911 revolution, though it is more of a critique of a lack of cultural progress rather than political change. The enjoyment of leisure reveals conflicting reports of societal change and progress, revealed in the contrasting role of women in fanguan and mahjong. Furthermore, as with the teahouse, gambling also provided a sort of sanctuary in the ROC. Though unlike the teahouse, the sanctuary did not come in the form of extreme change as the teahouses in the Warlord Era. Leisure provided a place where marginalized people, such as women, could safely participate in society, whether simply socializing in a safe environment such as women playing fantan, or critiquing the system, in the case of Mahjong, without fear of reprisal.

In any case, shady leisurely activities such as teahouse drinking, and the gambling games above, got intertwined with the larger societal changes during the Republican Era of China. Even the tiniest conversation that took place during these activities and in these places holds larger ramifications for issues in a rapidly changing world. Leisure, despite attempts of heavy reformation and surveillance by the government for the sake of a new, modern China, managed

---

<sup>25</sup> Maggie Greene, "The Game People Played: Mahjong in Modern Chinese Society and Culture," 17.

to reflect and display issues quite clearly, whether it was their status during times of struggle or simply through local gossip.

Leisure was not only for innocuous diversions from work, but it was also a thing of livelihood (even through spectacle), a political tool used by all walks of life, and it was a marker of Chinese progress, or lack thereof. Though the media at the time focused on the violence and supposed moral degeneracy related to places of leisure, these same ideas of spectacle also reveal the importance of leisure to the livelihood of the community. Though decried as unproductive, people from all parts of society used it to advance their ideologies, whether in plain public view or in private. Finally, the state of leisure represented the state of progress and stability in Chinese society, providing critiques in progress. Through the lens of leisure, one can provide a three-dimensional view of the progression of Republican China.

## Bibliography

- “Ban On Mahjong: Canton’s Prohibition Against Gambling Kwangsi Example Canton, Oct. 29.” *South China Morning Post (1903-1941)*. October 31, 1932. 1757409161. ProQuest Historical Newspapers: South China Morning Post.
- “Canton Affairs: Finance Problem Bearing Heavily Canton, March 11.” *South China Morning Post (1903-1941)*. March 15, 1926. 1538761014. ProQuest Historical Newspapers: South China Morning Post.
- “Fan-Tan Profits.” *South China Morning Post (1903-1941)*. July 25, 1917. 1500026002. ProQuest Historical Newspapers: South China Morning Post.
- Greene, Maggie. “The Game People Played: Mahjong in Modern Chinese Society and Culture.” *Cross-Currents: East Asian History and Culture Review* 5, no. 1 (2016): 1–27. <https://doi.org/10.1353/ach.2016.0001>.
- Mitter, Rana. “The War Years, 1937-1949.” In *The Oxford Illustrated History of Modern China*, by Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom, 151–77. Oxford, UNITED KINGDOM: Oxford University Press, 2016. <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ucm/detail.action?docID=4706585>.
- (Our Own Correspondent). “Fantan in Canton: Petition Against Revival of the Evil Canton, Dec. 23.” *South China Morning Post (1903-1941)*. December 24, 1915. 1499229097. ProQuest Historical Newspapers: South China Morning Post.
- Paulès, Xavier. “Gambling in China Reconsidered: Fantan in South China During the Early Twentieth Century.” *International Journal of Asian Studies* 7, no. 2 (July 2010): 179–200. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S1479591410000069>.
- Shao, Qin. “Tempest over Teapots: The Vilification of Teahouse Culture in Early Republican China.” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 57, no. 4 (November 1998): 1009–41. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2659302>.
- Wang, Di. “Struggling for Livelihood: Social Conflict through the Teahouse in Republican Chengdu.” *European Journal of East Asian Studies* 5, no. 2 (2006): 247–73.
- . *The Teahouse: Small Business, Everyday Culture, and Public Politics in Chengdu, 1900-1950*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008.

## **An Anti-Chinese Agenda: The Acceptance of a Selected Few, 1870 to 1942**

By Cynthia Bravo Zamora

During the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, China was relatively wealthy, yet it was marked by foreign invaders, Chinese rebellions, and rulers trying to resist foreign invasions.<sup>1</sup> These events made life in China, particularly in the province of Guangdong, formally known as Canton, extremely difficult. The country was left in economic distress and in order to pay for the wars, the people were ravaged by high taxes. These taxes were a heavy burden on the people of Guangdong who were facing natural disasters and famines caused by the Qing Government's destruction of the granary systems during the Taiping Rebellion. These hardships further impoverished the region of Guangdong to the point where it could no longer sustain its population.<sup>2</sup> As a result, many Chinese men from this province decided to migrate to America "in search of a better living, a better system, and a better shelter."<sup>3</sup> Since opportunities for prosperity in China were virtually nonexistent, Chinese men felt their only option was to leave their country and seek employment opportunities elsewhere.<sup>4</sup>

As stated by historian Ko Ling Chan, the main driver for the Chinese migration was economic instability. As a result, thousands of impoverished Chinese men migrated in order to "earn more money and improve the quality of life for their families..."<sup>5</sup> These Chinese men made the decision to leave their families in hopes of earning a living in America while working in the Gum Shan, "The Mountain of Gold" or in railroad construction. These Chinese men did

---

<sup>1</sup> Tamura et al., *China: Understanding Its Past*, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997), 75.

<sup>2</sup> Corinne K. Hoexter, *From Canton to California: The Epic of Chinese Immigration* (New York: Four Winds Press, 1976). Introduction, xii.

<sup>3</sup> Chan, *Chinese Migration and Families-At-Risk*, xi.

<sup>4</sup> John Robert Soennichsen, *The Chinese Exclusion ACT of 1882* (Westport, ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2011), ix.

<sup>5</sup> Ko Ling Chan, *Chinese Migration and Families-At-Risk* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, UNITED KINGDOM: Cambridge Scholars Publisher, 2015), 4.

not intend to settle permanently in California, instead, they were hoping to quickly amass wealth in order to return back to China to live with their families and start a business.

When the first wave of Chinese immigrants arrived in San Francisco in the 1850s, they were grudgingly accepted.<sup>6</sup> These Chinese immigrants were partially welcomed for two reasons: there was a need for more laborers in major industries such as mining and railroad construction, and there was a need for more settlers to settle in the emerging towns of the newly formed state of California. These newcomers were hired in gold mines or railway construction sites throughout Western cities, however, in the 1860s as more Chinese men arrived, the competition for jobs surged leading to “mobs in California and Oregon organized to ‘run out of town’ the Chinese coolies...”<sup>7</sup> It was then that hostility towards Chinese immigrants gained prominence. During the 1870s, there was a widespread economic depression in America and jobs became even more scarce. Since Chinese men were seen as cheap labor, companies began to hire them. This was seen as a threat by many white men who used hateful rhetoric and often turned to violence in what they perceived to be a way to protect their livelihoods.<sup>8</sup>

As a result of the backlash to the Chinese migration, the State of California adopted an anti-Chinese agenda pushed by the Workingmen’s Party of California founded by Denis Kearney. An anti-Chinese agenda was also adopted by Congress, which passed the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882.<sup>9</sup> Yet, despite the rampant anti-Chinese sentiment in California, two Chinese immigrants, Kam Ah See, a resident of Plainsburg and Le Grand and Ah You, a resident of Yosemite and Merced, were able to overcome the brutal aspects of the anti-Chinese racism in Merced County.

---

<sup>6</sup> “Affidavit and Flyers from the Chinese Boycott Case.” *Educator Resources*. National Archives, 2017.

<sup>7</sup> Chang, Gordon H., and Fishkin, Shelley Fisher, eds. *The Chinese and the Iron Road : Building the Transcontinental Railroad*. Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 2019.

<sup>8</sup> “Affidavit and Flyers from the Chinese Boycott Case.”

<sup>9</sup> John Robert Soennichsen, *The Chinese Exclusion ACT of 1882* (Westport, ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2011).

Ah See and Ah You were able to fully integrate themselves into their largely white communities. This paper will argue that, despite the strong anti-chinese movement in California, certain Chinese migrants were able to overcome racism and xenophobia in their communities in situations where the white population did not view them as a threat.

### **Gum Shan “The Mountain of Gold”**

The first wave of migration from China to the United States occurred between 1849 and 1855. This corresponded with the California Gold Rush which began in 1848 when James Marshall found gold flakes in the American River.<sup>10</sup> The news of gold soon reached the impoverished country side of China, alluring thousands of men who chose to risk their lives for a once in a lifetime opportunity to acquire wealth. The voyage across the Pacific to San Francisco typically took up to eight weeks. Many Chinese people called the city “Gum Shan” or the “Mountain of Gold.”<sup>11</sup> The prospect of mining for gold represented a newly kindled hope for better lives for themselves and their relatives in China.

During the first years of the Gold Rush, there were no laws governing the extraction of gold and ownership of mining fields. Since gold mining was fairly new and there was not yet an intense competition for resources and space, immigrants of all races were tolerated. The first Chinese immigrants to arrive typically worked downstream from white Americans, Mexicans, French, Irish, and Canadian miners.<sup>12</sup> Mining during these early years was essentially “a free-for-all occupation in which the Chinese had as much right as anyone to set up camp and work the same ground for gold.”<sup>13</sup> But that soon changed as time went on and more miners

---

<sup>10</sup> Steve Wilson, *The California Gold Rush : Chinese Laborers in America (1848-1882)* (New York, NY, UNITED STATES: Rosen Publishing Group, 2016), 6.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>12</sup> Soennichsen, *The Chinese Exclusion ACT of 1882*. 12

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

arrived, creating mining camps which took up the workable land and increased competition for claims. This resulted in fights as men from the overcrowded camps began to intrude on each other's claimed land. This was bad for the Chinese who "by virtue of their non-Western appearance and a language so different from the English and European languages, were among the first to become victims of harassment by white miners."<sup>14</sup> This harassment ranged from pranks to vindictive attacks such as cutting off Chinese men's queues. Queues were a traditional hairstyle imposed on Chinese men by the Qing dynasty as a sign of submission, and without their queues Chinese men could not return back to China.<sup>15</sup> As expected most "American miners knew little of the tradition behind the queue, [as a result it became a] target for the white man's animosity, especially since the miners could see how upset the Chinese became over the cutting of queues."<sup>16</sup> Without knowing or caring about the symbolic meaning surrounding the queues, the American miners were cutting them off the Chinese miners in order to display their dislike for them. The harassment did not stop there, white miners would also chase the Chinese out of camps that appeared to be producing a lot of gold in order to claim it for themselves.<sup>17</sup>

As more men showed up to mine gold, labor unions were created in order to protect miners, with the exception of Chinese miners. For example, The Knights of Labor accepted races other than white and was considered "a major force in enrolling 'Jew or Gentile, Christian or Infidel' into its ranks of labor union members [but they] drew the line at accepting the Chinese."

<sup>18</sup> One of the biggest issues opposed by the labor unions was the use of dynamite because it was

---

<sup>14</sup> Soennichsen, *The Chinese Exclusion ACT of 1882*, 11.

<sup>15</sup> Khan, Bethany. "Pigtail of a Disgraced Chinese Man." Worcester City Museum Collection. 2016

<sup>16</sup> Soennichsen, 13.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, 12.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, 15.

not safe and occasionally deadly. This created more animosity towards the Chinese since as they were not protected under labor unions, mine owners began hiring them to use dynamite. So in order to bypass the demands of labor unions, mine owners began contracting more Chinese workers who would work in deadly conditions and for a much lesser wage compared to white miners or other union men. This was seen as a threat by white miners who feared they would be replaced with Chinese miners. This forced the white mining unions “to accept the new technology [such as dynamite], along with lower wages” for their white members.<sup>19</sup> The fact that white miners were now earning lower wages further increased the level of animosity against the Chinese. In order to appease its members, labor unions made it harder for Chinese to acquire work by boycotting businesses that hired them.<sup>20</sup>

### **Railroad of the West:**

As gold mining reached its height, new job opportunities emerged. The start of railroad construction began during the mid-1850s, a few years after gold was found. The purpose of these railroads was to link cities in Northern California to major gold processing areas. This created an abundance of new jobs. The transcontinental railroad provided work for the Chinese miners being pushed out of the industry and gave Chinese people still living in their home country more reasons to come to the United States.<sup>21</sup> Although the work was incredibly difficult and the pay was minimal, to many Chinese workers it was seen as a way of escaping the violence and hatred they experienced in mining camps. But when the railroads were completed and job opportunities dried up, the merging of Chinese and white society became more noticeable. Since the Chinese were no longer secluded in mining or railroad camps and began forming Chinatowns in

---

<sup>19</sup> Soennichsen, *The Chinese Exclusion ACT of 1882*, 14-15.

<sup>20</sup> Affidavit and Flyers from the Chinese Boycott Case.” *Educator Resources*. National Archives, 2017.

<sup>21</sup> Soennichsen, *The Chinese Exclusion ACT of 1882*, x.

established cities, the animosity towards them intensified even further.<sup>22</sup> As a result, new racial tensions surfaced which led local and state governments to exert control over Chinese migration and employment.

### Racial Tension and Description of Chinese:



Working Men's Party in California *The Chinese Must Go*

As more Chinese immigrants began to arrive and jobs became more scarce, the inevitable clash of the two distinct societies began. This merging gave a new meaning to the Anti-Chinese rhetoric which spread across California. At this time, the Panic of 1873 occurred. During the Panic of 1873, America suffered a financial crisis that halted Westward expansion as unemployment rates surged, prompting increased aggression towards the Chinese. This panic “provided evidence that mild hostility toward a foreign people could escalate into outright violence when an economy soured, and people were in fear of losing their jobs.”<sup>23</sup> Anti-Chinese violence increased, in part, due to orator Denis Kearney and politician John Bigler who promoted hateful rhetoric. These men aroused the anger of unemployed white Americans by portraying the

<sup>22</sup> Soennichsen, *The Chinese Exclusion ACT of 1882*, x.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, x.

Chinese as villains. Their usage of this kind of language ignited violence and hostilities towards Chinese people, which caused the destruction of many Chinatowns. As a result of the influence of anti-Chinese rhetoric, local and state governments created laws and facilitated the creation of anti-Chinese movements in order to lessen Chinese participation in white American society.<sup>24</sup>

This ultimately led to a ban on Chinese immigration. Anti-Chinese legislation continued to strengthen the Exclusion Act through amendments that supported an effective ban on the “immigration of Chinese women, and a series of laws that complicated everyday life for Chinese residents of the United States.”<sup>25</sup> The marginalization created by these policies was intended to prevent integration, keep Chinese people isolated from white communities, and eventually eliminate the Chinese from America altogether.

### **Merced:**

Although Merced County had many Chinatowns, this paper will focus on three in particular, the Chinatowns of Merced, Plainsburg, and Le Grand. The City of Merced along with its Chinatown experienced rapid growth in the late 1800s and by 1872 Merced achieved incorporated status. Hundreds of Chinese people gained employment in the construction of the San Joaquin Valley Railroad and in order to accommodate these workers, Chinese stores started appearing, forming Merced’s Chinatown.<sup>26</sup> Despite the Chinatowns bringing in settlers to the rapidly growing Merced, officials facilitated the hostility experienced by the majority of the Chinese. Chinese laundrymen and working-class families often suffered discrimination and violence at the hands of white supremacy. This type of discrimination was seen as a response to

---

<sup>24</sup> “Chinese Immigration and the Chinese Exclusion Acts.” *Office of the Historian, Milestones* 1866-1896. Foreign Service Institute.

<sup>25</sup> Soennichsen, *The Chinese Exclusion ACT of 1882*, xi.

<sup>26</sup> Sarah Lim, “Remembering The Merced Chinese: The Builders Of The Great Central Valley, 1860-1960” (California State University, Stanislaus, n.d.). 85

Chinese sojourners who would send all their money back to China. The white population in Merced viewed Chinese laundrymen responsible for the economic recession because they would send their earnings back to China rather than investing it back into the economy.<sup>27</sup> As a result of this, the main targets of the anti-Chinese agenda in Merced was the removal of all Chinese laundries.

The anti-Chinese agenda took root in Merced County as early as the 1860s with legislation protecting white people in the mining industry and agricultural business. In Merced during the years of 1884 and 1885, the town conducted a series of roundups and purged the Chinese community. The town officials allowed its white citizens to form anti-Chinese organizations with the purpose of drafting bylaws and constitutions in order to withdraw ‘patronage’ and displace the Chinese residents.<sup>28</sup> In accordance with these newly formed laws Merced’s board of supervisors declared Chinese laundries a nuisance and gave them 90 days to move beyond the town limits. These events ultimately led to the event of December 25, 1885 where Chinese categorized as vagrants, prostitutes, and opium dealers were driven out of Merced.<sup>29</sup>

### **Plainsburg and Le Grand:**

Although not much is known about the history of Plainsburg or its Chinatown, its location, between mining and farming fields, made it the center of a flourishing settlement.<sup>30</sup> Before adopting the name Plainsburg in 1869, the town was known as Welch’s Store on Mariposa Creek. By late 1869 and early 1870’s the town had well established ranches, farms, a

---

<sup>27</sup> Lim “Remembering The Merced Chinese,” 107.

<sup>28</sup> Jean Pfaelzer, *Driven Out: The Forgotten War Against Chinese Americans* (New York: Random House, 2007), 261-62.

<sup>29</sup> Pfaelzer, “*Driven Out*,” 261.

<sup>30</sup> Lim, “Remembering The Merced Chinese,” 47.

jail, a newspaper publisher as well as “two hotels, two blacksmith shops, mercantile stores, a large billiard saloon, a barber shop, and a good doctor.”<sup>31</sup> Plainsburg also had a thriving commercial center with a Chinatown accounting for four hundred Chinese people.<sup>32</sup> This Chinese community worked in ranches, farming fields, and mining. As mentioned by the historian Sarah Lim “there was a trail in Plainsburg known as ‘Chinese Trail’ leading to Southern mines where Chinese miners worked the leftover claims.”<sup>33</sup> A resident of the area, Emmett Cunningham, described seeing long lines of Chinese wearing straw hats jogging up the trail carrying baskets of supplies suspended from a pole.<sup>34</sup> Although around this time the gold fever had subsided, the Chinese of Plainsburg still had hopes of finding gold. Since they faced no competition in these abandoned mines, the Chinese experienced less harassment from the white society.

With all the commercialization accruing in Plainsburg, the town was predicted to be ‘the’ town in Merced County. Unfortunately, that did not happen. Plainsburg was bypassed by two railroad systems, in 1871-72 with the Central Pacific along what is now Highway 99 and in 1896 by the Santa Fe railroad in Le Grand. The farmers of the area did not want the railroad to cross their lands and as a result the town’s status as a commercial center began to disappear. By the late 1890s and early 1900s, Plainsburg lost its population and was replaced by the neighboring railroad town of Le Grand. Most of the businesses were moved to Le Grand or were torn down and used as lumber. The Chinatown faced destruction and turned into farming fields. Thus, the once thriving town became a ghost town.

---

<sup>31</sup> “Plainsburg,” n.d., Court House Museum.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Lim, “Remembering The Merced Chinese.” 47.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.. 47-48.

By the 1900s Chinese settlers relocated to the town of Le Grand which was described as a railroad town and the center of the Eastern Merced County. Although much of the history of Le Grand has yet to be uncovered, the town was described as having “one large two story hotel with meals, saloon, and gambling tables -two saloons- two or three blacksmith shops- two or three Chinese laundries- one doctor and drug store-...[and] a weekly newspaper.”<sup>35</sup> Between the years 1910-1912, the town of Le Grand had made the transition from grain and cattle farming to producing more diversified crops which brought more jobs into the town. The only orchard in this time belonged to Kam Ah See, a Chinese immigrant.<sup>36</sup>

### **Kam Ah See**



Kam Ah See (Courtesy of Merced County Historical Society, Merced)

Despite the racial tensions in Merced County, Kam Ah was well known and loved by the white community. Many described him as a “colorful and interesting pioneer citizen of

---

<sup>35</sup> Elizabeth Kahl Miller and Donna GilletteHall, “Early Days in Le Grand,” in *Le Grand History: Memories of Le Grand History Club*, 2007. Merced County Courthouse Museum.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

Plainsburg and early Le Grand.”<sup>37</sup> Ah See was born on April 14, 1842 in Hong Kong, Guangdong, China.<sup>38</sup> Ah See came to California as a bachelor, the term bachelor was given to single or married Chinese men who left their wives and children in China, and settled in Plainsburg’s Chinatown in May 1872. He made the decision to leave his wife and two sons in China in order to come to America and provide for them. From his arrival to his departure back to China in 1884, not much is known about his life other than he was a cotton picker for Henry McClure and Thomas Wilcox.<sup>39</sup> Ah See briefly returned to China in 1884 to visit his family and in 1885 he returned back to Plainsburg. In a 12-year span he worked as a cook for C.T. Dooley and John Price, herded sheep for Sam Strawby, and conducted a Chinese laundry in Minturn near the town of Le Grand.<sup>40</sup> Although laundry was traditionally considered to be a woman’s job, the fact that Chinese men could not afford to bring their wives to America encouraged them to open up laundries to accommodate the Chinese community, as a result “this created an opportunity for the Chinese to have successful laundry businesses.”<sup>41</sup> Yet during this time, white communities targeted Chinese laundries and labeled them a nuisance since they believed the laundries were a disruption to their society. As seen in an editorial piece about Chinese washhouses, the editor of the *San Joaquin Valley Argus* called on the local government to use “lawful means” to eradicate what she thought to be a nuisance.<sup>42</sup> Ah See sold his laundry and moved to Le Grand in 1897.

Although Ah See worked hard, it was not until he permanently moved to Le Grand that he fully integrated into the white community. Between the years of 1897 to 1903, Ah See

---

<sup>37</sup> Elizabeth Kahl Miller and Donna GilletteHall, “Kam Ah See,” in *Le Grand History: Memories of Le Grand History Club*, 2007. Court House Museum.

<sup>38</sup> “California Death Index: Kam See,” n.d.

<sup>39</sup> Kahl Miller and GilletteHall, “Kam Ah See.” 26.

<sup>40</sup> “Kam Ah See, 1920s,” *Le Grand Community Day*, May 1, 1932.

<sup>41</sup> Wilson, *The California Gold Rush : Chinese Laborers in America (1848-1882)*.16

<sup>42</sup> *San Joaquin Valley Argus*. 1879-1890, Merced County Courthouse Museum.

reinvented the agricultural life in Le Grand. He introduced the first windmill irrigation system and produced the first commercial orchard in addition to the first orange grove in the county.<sup>43</sup> Ah See also became the first pioneer in the commercial alfalfa industry and installed water pumping around the year 1910. From 1903 to the day of his death, Ah See invested his earnings back into Le Grand and bought and sold land to the white community members. Ah See fully integrated into his community when he cut off his queue signaling that all ties to his old life were now gone.

Kam Ah See became ill in late December of 1927 and a few weeks later at the age of 86, he died on January 14, 1928 in Le Grand, California.<sup>44</sup> His death was classified as complications from pneumonia. At the time of his death, he was surrounded by his close friends; Mrs. Tosh, Jim Smith, John Barker, and William Louely. His funeral service was held at the local Methodist Church in Le Grand and was officiated by Reverend D.C. Williams, who was also a close friend.<sup>45</sup> At the news of his death, the community came together to commemorate his life and all the schools and business houses were closed during the funeral which preceded a large procession to his grave.<sup>46</sup> He was buried in the Plainsburg's cemetery. The process of Ah See's burial is rare and the fact that he was buried in a cemetery that had no distinction site between white and chinese demonstrates his importance to the town of Le Grand.

## Ah You

---

<sup>43</sup> Kahl Miller and GilletteHall, "Kam Ah See." 26.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 28.



Ah You (Courtesy of Merced Courthouse Museum, Merced)

Ah You was born on April 16, 1847 in Sun Ning County Village, Canton, China.<sup>47</sup> He arrived in San Francisco in 1867 as a bachelor with no known family other than his parents. While living there he worked as a cook for a restaurant.<sup>48</sup> A few years later he left San Francisco for the San Joaquin Valley where he worked for various hotels and camps. In 1876 he moved to Mariposa and tried his luck mining gold at John C. Fremont's old Spanish grant. It is not clear why he left his mining job, but soon after he began working as a cook at Leidig's Hotel in Yosemite Valley. While working at the Leidig's Hotel, the Washburn Brothers (owners of the Wawona Hotel in Yosemite Valley) heard of Ah You's cooking skills, and Henry Washburn, senior partner of Wawona, hired Ah You as a cook for his hotel.<sup>49</sup> Ah You cooked at the Wawona Hotel and spent the winters in Merced. While at the Wawona, Ah You cooked for many noted visitors; in 1890 President Benjamin Harrison praised Ah You's Chinese-style fried chicken, in

---

<sup>47</sup> "Famed Chef of Wawona Hotel Dies in Merced," *Fresno Bee Republican*, July 3, 1942, Merced Courthouse Museum.

<sup>48</sup> Rad's Ramblings, Ah You's Interview with Rad's Ramblings, n.d., Merced Courthouse Museum.

<sup>49</sup> "Famed Chef of Wawona Hotel Dies in Merced." Merced Courthouse Museum.

1903 President Theodore Roosevelt praised Ah You for his apple pies, and in 1909 President William H. Taft complimented the dinner Ah You prepared him.<sup>50</sup> Ah You dedicated 47 years of his life working at Wawona bringing prestige to his workplace. In 1927 Ah You retired and decided to permanently move to Merced. Although Ah You was elderly, he was described by his friends as an expert in pastry and a master at making wildcat soup.



Ah You with Mr, and Mrs. Joseph McInerny (Courtesy of Merced Courthouse Museum, Merced)

Ah You died on July 1, 1942 in Merced, California at the age of 95. He was hospitalized at Merced General Hospital and succumbed to an unknown illness.<sup>51</sup> At the time of his death his biggest fear was that he would not have a decent “Chinese burial”, but his closest white American friend, Postmaster Joseph T. McInerny took it upon himself and decided to bury Ah You in a Chinese Manner according to ancient rites of the Chinese.<sup>52</sup> Ah You’s funeral was held

<sup>50</sup> Rad’s Ramblings, Ah You’s Interview with Rad’s Ramblings. Merced Courthouse Museum.

<sup>51</sup> “You, Ah: Taken by Death,” *Merced Express*, July 2, 1942, Merced Courthouse Museum.

<sup>52</sup> “Ah You Is Dead: Ah You, Elderly Chinese Resident of Merced Dies During Night at Age of 95,” *Merced Sun Star*, July 2, 1942, Court House Museum.

in Welch-Nelson Mortuary and he was buried in the Merced Chinese Cemetery. At the time of his death, he had no children and was described by Postmaster J.T. McNerny as a “smiling little Chinese... [who] was undoubtedly one of the most loveable characters... Everyone who knew him liked him.”<sup>53</sup> Although Ah You did not directly contribute to the expansion of his town like Ah See, his renowned cooking skills brought in clientele, economically contributing to the town.

**Conclusion:**

Although the Chinese migration was needed and welcomed, yet it came at a high price. California greatly benefited from this migration in terms of cheap labor in industries such as mining and railroad construction, yet with each wave of migrants that came into the United States, the Chinese became targets of hatred and persecution. The fear that the Chinese were trying to encroach on white communities and compete for jobs led to the physical danger and climate crises around Chinese communities throughout Merced County. Although the stories of these Chinese migrants have been forgotten or erased in many cases, their lives in America were tinted with stereotypes and a history of racial tension. The Chinese who arrived in America did not expect to stay, rather they wanted to acquire wealth and return home. During their stay they formed Chinatowns in the midst of hostility by the white community.

Considering the anti-Chinese agenda in Merced county, how were Kam Ah See and Ah You able to create personal and economic relationships with their white community? What differentiated these two men from other Chinese immigrants? The stories of Kam Ah See and Ah You are unusual during this time period yet possible. In their respective towns, both men earned the respect of their white neighbors through their hard work and kind personality. In addition, both men did not compete with the dominant white society for jobs. As a result, they were not

---

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

categorized as a threat nor did they pose any danger to the white communities. Although at one point in their lives they did compete for jobs, Kam Ah See owned a laundry which was seen as a women's job and Ah You mined gold at John C. Fremont's old Spanish grant in Mariposa, they switched professions which allowed them to overcome racial barriers such as discrimination, anti-Chinese violence and stereotypes attributed to Chinese sojourners who would send their earnings back to China. Ah See's and Ah You's professions directly contributed to the economic growth of the towns.

In addition to contributing to the economic growth and prosperity of their towns, (Ah See's innovative skills which made agriculture easier for the community of Le Grand, and Ah You's cooking skills which brought recognition and more business to his workplace), both men were classified as law-abiding citizens and bachelors. Both men died at an old age without producing children in the United States. This was appealing to the dominant white society since it contributed to the logic behind the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. This act prevented Chinese women from immigrating to the United States in efforts to stop Chinese from reproducing and lowering the 'integrity of America.' The fact that both men did not have children while living in the United States made them exemplary residents because they were not contributing to the growth of the Chinese population. This appeased the hysterics of the white society. Despite living during a period of strong racial tension and through the anti-Chinese movements of Merced County, these men were accepted into white communities and were allowed to live freely among their white neighbors.

## Bibliography

- “Affidavit and Flyers from the Chinese Boycott Case.” *Educator Resources*. National Archives, 2017.  
<https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/chinese-boycott>
- “Ah You Is Dead: Ah You, Elderly Chinese Resident of Merced Dies During Night at Age of 95.” *Merced Sun Star*, July 2, 1942. Merced Court House Museum.
- “California Death Index: Kam See,” n.d. Merced Court House Museum.
- Chan, Ko Ling. *Chinese Migration and Families-At-Risk*. Newcastle-upon-Tyne, UNITED KINGDOM: Cambridge Scholars Publisher, 2015.
- Chang, Gordon H., and Fishkin, Shelley Fisher, eds. *The Chinese and the Iron Road : Building the Transcontinental Railroad*. Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 2019.
- “Chinese Immigration and the Chinese Exclusion Acts.” *Office of the Historian*, MilestonesL 1866-1896. Foreign Service Institute.
- “Famed Chef of Wawona Hotel Dies in Merced.” *Fresno Bee Republican*, July 3, 1942. Merced Court House Museum.
- Hoexter, Corinne K. *From Canton to California: The Epic of Chinese Immigration*. New York: Four Winds Press, 1976.
- Kahl Miller, Elizabeth, and Donna GilletteHall. “Early Days in Le Grand.” In *Le Grand History: Memories of Le Grand History Club*, 2007.
- . “Kam Ah See.” In *Le Grand History: Memories of Le Grand History Club*, 2007.
- “Kam Ah See, 1920s.” *Le Grand Community Day*, May 1, 1932. Merced Court House Museum.
- Khan, Bethany. “Pigtail of a Disgraced Chinese Man.” Worcester City Museum Collection. 2016. <https://researchworcestershire.wordpress.com/2016/07/20/pigtail-of-a-disgraced-chinese-man/>
- Lim, Sarah. “Remembering The Merced Chinese: The Builders Of The Great Central Valley, 1860-1960.” California State University, Stanislaus, n.d.
- Pfaelzer, Jean. *Driven Out: The Forgotten War Against Chinese Americans*. New York: Random House, 2007.
- “Plainsburg,” n.d. Merced Court House Museum.
- Rad’s Ramblings. Ah You’s Interview with Rad’s Ramblings, n.d. Merced Court House Museum.
- “San Joaquin Valley Argus,” 1890 1879. Merced Court House Museum.
- Soennichsen, John Robert. *The Chinese Exclusion ACT of 1882*. Westport, UNITED STATES: ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2011.
- Tamura, Eileen H., Eileen Tamura, Linda K. Menton, Noren W. Lush, Francis K. S. Tsui, Warren Cohen, and Francis K. C. Tsui. *China : Understanding Its Past*. Honolulu, UNITED STATES: University of Hawaii Press, 1997.
- Wilson, Steve. *The California Gold Rush : Chinese Laborers in America (1848-1882)*. New York, NY, UNITED STATES: Rosen Publishing Group, 2016.
- Working Men’s Party in California, *The Chinese Must Go Political cartoon of the Workingman’s Party of Guerneville. 1879*. Sonoma County Library Photograph Collection.  
<https://calisphere.org/item/b44b5a084ce628369fd1b844b696f3aa/>
- “You, Ah: Taken by Death.” *Merced Express*, July 2, 1942. Merced Court House Museum.

## **The Role of Women in Africa: 5000 BCE-Late Antiquity**

By Adam Allen

In civilizations throughout all of global history, the role of women has been limited by their portrayal in stereotypical roles such as mothers, wives, daughters, or even mistresses. These portrayals of women are constantly reinforced throughout society, media, and cultures, subliminally, and overtly training the mind to illustrate women as inferior to men. In history there are limited narratives about powerful, influential, and leading women's triumphs and stories discussed at length, and when we do hear of them, people tend to only speak of nobility, such as Cleopatra or Queen Elizabeth. This phenomenon begs two questions: have women *always* been treated as inferior to men? And if not, where in history did the role of women change, causing society to be so male dominated and view men as superior to women? After a study of ancient Egypt and Ethiopia civilizations, it is apparent that women have not always been viewed as inferior to men. The objective of this essay is to demonstrate how initially in ancient Egyptian and Ethiopian society women were viewed equally to, and at times superior to, men.

Women of ancient Egypt and Ethiopia civilizations often held powerful, spiritual roles that garnered them respect and admiration in society. These women contributed greatly to spiritual, political, and economic developments across their countries. Learning the roles of women depicted in ancient African civilizations is essential for honoring and respecting the past of African women, while reinstating them to their dignified place in history and contemporary society. It is important to note that, not only did some societies allow women to hold a superior position in society, there were different ways for women to achieve superiority, whether it be aesthetically, politically, spiritually, or socially. This is a testament to how advanced some early

African civilizations were in terms of gender roles, relations and societal structures. The role of women in Egypt and Ethiopia civilizations was such a unique factor of society, not only because women led diverse and decisive roles in their communities, but also because the gender roles practiced in Egypt and Ethiopia were not commonplace in contemporaneous societies in Europe, such as Ancient Greece and Rome. When describing the role of women in ancient Graeco-Roman society, Walter Scheidel, an Austrian historian and researcher who teaches ancient history at Stanford University, chronicled, "all in all we may assume that an absolute majority of all women in ancient Graeco-Roman world either belonged to households that lived by agriculture and had, at least at times, to rely on labour of all its members or women were compelled as slaves or dependents to fulfill whatever tasks they were assigned."<sup>1</sup> This analysis by Scheidel is significant because it shows that women in the Graeco-Roman world did not have access to achieve the level of status in society that women in Egyptian and Ethiopian civilizations were privy to. In contrast, when describing ancient Egyptian society, Herodotus, an ancient Greek writer, geographer, and historian, stated that, "the Egyptians themselves, in their manners and customs, seem to have reversed the ordinary practices of mankind. For instance, women can attend markets and are employed at trade, while men stay at home and do the weaving."<sup>2</sup> Herodotus' claim is significant because it indicates that gender relations and norms in Egypt were very different from what he had seen in the deeply rooted patriarchal system he was accustomed to in Greece. Another example of the gender relations that existed in early African societies can be seen in ancient Greek historian Diodorus' description of the equality between

---

<sup>1</sup> Walter Scheide, "The Most Silent Women of Greece and Rome: Rural Labour and Women's Life in the Ancient World (I)." *Greece & Rome*, vol. 42, no. 2, (Classical Association, Cambridge University Press), 199

<sup>2</sup> Beatrice Lumpkin, "Hypatia and Women's Rights in Ancient Egypt." *Black Women in Antiquity*. Rev. ed. Edited by Ivan Van Sertima. (New Brunswick: Transaction Press, 1987), 157

men and women more than half a millennium after Herodotus. Diodorus claimed, "it was ordained that the queen should have greater power and honor than the king and that among private persons the wife should enjoy authority over her husband, the husband's agreeing in the marriage contract that they will be obedient in all things to their wives."<sup>3</sup> Diodorus' explanation illustrates that these elevated views of women were not something that existed only to make it seem as if these early civilizations were just and equal, but it also signifies that these gender relations and views of women by men were maintained and expected behind closed doors, in families and marriages, just as they were in public. In addition to the above examples, another approach in which women achieved social status was through beauty and their bodies.

Body adornment in society was more than just an act of beautification in ancient African civilizations. Body adornment is the combination of magic, medicine, and religious practices, used to beautify one's appearance and to project social status. Women in these early societies who had undergone scarification and cicatrization signified higher levels of status. Scarification is the practice of scratching, etching, burning/branding, or superficially cutting designs, or words into the skin as a permanent body modification, while cicatrization is the process of healing a wound by contracting tissue in order to form scarring.

"The markings were a language clearly understood by those who could read their symbolic meanings. They were an indication of social status. The markings varied according to cultural group but would generally tell the following story; 'See the design on my breasts, arms and back? I have had my first menses. I have come of age. Give me honor. See the design on my abdomen? I carry my first child. Give me honor. Or, see the design on my face? I am a married woman. Give me honor. You can read my achievement and the strength of my character when you see the art and accumulation of my adornment. Read me and behave accordingly.'<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> Lumpkin "Hypatia and Women's Rights in Ancient Egypt," 157

<sup>4</sup> Camille Yarbough. "Female Style and Beauty in Ancient Africa." *Black Women in Antiquity*. Rev. ed. Edited by Ivan Van Sertima, (New Brunswick: Transaction Press, 1987), 89-90

This quote from historian Camille Yarbough is noteworthy because it details the cultural importance of the scars that existed on these women's bodies and illustrates their level of status in society. It also signaled respect as women continued to go through the stages of womanhood and motherhood; the level of status and respect they received from people in society should ascend similarly. The role of motherhood was not taken lightly in these early African civilizations. Mothers were often considered to be the foundation of society and the creators of Gods. American poet, writer, and professor Sonia Sanchez claims, "the fact that women as spiritual beings were considered full partners in civilization-building was reflected historically in Egyptian society by records kept on women-pharaohs and indicated a widespread belief that women also housed the Divine."<sup>5</sup> This statement by Sanchez is crucial to the understanding of women achieving higher status in society, because it provides reasoning on why women were so highly thought of and treated superior to men. The people believed that if it were not for the women, then the kings or Gods that they have looked up to and respected would not have existed. Mythical Gods and characters played a big role in the spirituality of many early African societies. Another unique claim in this reading was the one made by Ptahhotep, an ancient Egyptian vizier, who is a high ranking official or political advisor, appointed by the pharaoh. Ptahhotep advised his son, "be unstinting in lavishing attention on your wife because she is the foundation of your family."<sup>6</sup> Essentially, this quote symbolizes an example of men in higher positions advising other men to treat women with the utmost respect, which illustrates that even men in the upper echelons of society believed and followed these matriarchal views.

---

<sup>5</sup> Sonia Yarbough, "Nefertiti: Queen on a Sacred Mission," *Black Women in Antiquity*. Rev. ed. Edited by Ivan Van Sertim, (New Brunswick: Transaction Press, 1987), 49.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

Lastly, another example of women achieving higher social status and being treated superior to their male counterparts in society, are the many queens that once held power in some of these ancient Ethiopian and Egyptian societies. There is a chapter titled "The Great Queens of Ethiopia", in Ivan Van Sertima's book *Black Women in Antiquity*. This chapter was written by Charles Finch and Larry Williams, and in the chapter they expressed the following, "the most important of the Ethiopian queens we are considering were independent rulers; their husbands were consorts to them. These queens ran the civil administration, led armies against military foes, promoted long-distance commerce and diplomatic relations, and engaged in massive building programs."<sup>7</sup> This reveals the fact that in ancient Ethiopia women had the opportunity and access to work in all positions of society, and at times were able to gain leadership positions or roles. Finch and Williams go on to claim that, "in every way, they [women] exercised the full prerogatives and powers of rulership. Such independent female rulers are found throughout Africa in time and space and it is our contention that this relative frequency of the queenship—compared to other parts of the world—reflected the persistent matriarchal patterns in Africa through the course of history."<sup>8</sup> This means not only were women placed in positions of power, but also that women exercised the power given to them to its full extent. While also actually being trusted in these roles and expected to run these civilizations no different from if it were a king in power. While this pattern of queenship seems to be a rarity, it was not only evident in ancient Ethiopia, it also existed in ancient Egypt.

Although Egypt is known for its ancient civilizations and the monuments of the pharaohs, history tends to forget about the queens that reigned during those times. The

---

<sup>7</sup> Charles Yarbough and Larry Williams, "The Great Queens of Ethiopia" *Black Women in Antiquity*. Rev. ed. Edited by Ivan Van Sertima, (New Brunswick: Transaction Press, 1987), 15-16

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 15-16

Queens of Egypt were a powerful force in their own right, such as Queen Hatshepsut or Queen Tiye. Dr. James Harris, leader of the investigation of the royal mummy collection in the Egyptian museum in Cairo, describes Queen Hatshepsut as, "a former queen who ruled Egypt as pharaoh and undertook titles of raiment of a king as depicted in temple scenes and in statuary after the death of her husband Thutmosis II and during her coregency with her stepson Thutmose III."<sup>9</sup> Dr. Harris' quote illustrates that when women were placed in power, they were trusted to complete all tasks that were required of them due to inhabiting the role of a king, rather than just being someone placed in power with no real expectations or duties, or as placeholder for a heir in the family to come up and take the position. Queen Hatshepsut was not the only woman to attain this level of leadership, another example of that can be Queen Tiye. When discussing Queen Tiye, Dr. Harris stated, "Queen Tiye was the beloved wife of Amenhotep III and mother of pharaoh Amenhotep IV also known as Akhenaton. Queen Tiye played a crucial role in leadership during her husband's reign and her son's Akhenaton. These examples of Queen Tiye's leadership was reflected in statuary inscriptions, and reliefs in temples and tomb chapels, and she was even involved in diplomatic correspondence with heads of foreign states."<sup>10</sup> The women in these Egyptian societies had important responsibilities and were not domesticated or confined to the home like many would assume, and they often took on roles that today are commonly referred to as a 'man's job'. Ultimately, the women of these times set the foundation for the empowerment of women and are not credited enough.

---

<sup>9</sup> James E.Harris, et al., "Mummy of the 'Elder Lady' in the Tomb of Amenhotep II: Egyptian Museum Catalog Number 61070." *Science*, vol. 200, no. 4346, American Association for the Advancement of Science, 1978, 149.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 149–51

To conclude, women in ancient Egyptian and Ethiopian societies were far more than just wives and daughters confined to the home; they had much more status than commonly believed and were highly respected in society. Throughout ancient Egyptian and Ethiopian civilization these elevated views of women were very prominent and practiced normally, while in Greece and Rome they were developing patriarchal societies that confined women to the home, and viewed women as inferior to men. These Greek and Roman societies would later influence the Western world, and these ideas of gender relations and norms in society would later become the dominant ideas of the New World. Fundamentally, this was problematic because these stereotypical notions of women, and the constant degradation of women began to be planted all over the globe through colonialism and imperialism, and as a result, it has shaped the way people view women in contemporary society. It also has created the idea that patriarchy is natural, and something that has existed in all societies throughout history, when in reality it has not. Ultimately, this has led to the society we live in today, where women find themselves still in the middle of multiple movements, in hopes of creating a society where women are viewed, paid, and treated equally to their male counterparts. While this is just a basic understanding of the oppression women in today's society face, it contradicts women's place in society of ancient Egypt and Ethiopia, and the notion that women have always been treated second-class to men. Barbara S. Lesko, author and Administrative Research Assistant in the Department of Egyptology at Brown University claims, "four thousand years ago women in the Nile Valley enjoyed more legal rights and privileges than women have in many nations of the world today. Equal pay for equal work is a cry heard now, but seems to have been the norm for thousands of

years ago in Egypt."<sup>11</sup> In sum, when looking at the role of women in today's Western society most would agree women are treated far too poorly and unjustly in comparison to men, due to the norms of the patriarchal society we live in. In order to fix this problem it is essential that representation of women in power, like those of ancient Egypt and Ethiopia civilizations are discussed, because stories of the past, such as those expressed here, can be critically used to incite inspiration, to spread knowledge, and to break down the patriarchal structures that dominate American contemporary society.

---

<sup>11</sup> Lumpkin, "Hypatia and Women's Rights in Ancient Egypt," 157.

## Bibliography

- Finch, Charles. Williams, Larry. "The Great Queens of Ethiopia" *Black Women in Antiquity*. Rev. ed. Edited by Ivan Van Sertima. New Brunswick: Transaction Press, 1987.
- Harris, James E., et al. "Mummy of the 'Elder Lady' in the Tomb of Amenhotep II: Egyptian Museum Catalog Number 61070." *Science*, vol. 200, no. 4346, American Association for the Advancement of Science, 1978, pp.1149–51, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1746491>.
- Lumpkin, Beatrice. "Hypatia and Women's Rights in Ancient Egypt." *Black Women in Antiquity*. Rev. ed. Edited by Ivan Van Sertima. New Brunswick: Transaction Press, 1987.
- Sanchez, Sonia. "Nefertiti: Queen on a Sacred Mission" *Black Women in Antiquity*. Rev. ed. Edited by Ivan Van Sertima. New Brunswick: Transaction Press, 1987.
- Scheidel, Walter. "The Most Silent Women of Greece and Rome: Rural Labour and Women's Life in the Ancient World (I)." *Greece & Rome*, vol. 42, no. 2, [Classical Association, Cambridge University Press], 1995, pp. 202–17, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/643231>
- Yarbough, Camille. "Female Style and Beauty in Ancient Africa." *Black Women in Antiquity*. Rev. ed. Edited by Ivan Van Sertima. New Brunswick: Transaction Press, 1987.

## **Artemisia Gentileschi from Baroque to Neo-Baroque: Reimagining Female Biblical Figures and the Female Gaze**

By Maya Ramirez

Artemisia Gentileschi (1593-1653) has redefined feminism in art through her participation in creating art pieces within an artistic era defined by momentary interpretations of classical stories. This led to the reimagining of female biblical characters, a feat which has allowed Artemisia to gain popularity in the modern day. Artemisia Gentileschi, despite being confined within a society and professional field dominated by men, was able to define the female gaze through her art. It is typical to find biblical stories in Western paintings, however, the vast majority are created by men, for the expression of male voyeuristic desires. Gentileschi encountered these common interpretations through her iterations of classic figures, like Susanna, Judith, and Mary Magdalene. These figures took on strong roles as heroic, virtuous, and capable women. Gentileschi's reimagining of historical figures is vastly different from the same narratives produced by her male counterparts, like Caravaggio (1571-1610), an incredibly respected male painter during the Baroque period in Italy. Besides being a fundamental part of the artistic scene in Italy, Gentileschi also heavily participated in female activism which became prominent due to female authors like Lucrezia Marinella. Through Gentileschi's art, it is evident that her motive to make art pieces for the consumption and gaze of women has allowed her to become a feminist icon of the modern day. Her art still holds relevance, although being centuries-old, due to the ways it can relate to female voyeurism, a topic frequently discussed in film and media studies. Gentileschi's art and life can provide a clear and concise view of what constitutes the female gaze in art, and how female-dominated biblical narratives tie

into these interpretations.

Gentileschi holds relevance in a variety of feminist movements, which has caused controversial and problematic scholarship to be attached to her name. It is important to recognize that the feminist movement at the time did not define themselves as feminists, but rather were authors of their own activist ideals. Gentileschi cannot be placed in a frame of first or second wave feminism, instead she fits into modern feminist ideals by illuminating figures of power and action within her art. Since feminism was undefined in the 17th century, Gentileschi instead participated in an era where gender relations and perceptions of women were evolving.

In the Neo-Baroque or modern day, feminism has become focused on the empowerment of women, a mold which Artemisia has proved useful in filling. Within the popularity of fourth wave feminism, Artemisia has become a prominent figure, primarily due to the sexual violence she endured at a young age. The fictionalization and romanticization of Gentileschi's life are not only common in the media, but are also frequently exhibited in academic writings. This has created a problematic marking on Gentileschi's life and image as she is commonly defined by her rape case. The use of her past to justify her painting's prolific narratives has created a paradoxical effect on the understanding of her life as an artist and activist. Instead, it is imperative to view Gentileschi's art pieces not as reflections of sexual violence, but testaments to her activism, artistic talent and advanced perceptions of spectatorship and gender. Artemisia Gentileschi's art and transformation into a feminist figure of the modern-day illuminate her impact on spectatorship and gender in art. This is evident through her depictions of strong females in biblical stories and in the comparison of her artworks to

other male artists of the time. By analyzing the reinstating of power to female bodies in art, and Gentileschi's problematic role in Western feminism, Gentileschi is able to ameliorate the definition of what constitutes the female gaze and redefine modern understandings of feminism and art.

### **Artemisia Gentileschi; Feminism Through Painting**

Artemisia Gentileschi was born in Rome on July 8, 1593. Her father Orazio Gentileschi was a classically trained painter who studied under and alongside Tassi and Caravaggio.<sup>1</sup> Growing up, Artemisia was the legal property of her father, as were all the women born in Italy at this time due to the perception that women were weaker, and more unstable than men.<sup>2</sup> The understanding that women were not as virtuous as men due to biblical references like Adam and Eve allowed men to dominate an incredibly patriarchal system.<sup>3</sup> This was also very common in the writings of male authors like Guiseppe Passi, who wrote *The Defects of Women* to perpetuate misogynistic ideas regarding the lack of morality women have.<sup>4</sup> Feminist authors like Lucrezia Marinella fervently fought against narratives outlined by male authors like Passi. During this turbulent time of women being frequently confined to the regulations of male domination, Gentileschi was subject to increasing amounts of attention due to her and her father's 1612 court case against Agostino Tassi who was accused of raping Gentileschi in his studio.<sup>5</sup> This case further sustained the ideas of Gentileschi being property and lacking her own sense of independence. Despite this, Artemisia sought to restore her image and when Tassi proposed

---

<sup>1</sup> "Gentileschi, Artemisia (c. 1597 - c. 1652)." In *The Penguin Biographical Dictionary of Women*, edited by Market House Books Ltd.. Penguin, 1998.

<sup>2</sup> Mary D, Garrad. *Artemisia Gentileschi and Feminism in Early Modern Europe*. London: Reaktion Books, 2020.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

<sup>5</sup> "Gentileschi, Artemisia (c. 1597 - c. 1652)." In *The Penguin Biographical Dictionary of Women*, edited by Market House Books Ltd.. Penguin, 1998.

marriage she accepted the sexual relationship. Under oath, Artemisia claimed Tassi forced sexual acts onto her and even underwent physical examinations as evidence.<sup>6</sup> Tassi's poor reputation, along with multiple scandals already attached to his name like the disappearance of his wife, resulted in him being charged for the case. Despite being a subject of controversy and lacking a female artistic group, Gentileschi began defining her own artistic style. Instead of following the form of those her and her father studied under, Artemisia sought to redefine female biblical narratives. Soon after the case, she married Pierantonio Stiattesi, in order to recover her family's reputation.<sup>7</sup> These forms of gender inequality and societal injustices which became all too real for Artemisia Gentileschi and many other women began taking center stage socially.

In response to oppressing actions, outspoken female writers in the 17th century began expressing their own opinions on gender roles. Understanding the gender relation undertones during the time of Gentileschi's life makes her involvement in the movement increasingly evident, and also illuminates the kind of female activism Gentileschi is a part of in the modern day. It is important to remember that forms of activism in the 17th century were very different from modern day feminism. In truth, there was no such movement in the Italian Baroque period, instead, female activism began through the rewriting of male dominated gender narratives. Lucrezia Marinella, author of *Exhortations to Women and Others if They Please*, outlines the ideals which were prevalent within Italy, especially Venice. In her book, Marinella examines the ideas of women in secrecy and solitude, various societal apparatus of control, gender differences and God. Women's societal roles are heavily outlined through Marinella's portion on domestic confines as well as the

---

<sup>6</sup> Garrard, Mary D. *Artemisia Gentileschi and Feminism in Early Modern Europe*. London: Reaktion Books, 2020, 24.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, 25

differences between men and women;

“Therefore we maintain that women were kept within domestic walls not by men’s evil desire to dominate them or by some other external force, but by God and Nature....God, who built the universe with wisdom and providence, gave natural and different tasks to the male and the female. He knew that if they were assigned the same task, they would not achieve a perfect life.<sup>8</sup>”

Marinella’s interpretations of gender roles did not fight against the injustices which occurred towards women, and had an increasingly passive approach to the preservation of the women's role in society. Marinella still maintained her female activist position through her writing of how crucial women were to the functioning of their society, when male perceptions of women were misogynistic and damaging. Instead, Marinella focused on preserving the virtuous roles women played in domestic settings through her writing to counter the ideas that women did not have godly values, and did not play crucial parts in the functioning of society. This is also evident in her passage regarding women's time in the home;

“It is inside the home that the results of their activity must be witnessed, and here also that their reputations, which are based in preserving wealth with prudence and wisdom and without complaint, must be kept. They must consider that had God, the Great Master, formed men and women of equal physical strength such that both were capable of traveling and conducting

---

<sup>8</sup> Marinella, Lucrezia. *Exhortations to Women and to Others if They Please*, (1645), ed. And trans. Laura Benedetti (Toronto, 2012), 51

business and neither ruled over wealth and acquisition all gain would be in vain...while men were granted strength and vigor, that they might make their household happy and prosperous with their toil and with women's help, prudence and skills.<sup>9</sup>

This passage can easily characterize the kinds of ideals of the time; women played crucial roles in society no matter their domestic confines. Despite these ideas being thought of as sexist in the modern lens, Artemisia Gentileschi was a part of these perceptions in a new way. In the reinventing of female biblical characters, Gentileschi expressed that women were not only prominent and crucial to domestic areas of life, but were also professionals who affected all aspects of society. Gentileschi's female dominated narratives created a new discourse within this movement, one regarding female power and outlining women outside of the home. Gentileschi's women broke the typical confines of female activism within Italian 17th century society, and began to redefine the portrayal of female heroes and bodies through the female perspective.

When speaking on feminism there are many subcategories which arise. As expressed by Marinella, the Baroque time in Italy was not forgiving towards women's independence or the building of a respectable reputation. Female activists like Marinella were looking at redefining the current perceptions of their roles in society. Gentileschi's image within the modern day however, has been used to further understand women's ability to change the narrative and examine injustices. One way Gentileschi is able to do this is through her paintings' ability to exhibit the female gaze. The paintings' narratives are tailored to the pleasures and understandings of women, creating an empowering space for the character and viewer.

---

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 52

The female gaze is a topic frequented by feminist film scholars, however, the ideas of gender and the gaze are prevalent in painting as well. Voyeurism, or the pleasure that comes from looking, has been the root of many of the visual arts we have today. The body of woman has remained a common topic as the pleasure of looking in an erotic way has led to the formation of new spaces and conversations in how viewers consume art. The possession of women through the gaze is an idea analyzed by Mary Ann Doane, a feminist film scholar and author of *Femmes Fatales: Feminism, Film Theory, Psychoanalysis*. Within her book Doane not only deconstructs film theory as well as the epistemology of the gaze, but also analyzes the roots of voyeurism and gender. The accessibility of women as well as the sexualization of women's bodies creates a trope which is easily enjoyed and digestible to male audiences. This ties into the apparatus which positions the spectator on the side of illusionary identification.<sup>10</sup> The identification mentioned is the separation between subject and viewer, corresponding with voyeuristic practices. These forms of looking affected the art world greatly, even if the modes of recognizing them were not attainable to those at the time. The sexualization of female figures, especially biblical characters, was incredibly common within Western art. Women's bodies were utilized for erotic consumption within the paintings and enjoyed by male viewers as well. Art produced to satisfy the male gaze was revered; women who looked away from their assailants, who tempted the men with non-confrontational looks were favored among male audiences and art critics. The accessibility and inaccessibility of women allowed men to dismiss the representations of danger while simultaneously presenting pleasure. This is mentioned by Doane as the woman trope, “He was, he dresses this castrated woman. He was, he dreaded this castrating

---

<sup>10</sup> Mary Ann, Doane. *Femmes Fatales: Feminism, Film Theory and Psychoanalysis*. New York: Routledge, 1992, 82.

woman. He was, he loved this affirming woman.”<sup>11</sup> The psychoanalytical forms of “looking” in relation to gender presents the discourse of the threats women have in their basic form.

At the time, women in paintings were accepted as erotic figures, and critiqued if they were characters with power. Gentileschi participated in the shifting of these commonly consumed women, and reinvented female characters who were dissociated with their stories of action, and more commonly equated to figures of pleasure. This is attainable in Gentileschi’s *Self Portrait as the Allegory of Painting* (1638-39).



Fig. 1 *Allegory of Painting*

Cesare Ripa, an Italian iconographer, claimed that the Allegory of Painting could be characterized by a woman, whose mouth was tied, wearing a heavy and large necklace of a face hanging from her neck, with a palette and brush. This bound and shackled

---

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 61

female character created by Ripa was rebutted by Gentileschi's own portrait. Within the painting, Gentileschi asserts herself as an active professional, her face uncovered as she gazes towards the canvas in front of her, focused as she raises the brush to the canvas. Her hair looks unkempt, and strands hang to the side of her face, not affecting her deep concentration. The necklace is a dainty size, and hangs around her neck dangling in front of her arm which holds her palette and brushes. This painting is not only a reinvention of the allegory, but also an ode to the professionalism of women and their active nature in paintings and society.

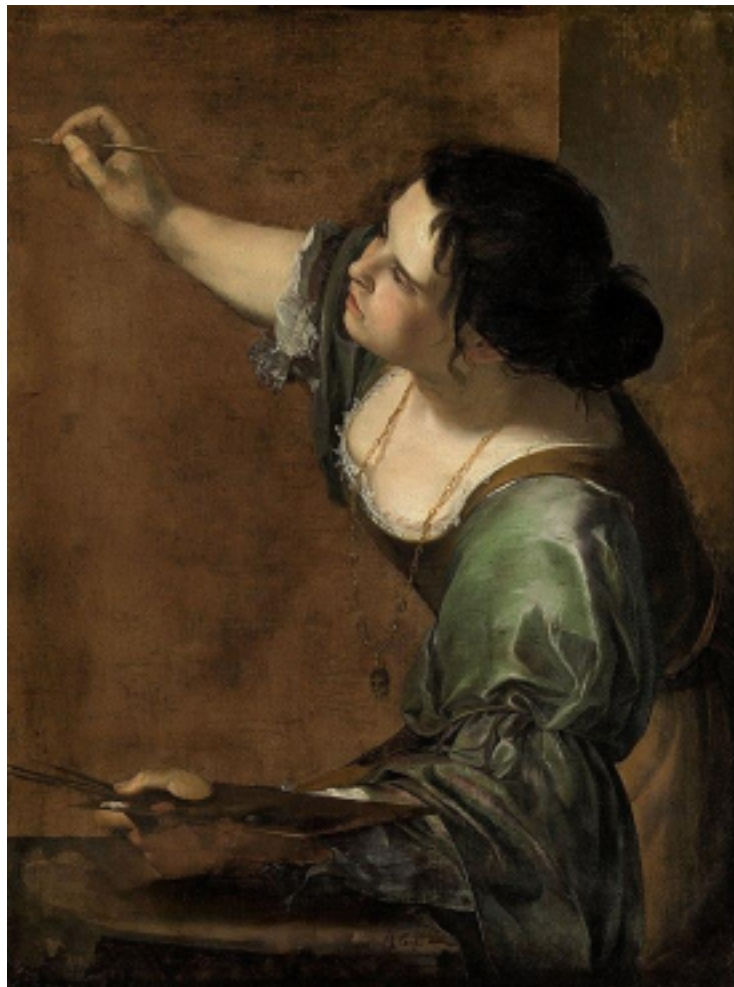


Fig. 2 *Self Portrait as the Allegory of Painting* (1638-39)

Artemisia is able to create substance to the allegory, elevating her identity as an artist while symbolically refuting the sexist behavior of placing women into allegorical confines.<sup>12</sup> By doing this, Artemisia is able to create a depiction of women with power and conviction through a fictive representation. The integration of her body into the piece represents her active participation as well as her psychic integration; although her body may be doing physical work, her mind creates the piece as well.<sup>13</sup> The nobility of artists is also a theme acknowledged by Artemisia through the painting. Even prior to the Renaissance, the status of painters was always in question due to their career being based on physical labor. Artists like Raphael and Michelangelo continuously commented on their importance within their pieces. Similarly, Artemisia claims this elevated status through her portrait, as well as the skill and determination the profession entails.<sup>14</sup> This allows her to transform a sexist narrative into a piece of art that supports her profession and advertises her abilities. Artemisia continues in this assertion of the female as active through the reimagining of female biblical characters.

Biblical stories have been a crucial part of Western art, as depictions of classic historical and religious stories remained prominent in Europe. Even in the salons of France, after Gentileschi's artistic career, history paintings were placed at the top because they were believed to be valued the most due to their inclusion of historical narratives. This is also true throughout a majority of art produced in Italy as large numbers of artists were patronized to create depictions of classical biblical stories, including Susanna and the Elders. The story of Susanna and the Elders follows a married woman who is confronted by

---

<sup>12</sup> Mary D, Garrad. *Artemisia Gentileschi and Feminism in Early Modern Europe*. London: Reaktion Books, 2020, 221.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 224

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 225

two elderly men. The men blackmail her, and demand her to perform sexual acts with them, and if she refuses, they will accuse her of adultery, forcing her to be stoned to death even if she did not commit illegal acts. The story, although incredibly disturbing, was often depicted in sexual and playful ways. This is evident in Tintoretto's depiction of the story in *Susanna and the Elders* (1555).<sup>15</sup>



Fig. 3 *Susanna and the Elders* (1555)

In the center of the painting there is a nude Susanna bathing, while two men peer into her space consuming her body with their gaze. Susanna appears to be gazing at herself in the mirror, admiring herself while the two elderly men stand at each corner of a wall separating her from the public view. This invasion of space and privacy is made to appear seductive, sensual and permitted as she allows their gaze to surpass her own physical boundaries. The fetishization of sexual violence was incredibly common among male painters depictions of

<sup>15</sup> Tintoretto, *Susanna and the Elders*, (1555), (Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna).

the event. This can heavily relate to the ongoing assumption at the time that women were not as virtuous as men, and were more capable of committing sins. Authors like Passi wrote heavily on the subject of women and their ability to commit adultery, while Lucrezia Marinella wrote *The Nobility and Excellence of Women, and the Defects and Vices of Men*, to refute the arguments presented by male authors and artists.<sup>16</sup> The hypocrisy outlined by feminist authors is further amplified by Artemisia's *Susanna and the Elders* (1610). Although Tintoretto's depiction of Susanna was over 50 years prior to Artemisia Gentileschi's interpretation of the story, it can illustrate the change in gender tensions as well as the historical relevance of such perceptions. Artemisia Gentileschi's *Susanna* not only exhibits the female gaze but also the discourses which surround gender and sexuality. Women's seductive capabilities were frequently illuminated in the art produced by men, especially in the 17th century, however, this motif is also prominent within Tintoretto's piece. *Susanna and the Elders* narrative became yet another vehicle for the expression of male voyeuristic desires. Artemisia Gentileschi was only 17 years old when she redefined the male narrative which *Susanna* was confined to.<sup>17</sup> The woman within Gentileschi's painting does not allow her body to be consumed by the gaze of men, as she raises her arms in resistance and turns her head from the men tormenting her. The honest female response to sexual assailants relates to the biblical story itself as *Susanna* refuses the men's blackmail. The narrative which was once dominated by male voyeurism is now shifted to the realistic response of a woman's discomfort.

---

<sup>16</sup> Mary D, Garrad.. *Artemisia Gentileschi and Feminism in Early Modern Europe*. London: Reaktion Books, 2020, 71

<sup>17</sup> Artemisia, Gentileschi, *Susanna and the Elders*, Oil on Canvas, 1610, (Schloss Weißenstein Collection).



Fig. 4 *Susanna and the Elders* (1610)

This is incredibly evident in the details in Susanna's facial and body expressions, her brow is creased and body twisted away from the men. Her being nude, and her attractiveness being evident, makes her seem vulnerable to the viewer and assailants, despite her resistance. One of the other key differences within Gentileschi's painting is the men depicted. Garrad examines the depiction of an old and young man;

“The younger man with thick dark hair, a somewhat dashing figure...hovers uncomfortably close to Susanna, his hand almost touching her hair and fingers.

The elders are typically presented as bearded old men to whom Susanna would not

normally be attracted..But these pictures are essentially male fantasies, a genre in which women invariably welcome men's overtures."<sup>18</sup>

Artemisia is able to portray women in a heightened realistic sense, since sexual attraction is inherent, even in women who say no. Portraying one of the male assailants as young, she is able to amplify Susanna as virtuous and heroic by refusing sexual acts to protect her honor and refusing to succumb to sexual attraction.<sup>19</sup> Artemisia reinvents Susanna as a real woman, one with sexual desires, limitations and virtues. This depiction of Susanna also examines women's sexuality and sexual identity. Visually, the contrast of Susanna's loose curls, and the tightly confined foliage relief coiffure behind her head, further illuminates the social hypocrisy of being a woman.<sup>20</sup> A woman is meant to feel shame for her beauty and sexuality until it is made legitimate by being given to, or taken by, a man.<sup>21</sup>



Fig. 5 *Susanna and the Elders* (1610) detail

<sup>18</sup> Mary D, Garrad. *Artemisia Gentileschi and Feminism in Early Modern Europe*. London: Reaktion Books, 2020, 76

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 76

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 78

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 78

The painting examines the social and ideological confines women's minds and bodies are held within, this is visually expressed by the tight space Susanna is held within as well as the architectural frames behind her. The erotic ways Susanna is typically expressed for male desires is redefined by Artemisia's Susanna, who questions the gender imbalances as well as the discourses which surround a male viewer and female subject.

Voyeurism and the fascination with the consumption of the human form is an idea which dominates spectatorship and the visual intake of art. These ideas are examined by Laura Mulvey in *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, which evaluates the use of female bodies as erotic pauses within artistic narratives. Mulvey examines the different levels women are expressed as; "traditionally, the woman displayed has functioned in two levels: an erotic object for the characters within the screen story, and as erotic object for the spectator within the auditorium, with the shifting tension between the looks on either side of the screen."<sup>22</sup> The idea that women are used as erotic subjects within the art itself and externally is evident in art that is expressed from the male gaze. This was seen in Tintoretto's piece as Susanna is offered for the consumption of the men within the painting, and for the voyeuristic desires of the men looking at the painting. This creates a erotic icon, one which is available for the pleasure of men, while lacking control of the narrative. Gentileschi's Susanna refutes these typical depictions through the action Susanna has within the piece. She does not succumb to the fantasies of the men within the painting or those viewing it, instead she transcends the typical depictions of her as powerless, and instead further insinuates her virtue and ownership over her body and situation, despite her

---

<sup>22</sup> Laura, Mulvey. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*. Eds. Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen. New York: Oxford UP, 1999, 625

vulnerability. Susanna is reimagined as a woman which coincides with feminist ideals, and in many ways surpasses them as the conversation of sexuality, gender, and ideological confines are brought to the surface.

### **Judith: The Breaking of Male Voyeuristic Desires**

The ideas regarding women as passive members of the narrative is also evident in biblical stories which focus on male desires rather than female power. This is tangible in the story of Judith and Holofernes. Judith is a biblical hero, who beheads the man who invades her town, creating havoc and terrorizing citizens. Judith was a clever widow, and through the seduction of Holofernes was able to behead him and end his terrorizing of her town. Despite Judith being a powerful and action driven woman, her figure was also used to continue the perceptions of women as deceitful and erotic seductresses whom endanger men.<sup>23</sup> The story is one which should exhibit a driven, powerful and heroic female, as she seeks out to defend her town and people. However, male artistic depictions interpret the story as one with erotic connotations due to Judith's entry into Holofernes bedroom. Not only does this create visual pleasure but by eroticizing Judith, it removes her threatening and powerful capabilities, making it more digestible and pleasurable to male viewers. This is incredibly evident in Donatello's bronze sculpture, *Judith and Holofernes (1455)*.<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>23</sup> Mary D, Garrad. *Artemisia Gentileschi and Feminism in Early Modern Europe*. London: Reaktion Books, 2020, 128

<sup>24</sup> Donatello, *Judith and Holofernes*, 1455, Bronze, (Palazzo Vecchio, Florence, Italy).



Fig. 6 *Judith and Holofernes* (1455)

Donatello's depiction of Judith emphasises her as a seductress, and temptress, although exhibiting masculine aspects. Despite Judith still holding power as she yields a knife above Holofernes head, women in Italy during the time did not have the same kind of social and political conviction as the Judith depicted by Donatello. Instead, the statue stood as a reminder of women's power, and the need for men to control it.<sup>25</sup> Besides portrayals of Judith being sexualized, she was also made to look disgusted and passive to the situation; this is evident in Caravaggio's interpretation of the story. Caravaggio's *Judith Beheading Holofernes* (1589-99), made the violent image more tame as Judith stood to the side of the painting, appearing to be young and distressed by the situation.<sup>26</sup> This is evident through her

<sup>25</sup> Mary D, Garrad. *Artemisia Gentileschi and Feminism in Early Modern Europe*. London: Reaktion Books, 2020, 137

<sup>26</sup> Caravaggio, *Judith Beheading Holofernes*, Oil on Canvas, 1598-1599, (Palazzo Barberini).

facial expressions of disgust as well as her detached stance within the scene. Holofernes remains in the center of the painting, while Judith and her handmaid take a passive stance to the situation.



Fig. 7 *Judith Beheading Holofernes* (1589-99)

The blood spills from Holofernes neck in the opposite direction of the woman within the scene, as Judith tilts his head upward. Judith's disgusted expression and static stance create a passive environment to an active scene. Depictions like this further perpetuate the idea that female power is non-threatening since it is dominated in a male space. Artemisia Gentileschi however, redefined Judith and her handmaid Abra and made them active, powerful, and in control of the narrative in her painting *Judith Slaying Holofernes* (1612-13). Gentileschi's elucidation of the scene shifts the narrative of Judith from a temptress to a religious defender.<sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup> Mary D, Garrad. *Artemisia Gentileschi and Feminism in Early Modern Europe*. London: Reaktion Books, 2020, 139



Fig. 8 *Judith Slaying Holofernes* (1612-1613)

The common trope of the domineering mistress and the sexualization of this theme breaks by the strength expressed by the two biblical figures within Gentileschi's painting. As her handmaid holds down the victim, her sleeves rolled up as blood spews from Holofernes' neck. Both of the women look down, focused on completing the heroic task, there is a dramatic composition as all the characters are central in the piece. Baroque art held the common characteristic of holding momentary qualities, paintings captured fictional

moments in a way which allowed viewers to savor a glimpse inside a longer story. Gentileschi's *Judith Slaying Holofernes* continues these Baroque characteristics while adding energy, action, and a intriguing juxtaposition between the texture of the sheet, the blood staining the bed and the lack of life within Holofernes face compared to the movement and determination of the women who are slaying him. The feminist ideals expressed within the painting are incredibly evident, the illustration of women as heroic, determined, active, and powerful are all portrayed visually and contextually. However, the painting has often been equated to being a violent piece in relation to her rape. This understanding of the painting is immensely problematic, Garrad speaks on these misconceptions;

“The relationship of this violent image to the artist’s experience of rape has been much discussed...It is important to remember that this is art, not psychotherapy. The pictorial revenge that Artemisia took on her rapist was not a defensive psychological reaction by a female victim, but might better be understood as poetic justice— a playful, imaginative expression of retribution she was due.”<sup>28</sup>

The mention of her rape in relation to her art is something which has become incredibly common within scholarship. These mislead conclusions have hurt Gentileschi’s redefining of female figures, and injured her image through the perpetuation of the romanticizing of sexual violence. This has not only left a controversial marking on Gentileschi’s art, but has also lead to the fictionalization and romanticization of Gentileschis trauma and early life, resulting in a harmful portrayal of her as an artist, feminist and, woman.

---

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 140

### **A Woman of the Neo-Baroque: Artemisia Gentileschi's Influence in the Modern World**

Although Gentileschi's rise to being a respected artist happened centuries ago, she has become a unique figure within the modern world, or Neo-Baroque. The Neo-Baroque is analyzed by Angela Ndalians in *From Neo-Baroque to Neo-Baroques?* The Baroque art movement which began in the 17th century revolved around the depictions of moments—a dramatic event attainable to audiences forever. Painters were able to play with perceptions of spectatorship through the momentary appeal of Baroque paintings. In a time of mass media, dramatic displays, and digital desires, this age makes such moments attainable and evident at every corner. The connection between this and the Baroque time period which Gentileschi was involved in is made evident by Ndalians;

“I have explored elsewhere the ‘Baroque’ as a transhistorical state that extends beyond the historical confines of the seventeenth century. Most evident in contemporary entertainment—which is the product of conglomerate industries with multi-media interests and which is now an integral part of contemporary urban life—the Neo-Baroque combines the visual, auditory and textual in ways that parallel the dynamism of seventeenth century Baroque form.”<sup>29</sup>

The Neo-Baroque time period in many ways mirrors the visual representations expressed by 17th century artists. As mentioned by Ndalians, the modern world is now dominated by media interests as well as the visual consumption of technology and images. The kind of momentary appeal held by paintings from the Baroque period mirror the commercials which dance across billboards in Time Square. Voyeuristic desires have a strong hold, as much of

---

<sup>29</sup> Angela Ndalians. "From Neo-Baroque to Neo-Baroques?" *Revista Canadiense De Estudios Hispánicos* 33, no. 1 (2008): 267.

the entertainment is through screens.. Despite there being a large transformation between the Baroque and Neo-Baroque, Gentileschi is heavily involved in both of these movements. Besides the obvious artistic parallels, her involvement is in part due to her image being utilized as part of the ‘Me Too’ movement, which strives to outline the amount of women who have experienced sexual violence. This is part of the newest wave of feminism, which uses the digital age to empower women's bodies, liberties and abilities to not only participate heavily in society, but demand justice for acts of sexual violence. Although feminist sentiments today are starkly different than the ones held in 17th century Europe, one cannot ostracize the visual relevance held within Artemisia's paintings to newly formed feminist movements. The force, intensity and energy expressed by Gentileschi's women heavily align with modern feminism, which has proved itself to be a new stage that highlights Artemisia's relevance to feminist ideals.

In the early 2000's Gentileschi took on a new era of fame, and is even titled an “It Girl” by the New York Times in 2002.<sup>30</sup> Artemisia's new 21st century image nearly transcended the historical figure mold she once fit into, instead Artemisia became integrated in fictional stories, a movement called *Kunstlerroman*. *Kunstlerroman* is an ‘artist novel.’ or a fictional story based around the life and development of an artist. Tina Olsen Lent outlines the part Artemisia has in *"My Heart Belongs to Daddy": The Fictionalization of Baroque Artist Artemisia Gentileschi in Contemporary Film and Novels*. The Artemisia fictions are brought by women who are involved in the post-modern world, allowing these women to re-write the typical narratives surrounding female figures.<sup>31</sup> Despite the *Kunstlerroman*

---

<sup>30</sup> Tina, Olsen Lent. ""My Heart Belongs to Daddy": The Fictionalization of Baroque Artist Artemisia Gentileschi in Contemporary Film and Novels." *Literature/Film Quarterly* 34, no. 3 (2006): 212.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, 213

focusing more on male artists like Van Gogh, Vermeer and Michelangelo, Artemisia Gentileschi proved an ideal historical figure for these monographs. This is partly due to her incredibly sexualized life story regarding her rape trial with Agostino Tassi.<sup>32</sup> This allowed the authors of these stories to romanticize her sexuality, creativity and life as an artist, creating a focus on her personal love life to define her fame. In 1947, the first fictionalized account of Artemisia was produced, with others recently produced in the early 2000's. These fictional stories would place Artemisia in the context of her rape case against Tassi, her rumored love interests and Orazio's involvement in her life. The stories reiterate the deep control the men in Artemisia's life had over her public image and artistic freedoms. As these stories developed, they modernized alongside the rise of a newer feminist movement looking towards the empowerment of women. However, the sexualizing of her biography is incredibly evident in these fictional written accounts, and even within scholarship.

Inevitably, one can find a great deal of scholarship surrounding the personal life of Artemisia Gentileschi. Despite this, there is still an ongoing search for more information on her life besides the documents from her case. The attachment of an artist's life to the art they created is not uncommon. Similarly to Vincent Van Gogh, who cut off his ear and created a self portrait of the account, paintings are in many ways reflections of the artist, or time period they resided in. Separating art from artists has been an age old debate, yet it is inevitable to tie in historical events to an artist's name. Artemisia does not escape from these connections between her rape case and art. It is nearly impossible to find a single article regarding Gentileschi's art without her rape being attached to it. In the New York Times article *Artemisia: Her Passion was Painting Above all Else*, Gentileschi's ability as a

---

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, 214

woman, and artist is in a problematic light. The article begins; “Artemisia Gentileschi suffered greatly in her life -- after being raped she endured ...”<sup>33</sup> Introductions of Artemisia rely on the sexual violence in her early life to justify the embodiment of a ‘strong female artist.’ Although, the kinds of patriarchal injustices are evident through Gentileschi’s trial, it is unfair to her image, and her biblical figures to equate to reactionary depictions due to the sexual violence she was victim to. Articles, and scholarship which begin with these assumptions, participate in a problematic trope which haunts Artemisia’s image, paintings and female figures—the Valiant Heroine. Her valiance however, comes from the sexual violence she experienced, defining her artistry and overtaking her female driven narratives as reflections of her rape case. As mentioned by The New York Times in their article *Blood, Passion and Captivity: Gentileschi’s Life is in her Paintings*, “How then can we look at the defiant strength of Gentileschi’s paintings without thinking of what she endured?”<sup>34</sup> This question which has overtaken Artemisia’s image and paintings is ongoing in the Neo-Baroque. The painting which falls most frequently to these skewed perceptions outlined by the article is *Judith Slaying Holofernes (1612-1613)*. For obvious visual reasons, many have equated it to being Artemisia’s artistic way of avenging herself from her past experiences with Tassi. These connections remove the narrative which incorporates Artemisia's artistic prowess, and instead replace it with assumptions based on her past. Narratives like these are hard to break. It is inherent to want to find a historical explanation for any revolutionary act, in this case, placing female characters in center stage. This quite

---

<sup>33</sup> Roderick Conway Morris, “Artemisia: Her Passion Was Painting Above All Else,” The New York Times (The New York Times, November 18, 2011)..

<sup>34</sup> Eleanor Nairne, “Blood, Passion and Captivity: Gentileschi's Life Is in Her Paintings,” The New York Times (The New York Times, October 5, 2020),

literally took the art world by storm, and continues to create debates. So, how can one separate her case from her artistic endeavours? With a plethora of fictional narratives, Western feminist ideals and controversial scholarship attached to Artemisia's name and art, it is important to look at her pieces from a purely analytical standpoint. Comparative analysis between Artemisia and other male painters of the area and time will illuminate the kinds of modern feminist ideals Artemisia is able to achieve, without the involvement of her rape case.

#### **Fourth Wave Feminism in Visual Analysis: What is Lost Through the Lens of Sexual Violence**

As previously mentioned, Artemisia's image is heavily involved in fourth wave feminism, specifically the Me Too movement. Despite the movement's call to action, the incorporation of a figure who did not identify as feminist has resulted in misleading assumptions of Gentileschi's role in the 17th century. Despite Gentileschi holding obvious feminist ideals, it is important to remember that she looked towards the empowerment of biblical figures to express ideas of female empowerment. This is evident in her portrayal of Mary Magdalene and Musicians. Artemisia's *Self Portrait as a Lute Player (1615)*, allows her to situate herself in a roleplaying form, playing with her personal identity while simultaneously commenting on the fictitious self.<sup>35</sup> This was a form of commentary on a woman's overlapping identity, of one's performative persona or 'true' self. Besides musicians depicted. By Artemisia holding relevance in terms of identity, and empowerment, the dress, stance and representation of the lute player goes back to typical depictions of female gypsies, sybils and even Michelangelo. The headdress worn by the lute player

---

<sup>35</sup> Mary D, Garrad. *Artemisia Gentileschi and Feminism in Early Modern Europe*. London: Reaktion Books, 2020, 97.

mirrors the portrait of Michelangelo, from 1520.<sup>36</sup> The connotations held by the painting express ideas of female identity, as well as artistic status. The incorporation of a variety of female experiences and identities provides ideological depth to the painting.<sup>37</sup>



Fig. 9 *Self Portrait as a Lute Player*

The form in which the lute player takes, displays a visual performance, with the shine of the blue fabric, dramatic chiaroscuro and a captivating stare towards viewers. Her hands appear to be on the brink of playing a chord, while hard shadows and highlights frame her face and breasts. Garrad mentions the correlation of this image to Gentileschi's personal

<sup>36</sup> Mary D, Garrad. *Artemisia Gentileschi and Feminism in Early Modern Europe*. London: Reaktion Books, 2020, 98.

<sup>37</sup> Artemisia Gentileschi, *Self Portrait as a Lute Player*, 1615, oil on canvas.

life; “Artemisia might have reasoned that it was safe to present a sexualized self-image—a dangerous choice for a woman who had been sexually branded by others...After all, if you present yourself in multiple roles, you can’t be pinned down to any one of them.”<sup>38</sup> The nuances within the portrait are lost if it is simply equated as a reinvention of oneself due to previous sexual violence. Artemisia’s dimensionality is expressed through the visual analysis of her paintings, these understandings are lost if her art is equated as reactions to the sexual violence she endured. Instead, Artemisia’s paintings provoke discourses of gender, identity, sexuality and art.

The ideas presented by her Lute Player are also tangible within her Mary Magdalenes. One of Gentileschi’s most infamous Magdalenes is her *Mary Magdalene in Ecstasy* (1623).

<sup>39</sup> Mary Magdalene is a female biblical figure outlined frequently in European art. Usually she is penitent, which can be seen in Caravaggio's *Penitent Magdalene* (1594-1595).<sup>40</sup>



Fig. 10 *Penitent Magdalene*

<sup>38</sup> Mary D, Garrad. *Artemisia Gentileschi and Feminism in Early Modern Europe*. London: Reaktion Books, 2020, 108.

<sup>39</sup> Artemisia, Gentileschi, *Mary Magdalene in Ecstasy*, Oil on Canvas, 1623, (private European Collection).

<sup>40</sup> Caravaggio, *Penitent Magdalene*, Oil on Canvas, 1594-1595, (Doria Pamphilj Gallery, Rome)

Caravaggio's Magdalene sits with her head tilted downward, only exposing her profile to the viewer. This kind of slow, passive and withdrawn depiction of Mary Magdalene was common during this time. However, Gentileschi's *Mary Magdalene in Ecstasy* (1623) shows the female figure in full action, she is passionate and in movement, becoming an active figure against a deep shadowed background. Similar to Gentileschi, Mary Magdalene is a figure very defined by her sexualized past, making many depictions of her being passive more digestible to viewers.



Fig. 11 *Mary Magdalene in Ecstasy* (1623)

This painting not only breaks the bonds which Mary Magdalene is commonly held to in narrative, but also in visual depictions. There is no ointment jar, skull or cross, symbols

commonly associated with the biblical figure.<sup>41</sup> This painting instead focuses on her, as a figure in herself, sitting alone in the dark, the positioning of her body illuminating a culmination of emotions; sadness, pleasure and bliss. It is true that slivers of Gentileschi are viewable within her depictions, more so however on the various roles, figures, and women she could empower as to outline her fictive self in a daring and creative form. It is evident that Gentileschi's pieces hold a plethora of visual conversations, ones which pertain to gender, identity and empowerment. Analysis which relies on a mixture of visual and contextual findings strengthens the understanding of Gentileschi through her characters and figures. By equating Gentileschi's paintings as by-products of her struggle with sexual violence, it continues the narrative of women being reactionary beings, a sexist ideal held by many during the 17th century, and continues into the modern day. If one is able to understand Gentileschi's paintings through the figures she portrays, Artemisia is able to become a much more dimensional and tangible figure, one who reinvented female characters, and began discussions of gender and voyeurism. Equating Artemisia's life and paintings as reactionary responses to her rape trial continues the Valiant Heroine trope, making her image and historical relevance a supplementation to her legacy of sexual violence. Understanding Gentileschi's talent, strength and innovation through her reimagining of biblical characters allows her legacy to transcend the bounds of a court case or Western feminism, but presents a new way of understanding gender and the power of voyeurism in the development of feminist ideals.

Artemisia grew in the public eye from a young age due to the sexual violence she endured, and as she became defined by a rape trial and the men in her life, she was able to

---

<sup>41</sup> Mary D. Garrad, *Artemisia Gentileschi and Feminism in Early Modern Europe*. London: Reaktion Books, 2020, 122.

break the visual bonds of the male gaze, through the reinvention of female figures.

Gentileschi can provide a clear idea of what constitutes the female gaze in art. Yes, she was one woman, but through a comparative analysis of her paintings, one can see how she is able to depict narratives that express female narratives and bodies in a space that is not dominated by eroticism and male voyeurism. Into the Neo-Baroque, Artemisia continues being defined by her young life, creating a problematic legacy which attaches to her paintings and image. The use of her trauma to justify her beliefs and strong female characters, is a skewed and controversial narrative. Situating Artemisia's paintings in a comparative analysis however, not only illustrates feminist ideals but also illuminates Artemisia's deep understanding of spectatorship and gender.

## Bibliography

- Caravaggio, *Judith Beheading Holofernes*, Oil on Canvas, 1598-1599, (Palazzo Barberini).
- Doane, Mary Ann. *Femmes Fatales: Feminism, Film Theory and Psychoanalysis*. New York: Routledge, 1992.
- Donatello, Judith and Holofernes, 1455, Bronze, (Palazzo Vecchio, Florence, Italy).
- Garrard, Mary D. *Artemisia Gentileschi and Feminism in Early Modern Europe*. London: Reaktion Books, 2020.
- Gentileschi, Artemisia, *Judith Slaying Holofernes*, Oil on Canvas, 1612-1613, (Museo e Real Bosco di Capodimonte).
- Gentileschi, Artemisia, *Mary Magdalene in Ecstasy*, Oil on Canvas, 1623, (private European Collection).
- Gentileschi, Artemisia *Self Portrait as a Lute Player*, oil on canvas, 1615, (Wadsworth Atheneum).
- Gentileschi, Artemisia, *Self-Portrait as the Allegory of Painting*, Oil on Canvas, 1638-1639, (Cumberland Gallery).
- Gentileschi, Artemisia, *Susanna and the Elders*, Oil on Canvas, 1610, (Schloss Weißenstein Collection).
- Lent, Tina Olsin. "'My Heart Belongs to Daddy': The Fictionalization of Baroque Artist Artemisia Gentileschi in Contemporary Film and Novels." *Literature/Film Quarterly* 34, no. 3 (2006): 212-18. Accessed October 21, 2020. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43798910>.
- Lucrezia Marinella, *Exhortations to Women and to Others if They Please*, (1645), ed. And trans. Laura Benedetti (Toronto, 2012).
- Morris, Roderick Conway. "Artemisia: Her Passion Was Painting Above All Else." *The New York Times*. The New York Times, November 18, 2011. <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/19/arts/19iht-Conway19.html>.
- Mulvey, Laura. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*. Eds. Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen. New York: Oxford UP, 1999: 833-44.
- Nairne, Eleanor. "Blood, Passion and Captivity: Gentileschi's Life Is in Her Paintings." *The New York Times*. The New York Times, October 5, 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/05/arts/artemisia-gentileschi-national-gallery.html>.
- NDALIANIS, ANGELA. "From Neo-Baroque to Neo-Baroques?" *Revista Canadiense De Estudios Hispánicos* 33, no. 1 (2008): 265-80. Accessed October 21, 2020. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27764254>.
- Tintoretto, *Susanna and the Elders*, (1555), (Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna).

## Music Heals: Lyrical Consciousness, Volume 1

By Irene Gonzalez<sup>1</sup>

1. Taboo, “Stand Up/Stand N Rock,” *Single*, 5:13
2. Lyla June “All Nations Rise,” *The People’s Knowledge*, 4:19
3. Quinto Sol, “Tierra Olvidada,” *Single*, 8:49
4. La Santa Cecilia, “ICE El Hielo,” *Treinta Días*, 4:30
5. Tupac, “Keep ya head up,” *Strictly 4 My N.I.G.G.A.Z...*, 4:24

### Introduction

*Lyrical Consciousness: Volume 1* is a mixtape that focuses on themes of resistance and love in communities of color. Through these topics, this collection of songs strives to provide a reflection on the struggles that Black, Indigenous, and other people of color (BIPOC) have undergone in the journey for freedom and self-determination. Music has always played a crucial role in the way that BIPOC communities process complex issues of race, class, and gender. Music has long been used as a form of healing, resistance, and unification. Throughout post-colonial times, music has served as a mechanism to oppose colonial structures and systems. Racism is still deeply embedded in systems and structures in the United States. People of color are negatively impacted by such institutions as for profit prisons, the police state, and many of the other remnants of settler colonialism that remain in place to this day.

This paper argues that music has been used as a tool of resistance, and analyzes the messages that are conveyed by the artists highlighted in this mixtape. This collection of songs

---

<sup>1</sup> The author, being also an editor, recused themselves from the editing process regarding this article. It received no special treatment and was required to conform to all standard requirements.

provides a unique perspective on how marginalized communities maneuver through society. Music can connect people to issues such as settler colonialism, environmental injustice, immigration policy, and the criminal justice system in the United States. This essay will examine music from select artists that deliver messages about cultural identity and social justice. It will investigate the messages these artists communicate in their music and how it reflects the struggles of their own communities. Through music, one can build a deep connection to these topics, both in recognizing the historic structures of inequality, and reflecting on how these issues continue to reinforce inequality today.

### **Indigenous Peoples are Sovereign Nations**

When Europeans first touched down in the Americas in the fifteenth century and began colonizing the land, a genocide ensued that eliminated many Native American tribes. Colonization was a very strategic project that worked to erase any bit of native identity and culture.<sup>2</sup> Taking away agency from indigenous peoples is not simply a thing of the past, it is a struggle that native people deal with to this day. American society tends to group Native American people into the category of “minority.” Scholar David E. Wilkins argues in his book, *American Indian Politics and the American Political System*, that Indigenous peoples are different from other ethnic groups in the United States because they are sovereign nations, not minorities. When using the term “minorities” towards indigenous peoples, it disregards the fact that indigenous peoples are the original inhabitants of the Americas.<sup>3</sup> They are what remains of the tribal nations, bands, and pueblos that existed long before the formation of the United States.

---

<sup>2</sup> Gilio-Whitaker, Dina. *As Long As Grass Grows: The Indigenous Fight for Environmental Justice, from Colonization to Standing Rock*. Beacon Press, 2019.

<sup>3</sup> David E. Wilkins and Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark, *American Indian Politics and the American Political System* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018), 38

Treaties are a vital aspect of the political relationship between native people and the United States. Relations between U.S and native nations are complex because “tribal rights are not based on or subject to U.S constitutional law and are therefore not protected by the constitution.”<sup>4</sup> However, under Article 6 of the U.S constitution, it states that “treaties made, or which shall be made, under the Authority of the United States, shall be the supreme Law of the Land; and the Judges in every State shall be bound thereby, any Thing in the Constitution or Laws of any state to the Contrary notwithstanding.”<sup>5</sup> The deals procured between Indigenous people and the United States are therefore should be enforced and protected. Indigenous peoples are the original inhabitants of the Americas; they had been living and taking care of the land long before European settlers initiated their conquests. It is important to set the historical context of the relationship between Native nations and the U.S to understand the complexities of sovereignty, settler colonialism, and environmental injustice.

Environmental racism and injustice are important issues that emerge from settler colonialism. The Energy Transfer Partners Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL), built in 2016 is an oil pipeline that cuts through the unceded territory of the 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty. The Treaty laid out the boundaries of the Great Sioux Reservation that makes up much of present-day South Dakota, west of the Missouri River and the sacred Black Hill and the life-giving Missouri River.<sup>6</sup> In 1874, General George A. Custer led an expedition into the Black Hills. Once gold was found, miners started moving into the Sioux hunting grounds and demanded protection from the U.S army. The United States then coerced a minority of Sioux Chiefs and headmen into signing an agreement in 1876 that ceded the Black Hills along with unceded lands outside the 1868 treaty’s

---

<sup>4</sup> Wilkins and Stark, *American Indian Politics and the American Political System*, 34

<sup>5</sup> “Article VI,” Legal Information Institute (Legal Information Institute), <https://www.law.cornell.edu/constitution/articlevi>.

<sup>6</sup> “Standing Rock Sioux Tribe,” January 11, 2017. <https://www.standingrock.org/content/history>.

permanent reservation.<sup>7</sup> This agreement violated a provision in the 1868 treaty which stated that any future land cession must “be signed by three-fourths of the adult members of the Sioux Nation.” Congress later passed The Agreement of 1877, also known as the Act of February 28, 1877, which removed the Sacred Black Hills region from the Great Sioux Reservation. The United States never obtained the consent of three-fourths of the Sioux which is mandated under Article 12 of the 1868 treaty.<sup>8</sup> Under these grounds, the DAPL infringed on the sovereignty of the Sioux Nation. Furthermore, the risk of an oil spill in these sacred waters puts the water source that the Dakota and Lakota peoples of the Standing Rock Sioux tribe depend on at risk. It is interesting to note that the original route of the pipeline was planned to run through a waterway north of Bismarck, North Dakota, a town inhabited by primarily white people, but the final route went directly under Lake Oahe, which is the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe's main source of drinking water.<sup>9</sup> These measures are an act of environmental racism as the DAPL was rerouted due to political concern expressed by the citizens of Bismarck so that the predominantly white residents would not be affected.

The song “Stand up/Stand N Rock” stands in opposition to the construction of the North Dakota Access Pipeline. It is a song that fights for land that rightfully belongs to the Standing Rock Sioux tribe. The song was a group effort by Taboo of the Black Eyed Peas, and the Magnificent 7, a group of Indigenous artists from across North America. The authenticity of the song is unique as native artists united to make a song as a way to express their right to self-determination. Being able to reclaim and be proud of one’s Indigenous ancestry through music is a form of resistance. The lyrics, “Stand up with the First Nations/A people that been

---

<sup>7</sup> Jeffrey Ostler, and Nick Estes. “The Supreme Law of the Land: Standing Rock and the Dakota Access Pipeline,” University of Minnesota Press, 2019, 14

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. 14

<sup>9</sup> Catherine Thorbecke, “Why a Previously Proposed Route for the Dakota Access Pipeline Was Rejected.” ABC News. ABC News Network, November 3, 2016.

living' here for thousands of years” reinforces the idea of unification of all native tribes across the United States that resist the federal government’s effort to undermine tribal sovereignty.<sup>10</sup> The music video shows real footage of native people rejecting the construction of the pipeline by singing, dancing, and drumming at protests against the construction of the DAPL. This opposition led police officers to respond with violence by blasting Standing Rock protesters with water canons and rubber bullets.<sup>11</sup> The words, “As history is on a sad repeat, is it liberty, or are we just acting free?/As our land depletes from these hands of greed” speak to the injustice that occurred at Standing Rock, and how this injustice fits into a larger story of the injustices that happen over and over again to indigenous peoples around the world.<sup>12</sup> Native people and native lands are vulnerable due to the inherent systems of oppression, and are a prime target for environmental injustice because of the lack of protection in the law. For these reasons, it is critical to have indigenous voices present when conducting discourse in climate and environmental justice and to respect treaties that protect sovereign native land. Standing Rock represents the magnitude of how colonial figures and systems do not respect treaty agreements. The song “Stand up/ Stand N Rock” reflects the feeling among native people that tribal sovereignty has been undermined by the U.S Federal Government. The Lakota phrase “Mni Wiconi,” meaning “Water is Life,” continues to be shouted by the voices of indigenous peoples on the frontlines, fighting to protect the sacred waters of Standing Rock.

### **Warriors of Love**

Lyla June Johnston is an Indigenous public speaker, artist, scholar, and community

---

<sup>10</sup> Taboo “Stand Up / Stand N Rock #NoDAPL” recorded at Jukasa Media Group produced by Printz Board, released December 4, 2016

<sup>11</sup> Sue Skalicky and Monica Davey, “Tension between Police and Standing Rock Protesters Reaches Boiling Point,” *The New York Times* (The New York Times, October 28, 2016),

<sup>12</sup> Taboo “Stand Up / Stand N Rock #NoDAPL”

organizer of Diné (Navajo) and Tsétsêhéstâhese (Cheyenne) descent. Her mission is to empower indigenous youth and promote love through her music. Singing is a form of prayer for many indigenous peoples, as it is for Lyla June. Johnston's song "All Nations Rise" illuminates native resistance through native existence itself. This song was chosen because it presents the harsh realities faced by native people at the hands of colonizers. In her song, Johnston sings, "I remember the days when our prayers were illegal" which is a reference to missionization, in which Native Americans were forced to assimilate to Christianity.<sup>13</sup> This often meant that native people could not speak, sing, worship, or write in their traditional languages. By doing this, the colonial institution of the Mission worked to erase native identity by creating a social hierarchy that subjugated native populations.<sup>14</sup> In the line, "I remember the days when being Indian was lethal," Lyla June addresses the extent to which native identity and pride were considered dangerous and threatening to the colonial order.<sup>15</sup> Being native made someone a target of racialized abuse, and those who resisted colonial regimes, borders, language, and structures were vulnerable to state sanctioned violence. Native women in particular were frequently subjected to rape, murder, and other forms of violence by European military and missionary personnel.<sup>16</sup>

Lyla June's voice delivers the words, "Yeah, we had a rough past but get ready for the sequel."<sup>17</sup> She acknowledges that Indigenous people have faced countless obstacles over the course of history, however, they continue to persist through all of the attacks made against them. She fosters a feeling of unification when she sings "Rise up, all you warriors of love/All you

---

<sup>13</sup> Lyla June "All Nations Rise" The People's Knowledge. released August 22, 1989

<sup>14</sup> Dr. Antonio de la Cova, "16 Racial Classifications of 18th Century Latin America Castas Paintings," Castas racial classifications, accessed November 7, 2021, <https://www.latinamericanstudies.org/race.htm>.

<sup>15</sup> Lyla June "All Nations Rise"

<sup>16</sup> Castañeda, Antonia I. "Chapter 2. Sexual Violence in the Politics and Policies of Conquest: Amerindian Women and the Spanish Conquest of Alta California" In *Sexual Violence in Conflict Zones: From the Ancient World to the Era of Human Rights* edited by Elizabeth D. Heineman, 39-55. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011.

<sup>17</sup> Lyla June "All Nations Rise"

answers to the prayers/Of our ancestors from above.”<sup>18</sup> These lyrics are a call to action for change, resiliency, and strength. The song is unique because it includes a verse in Spanish to honor indigenous people from Central and South America who are divided by arbitrary borders. Indigenous peoples from Latin America are commonly left out of the conversations happening in the United States about colonization, but this song binds *all* native peoples.

### **La Tierra Olvidada**

Quinto Sol is a reggae band from East Los Angeles, California. At its core, Quinto Sol is a Roots Reggae group that experiments with a mixture of Latin influences such as cumbia, rumba, and son. They create and use music as a tool to build awareness of socio-political and economic issues their community faces. They take inspiration from the everyday lives and struggles of indigenous communities. The song “Tierra Olvidada” or ‘Forgotten Land’ is a song about acknowledging the land of one’s ancestors, written by the band’s lead singer Mizraim Leal, also known as “Limon,”.

The song starts with the statement, “My people have been stripped of our core/You have denied us our true historical and cultural identity in hopes that we lose knowledge of self and go savage and turn against one another.”<sup>19</sup> These lyrics represent the resentment colonized people feel at having the knowledge of their ancestral roots stolen from them. As colonization persisted, society shifted to identify geographic areas by their settler names rather than the original name given by the indigenous population that resided on those lands. Quinto Sol voices the words, “How does an Indígena brown brother like me learn Spanish and not know my original tongue, my original tribe, my original culture.”<sup>20</sup> The frustrations of today's native community are reflected in these lyrics. The erasure of native culture by colonial powers forced the assimilation

---

<sup>18</sup> Lyla June “All Nations Rise”

<sup>19</sup> Pazculturayamor, “Quinto sol- Tierra Olvidada,” Youtube ( Youtube, September 16, 2008)

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

of indigenous people, forcing their ancestors to speak the language of their oppressors. These lyrics address the way people in a post-colonial society have been conditioned to forget their ancestral roots. Limon questions: why is it that we learn Spanish and English? Languages forced upon native people by their oppressors.

This question of lost identity is also explored by Gloria Anzaldua in her celebrated book *Borderlands/La Frontera*. Anzaldua uses a metaphor in order to accentuate the feeling of lost cultural identity, saying “the dentist is cleaning out my roots.”<sup>21</sup> She uses the example of a dentist visit to create the image of the calculated erasure of native culture. Due to the forced language conformity put forth by colonial frameworks, Indigenous languages became secondary and obsolete in many cases. However, many Indigenous peoples in the present remain resilient and resist said colonial powers by re-learning their native tongues and expressing themselves through music. This resonates when Quinto Sol says “Conoce tus raíces y viva tu cultura” which translates to ‘recognize your roots and live your culture.’<sup>22</sup> “Tierra Olvidada” reminds listeners that there should be a constant acknowledgment of the fact that nearly everyone in the Americas resides on native land. By acknowledging the Indigenous peoples who first inhabited the land, a conversation can be had about how historic colonial structures continue to affect our society today.

### **Racism in U.S immigration Policy**

Racial anxieties surrounding immigration are deeply ingrained in American policy and law enforcement. La Santa Cecilia’s song “ICE El Hielo” calls on the issues surrounding Immigration Customs Enforcement (ICE), and their treatment of migrants. According to their website, the mission of ICE is supposedly to protect America from cross-border crime and illegal

---

<sup>21</sup> Gloria Anzaldua, *Borderlands: La Frontera*. (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 2012). 74

<sup>22</sup> Pazculturayamor, “Quinto sol- Tierra Olvidada,” Youtube ( Youtube, September 16, 2008)

immigration that threaten national security and public safety. However, statistics show another story. A study done by Pew Research regarding the number of immigrants who have been deported between 2001 and 2018 showed that 60% of the immigrants deported were not convicted of a crime.<sup>23</sup> According to the study, criminal status is based on prior criminal conviction and removals by the U.S Department of Homeland Security. Of the 337,000 immigrants deported in 2018, some 44% had criminal convictions and 56% were not convicted of a crime.<sup>24</sup> A majority of people deported by ICE are not convicted of a crime.

“Crimmigration” is a concept used to describe the combined force of immigration enforcement and law enforcement.<sup>25</sup> An example of this concept in action is Arizona’s SB 1070, the Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhoods Act. SB 1070, is a policy that allows law enforcement officials to stop anyone who looks like an immigrant and ascertain immigration status.<sup>26</sup> This law enables law enforcement to detain and arrest individuals who cannot provide proof of legal status in the United States, making it one of the strictest anti-immigration laws in the country.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, the policy gives law enforcement officials an unprecedented amount of power in enforcing immigration law, enabling them to terrorize communities with no checks.

Laws like SB 1070 target and disproportionately affect communities of color. The message of La Santa Cecilia’s song emphasizes the terror that undocumented members of the Latine community faces at the hands of ICE in their everyday lives. She sings, “el Hielo anda suelto por esas calles/Nunca se sabe cuando nos va tocar” which translates to “ICE is on the

---

<sup>23</sup> “U.S. Deportations of Immigrants Slightly up in 2018.” Pew Research Center. Pew Research Center, August 19, 2020.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Yolanda, Vasquez. "Constructing crimmigration: Latino subordination in a post-racial world." *Immigr. & Nat'lity L. Rev.* 36 (2015): 609.

<sup>26</sup> Alissa R. Ackerman & Rich Furman (2013) The criminalization of immigration and the privatization of the immigration detention: implications for justice, *Contemporary Justice Review*, 16:2, 254

<sup>27</sup> “Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhoods Act of 2010,” Legal Information Institute (Legal Information Institute), accessed November 19, 2021,

streets, we don't know when it will touch us.”<sup>28</sup> Undocumented people often go through their daily lives with the worry that they will be caught in an ICE raid and face deportation. This anxiety can especially be seen in kids affected by this. The lyrics, “Lloran los niños lloran a la salida/Lloran al ver que no llegará mama” or “Kids cry, they cry on the way out/They cry that mom might not come home” capture the feeling of trauma many children face in light of harsh immigration policies— living in fear that their undocumented family members could be deported at any moment.<sup>29</sup> The intensity and violence of a child having to see their own parents be taken by ICE is very traumatizing. ICE confrontations have been known to escalate to violence and demonstrate a pointed disregard of immigrant’s rights and circumstances.

### **Black Voices**

When acknowledging the way music has been used as a tool to confront and resist oppressive structures, it is important to illuminate Black voices and experiences. “Keep Ya Head Up” is a widely known song by Tupac Amaru Shakur. Tupac, also known as “2pac” was an outspoken and highly influential rapper, who died at the age of 25. He was an icon to many people inside and outside the hip-hop community. This song is addressed to Black women, the message being for them to keep their heads up regardless of all the societal factors that hold them down. He starts his first verse with “Some say the blacker the berry, the sweeter the juice/I say the darker the flesh, then the deeper the roots” which highlights the beauty and cultural importance of Black women, who are often overlooked in pop culture.<sup>30</sup> He uses a common metaphoric comparison to the process of ripening fruit, in which the darker the berry is, the

---

<sup>28</sup> La Santa Cecilia “Ice El Hielo” Universal Music Latino y Arju Productions, Inc., Treinta Días 2013

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Tupac Amaru Shakur, “Keep Ya Head Up” recorded 1992 Interscope Records, Track 11, Released October 28, 1993

sweeter it is going to taste. He encourages his community to be proud of who they are and where their ancestral roots lie.

While U.S welfare policies uplift the white middle class, they largely exclude and discriminate against Black families.<sup>31</sup> Whites are more likely to receive welfare than Black families who are widely denied. His song speaks in support of Black women for their strength and perseverance when he says, “I give a holler to my sisters on welfare/Tupac cares, if don't nobody else care.”<sup>32</sup> This sends a message to all working class Black women that their struggles are not made in vain and there are people who empathize with their circumstances.

Communities that are predominantly Black are more policed than white neighborhoods.<sup>33</sup> The constant surveillance of law enforcement affects the lives of young Black men and women by forcing them to live in a constant state of vulnerability and fear, based on people’s perception of the color of their skin. Scholar Ruth Wilson Gilmore defines racism as “the state-sanctioned and/or extra-legal production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerabilities to premature death, in distinct yet densely interconnected political geographies.”<sup>34</sup> Racial projects like residential segregation are deeply connected to the way that communities of color are barred from social mobility, lacking resources, educational opportunities, and affordable housing. Tupac addresses this issue when he says, “We ain't meant to survive, 'cause it's a setup” to emphasize the struggles of people in poverty, living under systems that were built on the oppression of Black people.<sup>35</sup> He openly expresses his frustration at what it means to be a Black man in

---

<sup>31</sup> Marguerite Ward, “How Decades of US Welfare Policies Lifted up the White Middle Class and Largely Excluded Black Americans,” *Business Insider* (Business Insider, August 11, 2020), <https://www.businessinsider.com/welfare-policy-created-white-wealth-largely-leaving-black-americans-behind-2020-8>.

<sup>32</sup>Tupac Amaru Shakur, “Keep Ya Head Up”

<sup>33</sup> Vitale, Alex S. 2017. *The end of policing*.

<sup>34</sup> Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

<sup>35</sup> Tupac Amaru Shakur, “Keep Ya Head Up”

America. He vocalizes how the law and the system work together to perpetuate a cycle of poverty and racial violence against communities of color. Tupac closes his last verse with “I know you're fed up ladies, but keep your head up.”<sup>36</sup> The tone in which he raps this last line is expressed with exasperation and despondency; a reflection of not only what Tupac feels, it is also real history that discontents.

## **Conclusion**

Music is a universal language that all cultures find importance in. Artists have the power to shape the way that youth of color feel. Music can make them feel visible in a society designed to make them feel invisible. This mixtape strives to encourage its listeners to be consciously aware of the historical and real world problems that people of color face and often express through their music. The intention is to demonstrate how artists of color respond to settler colonialism and racial exclusion. It begins by introducing that Native Americans are members of sovereign nations that have a right to self-determination and self-governance. The Standing Rock Pipeline, and the subsequent protests are addressed, highlighting environmental injustices that indigenous people around the world face. The purpose of this mixtape is to uplift independent artists like Lyla June whose mission is to empower indigenous youth and spread love through music. This collection also discusses the need to recognize that America was founded on native land. Through music, artists can bring attention to U.S immigration policies that have a pattern of being racially exclusive. Lastly, this essay critiques the systematic racism perpetuated in the United States by centering Black voices. Analyzing music through a critical race lens provides an opportunity to understand what it reveals about the experiences of oppressed people in the United States. Music has long been a way for people of color to bring

---

<sup>36</sup> Tupac Amaru Shakur, “Keep Ya Head Up”

socio-political awareness to the issues they identify with within their own communities. Music brings together marginalized communities and builds a means of resistance, in which love and connection form the foundation.

## Bibliography

- “2Pac (Ft. Talent) – Changes.” Genius. Accessed November 8, 2021.  
<https://genius.com/2pac-changes-lyrics>.
- “Article VI.” Legal Information Institute. Legal Information Institute. Accessed April 30, 2021.
- Ackerman, Alissa R. & Rich Furman (2013) The criminalization of immigration and the privatization of the immigration detention: implications for justice, *Contemporary Justice Review*, 16:2, 254
- Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands: the New Mestiza = La Frontera*. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 2012.
- Castañeda, Antonia I. "Chapter 2. Sexual Violence in the Politics and Policies of Conquest: Amerindian Women and the Spanish Conquest of Alta California" In *Sexual Violence in Conflict Zones: From the Ancient World to the Era of Human Rights* edited by Elizabeth D. Heineman, 39-55. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011.
- Cook-Martín, David, and David Scott FitzGerald. “How Legacies of Racism Persist in U.S. Immigration Policy.” Scholars Strategy Network, June 20, 2014.  
<https://scholars.org/contribution/how-legacies-racism-persist-us-immigration-policy>.
- Cooper Rebecca, Caroline Heldman, Alissa R. Ackerman & Victoria A. Farrar-Meyers (2016) Hidden corporate profits in the U.S. prison system: the unorthodox policy-making of the American Legislative Exchange Council, *Contemporary Justice Review*, 19:3, 380-400, DOI: [10.1080/10282580.2016.1185949](https://doi.org/10.1080/10282580.2016.1185949)
- Cova, Dr. Antonio de la. “16 Racial Classifications of 18th Century Latin America Castas Paintings.” Castas racial classifications. Accessed November 7, 2021.  
<https://www.latinamericanstudies.org/race.htm>.
- Gilio-Whitaker, D. (2019). *As long as grass grows : the indigenous fight for environmental justice, from colonization to Standing Rock* . Beacon Press.
- Gilmore, Ruth Wilson. *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007.
- La Santa Cecilia “Ice El Hielo” Universal Music Latino y Arju Productions, Inc. track 8 in Treinta Días 2013
- Lyla June “All Nations Rise” bandcamp track 2 on The People’s Knowledge released August 22, 1989
- Ostler, Jeffrey, and Nick Estes. “THE SUPREME LAW OF THE LAND: STANDING ROCK AND THE DAKOTA ACCESS PIPELINE.” In *Standing with Standing Rock: Voices from the #NoDAPL Movement*, edited by NICK ESTES and JASKIRAN DHILLON, 96–100. University of Minnesota Press, 2019. <https://doi.org/10.5749/j.ctvr695pq.14>.
- Paz Cultura y Amor. “Quinto Sol - Tierra Olvidada.” YouTube. YouTube, September 16, 2008.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gAqmIHD6VAI>.
- Skalicky, Sue, and Monica Davey. “Tension between Police and Standing Rock Protesters Reaches Boiling Point.” *The New York Times*. The New York Times, October 28, 2016.  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/29/us/dakota-access-pipeline-protest.html>.
- “Stand up / Stand N Rock.” Think 100%, May 12, 2020.  
<https://think100climate.com/music/peoples-climate-music/stand-up-stand-n-rock/>.
- Taboo “Stand Up / Stand N Rock #NoDAPL” recorded at Jukasa Media Group produced by Printz Board, released December 4, 2016
- Thorbecke, Catherine. “Why a Previously Proposed Route for the Dakota Access Pipeline Was

- Rejected.” ABC News. ABC News Network, November 3, 2016.  
<https://abcnews.go.com/US/previous-proposed-route-dakota-access-pipeline-rejected/story?id=43274356>.
- Tupac Amaru Shakur, “Keep Ya Head Up” recorded 1992 Interscope Records track 11 released October 28, 1993
- “U.S. Deportations of Immigrants Slightly up in 2018.” Pew Research Center. Pew Research Center, August 19, 2020. Vitale, Alex S. 2017. *The end of policing*.
- Ward, Marguerite. “How Decades of US Welfare Policies Lifted up the White Middle Class and Largely Excluded Black Americans.” Business Insider. Business Insider, August 11, 2020.
- Wilkins, David E., and Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark. *American Indian Politics and the American Political System*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018.