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Special Issue: America and the Second World War 80 Years On



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EDITORIAL*

Dr Sam Edwards and Dr Andrew Sanders, our previous Co-Editors, completed their term with the BJMH with the publication of our last issue in April. The Journal's editorial team thanks them for their work and as a team we wish them well for the future. In March the General Committee of the British Commission for Military History, the Journal's sponsors, asked us to take over as Interim Co-editors until such time as a new, long term, senior editorial team can be appointed. We have both been members of the editorial team since the second issue of the Journal in 2015 and are glad to help. In what is a difficult time for military historians in academia that search is taking longer than expected but we are pleased to report that the Journal continues to thrive.

As has become the norm, our summer issue is a Special Issue having a chosen theme. Entitled *America and the Second World War 80 Years On*, this issue was conceived by our editorial predecessors during last year's celebrations of the eightieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War. The issue has been compiled by our Guest Editor, Dr Christian O'Connell, and we both thank him for his work on the issue. Through their fascinating articles the issue's authors examine topics related to the experience of a range of minority and marginalised groups during and after the Second World War; they include Conscientious Objectors, Japanese American internees, Black prisoners of war, Japanese war brides, lesbians and post-war students avoiding the American draft. The articles tell stories of the American experience of the war and its aftermath, stories that are not normally heard. We are pleased to publish them in the Journal.

Taking on the role on an interim basis, we want to recognise the support we receive as Co-Editors from the Journal's editorial team, and in particular, the hard work of the Managing Editors in moving articles through the vital peer review process. Their and the Peer Reviewers' work is genuinely appreciated and provides the bedrock for the Journal's scholarly integrity. One of the excitements of taking on the Co-Editor role is seeing the range of material submitted for publication, and we have both been pleased that the Journal continues to receive a steady inflow of articles and research notes from the widest possible range of authors, from academics to independent scholars, from established authors to first timers, and covering the widest possible range of topics within a broad interpretation of military history and war studies. Since its 2014 inception under the leadership of Dr Matthew Ford, our founding Editor, the Journal has striven to be inclusive and accessible to all. We are determined it will remain so. Our only criterion for publication is that the author has done the research

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and is presenting it in an interesting and scholarly way. We look forward to and commit to continuing to publish a breadth of authorship and topics on our watch – however long or short that may be.

ALASDAIR URQUHART

British Commission for Military History, UK

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Introduction: America and the Second World War 80 Years On – Impacts and Legacies at Home and Abroad

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On 10 September 2025, the United States Senate passed a resolution to commemorate the eightieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War and to honour the American veterans who took part. The bi-partisan resolution proposed by Richard Blumenthal (D – CT) and Mike Rounds (R – SD) asked Americans to

commemorate the 80th anniversary of the signing of the Instrument of Surrender aboard the USS Missouri (BB-63) on September 2, 1945, as a day of appreciation for the members of the 'Greatest Generation' who, through their sacrifices both in the Armed Forces and on the home front, preserved liberty for future generations.¹

The resolution was endorsed by a number of organisations and legacy groups, including the National World War II Museum, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and the American Legion. The commemorative events that followed took many forms across the United States.

President Donald Trump marked the anniversary of VE Day with a proclamation that described it as 'one of the most epic victories for forces of freedom in the history of the world,' thanking 'every patriot that made up the Greatest Generation.' He followed this with a statement on 14 August marking the Japanese surrender, once again stressing the 'unmatched courage, grit, and sacrifice of the fearless patriots of

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¹'S.Res.383 - A resolution commemorating the 80th anniversary of the conclusion of World War II with the surrender of Imperial Japan and honoring veterans of both the Pacific and European theaters.' Effective September 10,

<https://www.congress.gov/bills/119th-congress/senate-resolution/383/text>. Accessed 7 May 2026.

the United States Armed Forces.¹² In the way that commemorative acts provide insights into contemporary uses of the past and their socio-political contexts, Trump's comments were infused by the preoccupations of his administration that emphasise an all-conquering sense of 'America First' patriotism, as well as visions of his own political legacy. At the same time, they were echoing previous anniversaries whereby the conflict has been remembered nostalgically and frequently as a 'Good War' and for the sacrifices of a special generation that overcome an evil enemy, and the period of relative stability that followed.³

Remarkably, veterans in their 90s and even 100s were present at many commemorative events around the country. According to the National WWII Museum, around 45,000 veterans were still alive in 2025.⁴ Several took part in ceremonies at the World War II Memorial in the Washington Mall to mark V-J day. Others were present at the Battleship Missouri Memorial in Pearl Harbor on 2 September marking the official surrender of Japan 80 years earlier.⁵ At the former, veterans such as Dave Yoho and James Quinn were interviewed, highlighting the emphasis on honouring the memories of the remaining survivors while still possible. Some events focused on reconciliation and contemporary relations of former enemies, such as the program of remembrance involving Japanese Shinto priests and veterans'

²President Donald J. Trump, 'Victory Day for World War II, 2025: a Proclamation,' Issued 8 May 2025,

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/05/victory-day-for-world-war-ii-2025/>. Accessed 7 May 2026.

³Neil A. Wynn, "The 'Good War': The Second World War and Postwar American Society." *Journal of Contemporary History* 31, no. 3 (1996): pp. 463–82: p. 463. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/261016>

⁴'WWII Veteran Statistics,' *National WWII Museum*, accessed 31 October 2025, <https://www.nationalww2museum.org/war/wwii-veteran-statistics>. Accessed 7 May 2026.

⁵'80th Anniversary Commemoration of End of World War II,' *C-Span*, accessed 31 October 2025, <https://www.c-span.org/program/public-affairs-event/80th-anniversary-commemoration-of-end-of-world-war-ii/664991>. Accessed 7 May 2026;

'Commemoration of the 80th Anniversary of the End of WWII will be held at the Battleship Missouri Memorial in Pearl Harbor on Tuesday, Sept 2., with 25 WWII Veterans Attending,' *Pearl Harbor Aviation Museum*, accessed 31 October 2025, <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/commemoration-of-the-80th-anniversary-of-the-end-of-wwii-will-be-held-at-the-battleship-missouri-memorial-in-pearl-harbor-on-tuesday-sept-2-with-25-wwii-veterans-attending-302543028.html>. Accessed 7 May 2026.

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organisations at the Long Island Museum of American Armor.⁶ While these forms of remembrance demonstrate the dominance on the military aspects of the conflict, these events also highlight the complexity of the American contributions to the War effort. For instance, Navajo 'Code Talker' Thomas Begay was present at the V-E Day commemorations at the Washington Mall on 8 May, providing an indication of the 'greatest generation's' ethnic and racial diversity. African American veterans and their relatives also took part in events that emphasised their contributions to the war effort, as well as reminding audiences about the obstacles they faced in order to do so.⁷ 102-year-old veteran pilot Daniel Keel returned to Molise in Italy – where the famous Tuskegee Airmen were stationed – to take part in eightieth anniversary events.⁸ This remarkable reunion is illustrative of the complex transnational experiences which that characterised the war for different Americans, as well as their long-term legacies.

The anniversary therefore provides an opportunity to reflect on the war's varied effects. The Second World War triggered profound social, economic, and ideological shifts in the United States. While the reorganisation of the country on to a war footing affected most Americans across the social spectrum, the political implications for the country had profound consequences domestically and internationally for many decades. Millions of American military personnel were stationed abroad, and came into contact with different peoples and cultures. Often occurring in extraordinary circumstances, these encounters could function as catalysts for affirmations of as well as challenges to established notions of identity. The diverse racial and ethnic make-up of the American military was the focus of Thomas Guglielmo's *Divisions: a New History of Racism and Resistance in America's WWII Military*.⁹ This book, which examined the experiences of different Americans, as well as the nature and effects of the racial politics that permeated the military, challenges some of the dominant assumptions of unity and togetherness that emanate from much of the recent commemorative

⁶“On 80th anniversary of the end of WWII, a program of remembrance as Americans and Japanese reflect on VJ Day,” *Patch.com*, 1 September 2025, accessed 31 October 2025,

<https://patch.com/new-york/longisland/80th-anniversary-end-wwii-program-remembrance-americans-japanese-reflect>. Accessed 7 May 2026.

⁷“Black Uniform:” Film Screening and Discussion,’ *Veterans Breakfast Club*, accessed 31 October 2025, <https://veteransbreakfastclub.org/event/black-uniform-film-screening-and-discussion/>. Accessed 7 May 2026.

⁸“US WWII Airman aged 102 returns to fly over Molise skies,” ANSA, accessed 31 October 2025, https://www.ansa.it/english/news/general_news/2025/04/24/us-wwii-airman-aged-102-returns-to-fly-over-molise-skies_29bb6570-908a-4958-8a7b-c73603017df4.html Accessed 10 May 2026.

⁹Thomas A. Guglielmo, *Divisions: A New History of Racism and Resistance in America's World War II Military*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2021).

activity. Guglielmo not only demonstrates the various ways Americans from different racial and ethnic backgrounds navigated and challenged the racialised operations of the American war machine, but stresses the various costs of race-based decision-making in terms of efficiency, potential loss of life and the longevity of the war itself. While remembrance activity tends to prioritise simplistic 'Good War' narratives, historians such as Guglielmo, Brooke Blower, Andrew Buchanan, and Ruth Lawlor among many others, have been working to unpick such narratives by considering the more complex nature of the conflict for the United States. This has also entailed appreciating the more transnational and globalised nature of the conflict, which has included a much more internationalised historiography.¹⁰

Guglielmo's book was the subject of a keynote address at the Historians of the Twentieth Century United States (HOTCUS) Winter Symposium held at the University of Gloucestershire in February 2025. Entitled 'The United States and World War II: Impacts and Legacies at Home and Abroad,' the event brought together established and emerging scholars to consider the significance of the conflict for different groups of Americans in and outside of the military during the war and beyond. Given the clear militaristic emphasis of commemorative events, the symposium sought to interrogate the wider social, political, and cultural significance of the conflict for different groups of Americans, including women, African Americans, Japanese Americans, marginalised groups and even 'new' Americans that arrived to the United States as a result of wartime marriage. It also invited scholars to consider the significance of the war in terms of American politics, economics, and foreign policy, particularly in relation to the nation's shifting role in the world. The articles present in this special edition of the *British Journal of Military History* deal with issues of gender, race, sexuality, religion, and the agency of women, African Americans, Japanese Americans, and peoples that were intending to become American. They also consider the effects of the War on education and the role of scientific progress.

A common theme in the collection is the diverse experiences and effects of the incarceration of different Americans at home and abroad. Caleb Woodall's article focuses on the role of religion and labour in the actions of conscientious objectors and their challenge to the state's championing of freedom at abroad while and seemingly abandoning it at home. The notion of freedom and identity was also imperative to Japanese Americans confined to internment camps during the War as a result of Franklin D. Roosevelt's Executive Order 9066, as Maddie Hale examines. Her analysis of camp newspapers produced predominantly by women sheds light on previously underexplored voices, and how they understood their own American identities. The War also provided various opportunities for African Americans to

¹⁰See for instance Andrew Buchanan and Ruth Lawlor, eds. *The Greater Second World War: Global Perspectives*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2025).

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challenge inequality and discrimination, while contributions to the war effort allowed them to demonstrate and validate their own American identity. Simona Tobia's article on the memories of African American POWs not only highlights an underappreciated aspect of the War, but also centres on the long-term legacies of their experiences as a minority group by demonstrating the ways in which their memories were continuously reshaped in the years afterwards.

As Samantha Lanevi's article on the 'Bride Schools' in Japan discusses, aspiring Americans in the form Japanese women, needed to be *made* Americans. By examining the manner in which the schools prepared women for lives as American wives, Lanevi argues these institutions were a form of 'pre-assimilation' that reflected broader notions of American identity as well as occupation and immigration policies. For existing American women, the War had other implications. As Katie Marshall discusses via the fascinating example of Esther Herbert and Marvyl Doyle in the Women's Army Corps (WAC), the movement of women across military sites also allowed lesbians to meet and connect. While not without significant problems, Marshall's article adds to scholarship on the development of a lesbian scene within the military by exploring the personal experiences of Herbert and Doyle. In our final contribution, Rebecca Stone examines the War's effects on the perception and changing value attached to scientific progress, particularly in relation to emergence of the Cold War. Stone focuses on the way college students could avoid selective service as a means of measuring the new patriotic significance of scientific advancement in the post-war years.

At the time the authors were writing the articles for this special edition, the globe has been experiencing the various effects of military conflict in which the United States has played a central role, whether in the Middle East, Ukraine, or Venezuela. The political, social and economic ripple effects of these contemporary struggles are reflective of the ways in which war and conflict always have tangible as well as hidden consequences that go significantly beyond the battlefields. As the articles in this edition explore, this was as true for the Second World War as it is today.

Prisoners of Conscience: Labour, Religion, and Gender in Conscientious Objectors' Second World War Protests

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ABSTRACT

This article explores a strain of antitotalitarian critique that emerged out of conscientious objectors' experiences with the Civilian Public Service programme during the Second World War. A complex interplay of ideas about labour, religion, and manly dignity animated this critique. The author places the actions of 'radicals' like Don DeVault, Stanley Murphy, and Louis Taylor in their wider religious and labour-driven contexts. Crucially, the article offers a fresh perspective on conscientious objectors' protests against the immediate World War context that stresses the importance of the 'dignity of labour.'

Introduction

When he signed the Selective Training and Service Act (STSA) into law in September 1940, President Franklin Roosevelt facilitated the birth of Civilian Public Service (CPS). Designed partly to prevent an embarrassing repeat of the repressive treatment endured by American conscientious objectors (COs) during the Second World War, the Act stipulated that, in CPS, COs would complete 'work of national importance under civilian direction.' The programme represented a unique compromise between church and state: pacifist Christians, especially in the Quaker, Mennonite, and Brethren traditions, accepted the principle of conscription in return for alternative service opportunities that represented the government's recognition of the individual's First Amendment right to conscientiously object.¹

*Caleb Woodall is a doctoral candidate at the University of Cambridge. His dissertation explores conscientious objectors' Second World War experiences in America through the lenses of masculinity, labour, and race.

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¹Albert N. Keim and Grant Stoltzfus, *The Politics of Conscience: The Historic Peace Churches and America at War, 1917-1955*, (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1988), pp. 34–55; and Mulford Q. Sibley and Philip E. Jacob, *Conscription of Conscience: The American*

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Nearly 12,000 men served in CPS during the war, in more than 150 camps and units across the country.² Under Selective Service's authority, CPS men initially worked with the Forest and Soil Conservation Services in reopened Civilian Conservation Corps camps. Their agitation for more meaningful labour, however, resulted in increasing opportunities as the war progressed. By the time CPS disbanded in 1947, its participants had contributed over eight million man-hours of labour in fields ranging from forest-firefighting and soil conservation to mental health advocacy and medical experimentation.³ To demonstrate COs' willingness to sacrifice, the peace churches in charge of CPS agreed to fund the programme, and agreed that the work would be unpaid.⁴

The CPS experiment did not appeal or apply to all pacifists. More than 6,000 COs endured prison sentences, either because they viewed CPS as an intolerable collaboration with the warmaking state, because their objection was secular or limited to the Second World War, or because, as in the case of Jehovah's Witnesses and Muslims, the state did not recognize their religious claims with the same liberal respect that it gave members of the peace, mainline, and Catholic churches. While precise figures are impossible to ascertain, undoubtedly many COs chose to endure imprisonment because they saw little value in the kinds of labour demanded in CPS.⁵

State and the Conscientious Objector, 1940-1947, (New York: Cornell University Press, 1952). For an overview of COs' experiences in World War I, see Christopher Capozzola, *Uncle Sam Wants You: World War I and the Making of the Modern American Citizen*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 55–81.

²Rachel Waltner Goossen, *Women Against the Good War: Conscientious Objection and Gender on the American Home Front, 1941-1947*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), pp. 11–28; Steven J. Taylor, *Acts of Conscience: World War II, Mental Institutions, and Religious Objectors*, (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2009), p. 21.

³For the standard account of CPS, see Sibley and Jacob, *Conscription of Conscience*. On CPS firefighting, see Mark Matthews, *Smoke Jumping on the Western Fire Line: Conscientious Objectors during World War II*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006). On CPS human 'guinea pig' experiments, see Todd Tucker, *The Great Starvation Experiment*, (New York: Free Press, 2006). On mental health advocacy and hospital work, see Taylor, *Acts of Conscience*.

⁴Donald F. Durnbaugh, "The Fight against War of the Historic Peace Churches, 1919-1941," in *Challenge to Mars: Pacifism from 1918 to 1945*, ed. Peter Brock and Thomas P. Socknat, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), p. 235.

⁵Steven Taylor notes the 'pervasive feeling among CPS men that their work in camps fell far short of being "work of national importance" and represented little more than "make-work."' See Taylor, *Acts of Conscience*, pp. 57–58. See also James Tracy, *Direct Action: Radical Pacifism from the Union Eight to the Chicago Seven*, (Chicago: University of

Certainly, the programme's deeply unsatisfactory labour regime - alongside other factors such as financial difficulty and perceived intimidation by CPS administrators - pushed at least 300 COs to 'walk out' of CPS.⁶

Federal authorities invariably apprehended CO walkouts and held them in local and county jails before placing them on trial for violating the STSA. Prison sentences varied geographically and depending on the individual severity of the presiding judges, with most COs receiving eighteen months imprisonment up to 1942, and around eighty-five to ninety months imprisonment from 1942 to 1945.⁷ Following sentencing, authorities handed COs over to the Bureau of Prisons for incarceration.

When they repudiated CPS in favour of prison, many COs mirrored the concerns of Don DeVault, a CO chemist who walked out of CPS Germfask (Michigan) in 1944. DeVault argued that he did not 'object to making sacrifices' in CPS, but to the 'uselessness of the particular sacrifices that the authorities' designated for COs. He linked his rejection of 'made work' in CPS to a broader critique of the government's handling of its twin duties of preserving freedom of conscience at home and defending democracy abroad. That CPS labour was unsatisfactory was not the issue *per se*; for DeVault, the issue was the fact that 'useless' labour in CPS became a 'punishment for being conscientiously opposed' to war. Commenting on DeVault's case, another CO, Purnell Benson, put it succinctly: the state's refusal to live up to its promise to provide 'work of national importance' constituted 'religious persecution,' and a failure to recognize freedom of conscience. DeVault's protests also highlighted how ideas about manly independence suffused COs' understandings of labour dignity and religious freedom. The exasperated chemist told his parole board that 'to actually obtain' worthwhile work opportunities, 'one must behave servilely and show a respect for CPS which I honestly do not have.'⁸ For many COs, CPS labour represented a type of 'involuntary servitude' that erased their individuality by making them dependent on the state. This CPS 'slavery' forced COs to put aside their manly pride and work at

Chicago Press, 1996), pp. 12–20; and Scott H. Bennett, *Radical Pacifism: The War Resisters League and Gandhian Nonviolence in America, 1915-1963*, (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2003), pp. 100–113.

⁶Jehovah's Witnesses made up around 75% of the CO prison population. For this figure and the differing treatment given to various religious affiliations, see Sibley and Jacob, *Conscription of Conscience*, pp. 332–34; and Keim and Stoltzfus, *The Politics of Conscience*, pp. 120–26. See also Bennett, *Radical Pacifism*, pp. 100–103.

⁷Sibley and Jacob, *Conscription of Conscience*, pp. 246–51.

⁸All quotes taken from Purnell Benson, 'Penicillin Study Threatened by Chemist's Arrest' (27 October 1944), Henry LeRoy Finch Papers, Box 1, 'Reference Material re. CPS: statements against CPS or conscription', Swarthmore College Peace Collection [hereinafter SCPC].

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tasks better suited to what one CO disparagingly called 'an able-bodied moron.'⁹ This kind of thinking demonstrated a logic, common amongst COs, which intertwined labour dignity and religious freedom with a concern for the endurance of independent CO manhood.

In CPS's erosion of the dignity of labour, religious freedom, and manly independence, DeVault diagnosed an altogether more harrowing condition. The 'old American "individualist" world' in which men secured the welfare of their families by performing their labour 'with skill and imagination' was disappearing; government had become so intrusive that a man's only 'responsibility' was to 'obey orders.' The kind of 'discipline' required in CPS produced only 'unimaginative slaves.' The 'unimportance of work' both broke men's spirit and reduced their productivity. Prolonged isolation from women broke up the 'family system.' The result, DeVault warned, would be the downfall of American democracy.¹⁰ If historians have decisively repudiated the notion that the Second World War was a 'good war,' then DeVault and the men he represented deserve their place in this critical historiography.¹¹

Frustration with CPS was widespread, but COs of the non-resistant Mennonite and Brethren traditions largely avoided political intervention *à la* DeVault. Indeed, it fell to a self-defined cadre of 'radical pacifists' to animate CO protest in the Second World War. James Tracy and Scott Bennett emphasise the charismatic leadership of activists like Dave Dellinger, Bayard Rustin, and James Farmer in resisting conscription and protesting racial segregation in the nation's prisons but largely underplay the continued significance of the CPS labour regime and of religion to imprisoned COs' protests.¹² Other historians have situated the prison experiences of American pacifists within longer histories. Joseph Kip Kosek argues that Rustin and other Fellowship of

⁹Channing B. Richardson to Friends, February 21, 1943, Civilian Public Service Personal Papers and Collected Materials, Box 3, Channing Richardson Correspondence (1943), SCPC.

¹⁰Don DeVault, 'Conscription and Personality', *CPS-GI*, December 1944, Caleb Foote Papers (MS 1013), Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts, Amherst [hereinafter SCUA-UMA].

¹¹For an introduction to historiographical revision of the so-called 'good war' narrative, see Michael C. Adams, *The Best War Ever: America and World War II*, (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994). For recent additions to this critical historiography, focused on the disreputable behavior of American servicemen, see Aaron Hiltner, *Taking Leave, Taking Liberties: American Troops on the World War II Home Front*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020); and Ruth Lawlor, "Contested Crimes: Race, Gender, and Nation in Histories of GI Sexual Violence, World War II," *Journal of Military History* 84 (April 2020): pp. 541–69.

¹²Tracy, *Direct Action*, pp. 12–46; Bennett, *Radical Pacifism*, pp. 98–133.

Reconciliation (FOR) members became a 'vanguard of the more famous nonviolent movements of the 1960s' through their commitments to radical dissent while imprisoned.¹³ Marian Mollin, James Tracy, and Scott Bennett similarly understand COs' wartime prison experiences as a launchpad for the radical pacifism that would shape pacifist protest following the war. Tracy in particular notes that during the war radical pacifists began to 'shift their agenda away from labor,' that 'fetish of the Old Left,' while producing an intensely individualist, libertarian resistance movement against 'nascent totalitarianism.'¹⁴ Others have emphasized how prisons acted as a crucible for the forging of heroic, sacrificial models of manhood which 'masculinised' the peace movement. This 'masculinisation' prepared the peace movement for its 1960s heyday while insulating its leadership from the gendered and racial concerns of women and African Americans with whom it could have made strategic alliances.¹⁵

Protest in CPS certainly prepared radical pacifists for their postwar activist careers, but what ingredients produced that crucible? A complex interplay of ideas about religion and manly dignity was crucial to the production of a pacifist critique of the coercive bureaucratic machinery that imprisoned COs, religious and secular, saw as the defining feature of the wartime state. Labour, crucially, retained critical importance in this critique. It hinged on the notion that labour coercion in CPS directly undermined the nation's stated wartime objectives. The author places the actions of the radicals associated with this critique – Don DeVault, Stanley Murphy, and Louis Taylor-Krawczyk to name a few – in their wider religious and labour-driven contexts. Rather than viewing their prison protests primarily as rehearsals for postwar pacifist activism or as an early stage of the nonviolent civil rights movement, this article explores how the immediate context of the Second World War acted as a central component of their critique. Before they gained fame for their heroic protests against prison segregation, the men who left CPS argued that seemingly arbitrary and authoritarian government signalled the corrosion of individual and, importantly, *masculine*, character and moral responsibility; it also signalled that while the

¹³Joseph Kip Kosek, *Acts of Conscience: Christian Nonviolence and Modern American Democracy*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), pp. 147–48.

¹⁴Marian Mollin, *Radical Pacifism in Modern America: Egalitarianism and Protest*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006); Tracy, *Direct Action*, pp. 36–40; Bennett, *Radical Pacifism*.

¹⁵Timothy Stewart-Winter, 'Not a Soldier, Not a Slacker': Conscientious Objectors and Male Citizenship in the United States During the Second World War,' *Gender and History* 19, no. 3, (November 2007): pp. 519–42; Mollin, *Radical Pacifism in Modern America*, pp. 16–17. Mollin details pacifists' appropriation of the aesthetic of 'blue-collar' machismo of working-class men without analysing why this association came naturally to CO prison protestors.

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government was fighting a war to preserve democracy abroad, it was unshackling the forces of totalitarianism at home.

The CPS Walk-Out Explained

Most CPS walkouts blamed the work's coercive nature for their protest. This issue connected labour indignity to Christian notions of individual responsibility and gendered conceptions of brave, moral nonconformism. Walkouts suggested that these pillars combined to provide the scaffolds upon which individuality was built. If the state eroded any of these pillars, it would collapse that scaffold and mirror the totalitarian practices of America's undemocratic enemies. Walking out of CPS thus became part of a larger crusade: not just a rejection of insufficiently meaningful labour, but a protest against totalitarianism's encroachment into American life.

Walkouts criticised CPS for diminishing the dignity of labour. George Kingsley, a Presbyterian CO, promised to 'sever... relationships with C.P.S.' in October 1942. He justified his decision by arguing that CPS relegated 'the dignity of labor to that of serfdom; it means servility to Selective Service.' Like Don DeVault, Kingsley tied the notion of servility to the idea that to deny 'the right of individuals to pursue their vocations' was to deny freedom of conscience. Continued cooperation with this autonomy-erasing, servility-inducing programme, Kingsley argued, would make him a 'traitor to [his] innermost convictions'¹⁶ Walking out of CPS, for Kingsley, entailed rejecting the diminution of his freedom by asserting his right to work free from the compulsion of Selective Service.

Other CPS walkouts reproduced Kingsley's argument in starker terms. Writing from Hudson County Jail in Jersey City, Bill Kuenning cast the programme as an 'immoral institution' because it upheld a 'form of slavery' through unpaid work that was 'not of primary significance.'¹⁷ Art Brown, a CO and former textile worker, explained that working without pay in CPS was 'Slave Labor' and that the religious council in charge of the programme was '100% in favor of slavery.'¹⁸ For Kingsley, Kuenning, and Brown, coerced labour in CPS rendered the individual less than whole, dependent and unfree.

¹⁶George R. Kingsley, 'Conscience Cannot Compromise': Statement of George R. Kingsley,' Big Flats, New York, October 13, 1942, Henry LeRoy Finch Papers, Box 1, Reference Material re. CPS: statements against CPS or conscription, SCPC.

¹⁷William Kuenning, Open Letter to the Friends Intelligencer, Jersey City, New Jersey, June 5, 1943, Henry LeRoy Finch Papers, Box 1, Reference Material re. CPS: statements against CPS or conscription, SCPC.

¹⁸Arthur Brown, My Reasons for Leaving CPS, Undated, Henry LeRoy Finch Papers, Box 1, Reference Material re. CPS: statements against CPS or conscription, SCPC.

When protesting the indignity of CPS labour, COs also drew on religious imagery to argue that the programme offended Christian conceptions of labour's importance. Brown invoked the scriptures to highlight how Christian notions of a man's responsibility to provide for his household mapped neatly on to mid-century labour ideology that cast the ideal male as a household breadwinner and protector.¹⁹ The Bible's Timothy 5:18, he recalled, teaches how the labourer is worthy of his reward. Timothy 5:8, meanwhile, reveals that anyone who provides 'not for his own ... hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.'²⁰ For Brown, working without pay both undermined men's ability to uphold proper gender roles and implicated them in a betrayal of God's commands.

Spiritual concerns also underpinned COs' frequent invocations of the human personality. Since the 1930s, even non-pacifist churches had been warning the faithful that war was a 'violation of the human personality.' Once Japan attacked Pearl Harbor and Germany declared war on the United States, however, previously anti-war churches scrambled to justify their new-found support for the war. They modified their concerns for human individuality; now, it was America's duty to combat totalitarian regimes that erased the sanctity of the human personality by exalting the state as supreme and making men 'selfless cogs' in its machinery. The churches supported the war as one between ideologies; freedom-loving and God-fearing democracy versus slavery-inducing, state-worshipping totalitarianism.²¹ When COs charged CPS with violating freedom of conscience and preventing them from realizing the depths of the human personality, they were then simply extending to their own government a religious critique that their churches had been making in the global context for the best part of a decade.

Countless COs argued along these lines. In May 1945, Donald Lehman, a walkout from CPS #59 at Elkton, Oregon, argued that in the wartime United States, freedom of religion meant only that it was 'permissible for an individual to be conscientiously opposed to participation in war.' If the same individual protested the subjugation of

¹⁹Gregory Wood, *Retiring Men: Manhood, Labor, and Growing Old in America, 1900-1960*, (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2012), pp. 7-8.

²⁰Brown, "My Reasons for Leaving CPS."

²¹General Conference of the Methodist Church, 1936; Methodist Council of Bishops, 1942; both quoted in Gerald L. Sittser, *A Cautious Patriotism: The American Churches and the Second World War*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), p. 4, p. 19. Patricia Faith Appelbaum, *Kingdom to Commune: Protestant Pacifist Culture Between World War I and the Vietnam Era*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), p. 18. Gary J. Dorrien, *The Making of American Liberal Theology: Idealism, Realism, and Modernity, 1900-1950*, (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), pp. 151-216.

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labour in CPS, the 'result [was] imprisonment.' Lehman fumed that it was a 'mockery to call this freedom of religion when the State is allowed to rule what a person's religion may be!' The consequences would rebound into the 'personal lives of the citizenry.' Name-checking Don DeVault, he argued that 'the acceptance of bureaucratic control' would be accompanied by a 'loss of the sense of personal responsibility and a suppression of individual initiative.'²²

Seven COs who walked out of the CPS camp at Coshocton, Ohio, in June 1943 concurred: they argued that CPS labour resulted in 'the curbing of the mind, the crushing of the spirit.'²³ For Philip Kelsey, a Quaker who walked out of CPS after only two months in late 1942, CPS represented an 'absolute denial of the fundamental sanctity of the human personality' that denied the validity of 'the teachings of Jesus' and the 'necessary assumptions involved with a belief in representative government.'²⁴ The imposition of a coerced labour regime constituted both the rejection of the Messiah's word and the denial of the right, central to America's democratic promise, to freedom of religion.

While they grounded their protests in the dignity of labour and freedom of conscience, COs also betrayed a masculinist streak within their critique of CPS. Perhaps to deflect gendered criticisms levelled at COs from outside the pacifist community – critics frequently labelled COs as cowards, sissies, and 'yellow-bellies' – walkouts frequently articulated their protests as acts of masculine bravery.²⁵ Art Brown suggested that to maintain his inability to provide for his dependents by remaining in CPS would be 'dishonest, selfish, cowardly, and inconsistent.'²⁶ Charles Butcher claimed that to avoid conflict with the draft would 'have been an admission of cowardice and weakness.'²⁷

²²Donald Lehman, Civilian Public Service: A Conscription of Conscience, Elkton, Oregon, May 28, 1945, Bent Andresen Papers, Box 1, Reference Material re. conscientious objectors, etc., SCPC.

²³Coshocton Walkouts, We Seven Are Walking Out of CPS, Coshocton, Ohio, June 7, 1943, Henry LeRoy Finch Papers, Box 1, Reference Material re. CPS: statements against CPS or conscription, SCPC.

²⁴Philip M. Kelsey, Statement Against CPS, December 1942, Henry LeRoy Finch Papers, Box 1, Reference Material re. CPS: statements against CPS or conscription, SCPC.

²⁵On these gendered critiques, see especially Stewart-Winter, "Not a Soldier, Not a Slacker."

²⁶Arthur Brown, 'Why I Left CPS,' Erie, Pennsylvania, September 28, 1943, Henry LeRoy Finch Papers, Box 1, Reference Material re. CPS: statements against CPS or conscription, SCPC.

²⁷Charles Butcher, 'The Absolutists Were Right,' Washington, D.C, February 9, 1943, Henry LeRoy Finch Papers, Box 1, Reference Material re. CPS: statements against CPS or conscription, SCPC.

Passive acquiescence to CPS labour represented not just a failure of moral duty, but of masculine duty, too.

Paton Price, who registered as a CO in 1940 due to his 'social, humanitarian, and religious beliefs,' wrote to Attorney General Francis Biddle in December 1942 to explain his upcoming 'civil disobedience.' To 'acquiesce' to the conscription machine while knowing in his heart that this course was wrong would be to deny 'the sanctity of the personality.' Denying one's internal morality was, crucially, 'the device of cowards' and the 'suicide of moral and religious life.'²⁸ Conversely, Don DeVault criticized COs for showing a 'lack of courage' in putting their material comfort above their moral scruples by accepting the relative comfort of CPS over the moral imperative of rejecting its labour regime.²⁹ Within pacifist thought, a preoccupation with affirming moral, masculine bravery and independence aligned closely with protests against the indignity of CPS labour and violations of religious freedom.

The masculine imperative to denounce cowardice combined with labour-infused religious protest to form the basis of an emerging pacifist critique concerned, ultimately, with the preservation of American democracy. If political scientist Ira Katznelson is correct that a 'climate of universal fear' became a 'permanent condition' for Americans in the 1930s and 1940s as totalitarian regimes grew in strength in Europe and Russia, then such fears were particularly acute for COs who found themselves at the blunt end of American governance.³⁰ As such, many CPS walkouts directed their protests against the perceived petty or quasi-authoritarian nature of the programme, which, they believed, undermined the United States' global commitment to preserving democracy.

Art Brown certainly envisioned the links between labour, religious freedom, and manly individuality as crucial bulwarks against creeping totalitarianism. Propaganda which diffused the 'repeated story that we are fighting for freedom and democracy,' Brown announced, compelled COs to 'look and see what is happening from sources right within our own nation.' Brown criticized wage stagnation, extensions of executive power, organised labour's wartime no-strike pledges, discrimination against African Americans 'in the army and in industry,' and the 'disgrace' of 'Japanese American concentration camps.' But he geared his argument primarily toward another 'disgrace':

²⁸ Paton Price to Frances Biddle, December 14, 1942, copy in Henry LeRoy Finch Papers, Box 1, Reference Material re. CPS: statements against CPS or conscription, SCPC.

²⁹ Don DeVault to Caleb Foote, August 11, 1944, Caleb Foote Papers (MS 1013), SCUA-UMA.

³⁰ Ira Katznelson, *Fear Itself: The New Deal and the Origins of Our Time*, (New York: Liveright, 2013), pp. 12–13.

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CPS. He lamented that the 'fundamentalists' in CPS were, because they worked without pay, 'forced to violate Bible doctrines such as "the laborer is worthy of his hire."' For Brown, CPS denied its participants the chance to 'know how best they can contribute to society,' relegating the dignity of their labour by imploring them to 'follow the dictates of the state.' The moment required nonconformists to show the power of individuality by refusing to 'swallow all newspaper, radio, and movie propaganda'; it required men like Brown, who were 'interested in the future freedom of America' to take a courageous stand and 'nip it in the bud.' If they did not, the 'land of the free' would continue 'stumbling headfirst into totalitarianism.'³¹

What is most interesting about Brown's quite extraordinary language is that it was so unextraordinary among COs who walked out of CPS. Brown sent a transcript of an anti-CPS statement that he gave at his draft violation trial in September 1943 to every CPS camp in the country. Whether they read his message or not, other COs shared Brown's fear that the United States was engaged in a hypocritical totalitarian experiment in its administration of CPS. The seven COs who walked out of Coshocton that summer mirrored Brown's language almost exactly: CPS was conscription, and conscription required the individual to deny his religious expression and the dignity of his labour and instead follow the 'dictates of the state.'³²

Others made the same point in different words. In a 1943 letter to friends in CPS, the Congregationalist CO Paul Kermiet announced that he refused 'any longer to give obeisance to the war-making state in its programme of conscription and regimentation.' Life in the 'ivory towers' of CPS represented a subservience to the state which contradicted his faith's command to obey God alone.³³ Historians have conducted rich explorations of the dilemma pacifists faced when attempting to navigate the competing claims of church and state.³⁴ But the extent to which COs like Kermiet saw religious freedom and the dignity of labour as intimately enmeshed elements in their rejection of the modern state's conscription system evidences the centrality of these two factors to the emerging pacifist critique of totalitarianism. Acceptance of CPS entailed approval of slave labour and the 'way of violence and to the State's pre-eminence over God.' It erased the 'sanctity of the human personality.' By coercing their labour, Kermiet wrote with metaphorical flourish, the state made

³¹Brown, 'Why I Left CPS.'

³²Coshocton Walkouts, 'We Seven Are Walking Out of CPS.'

³³Paul J. Kermiet to Henry LeRoy Finch Jr. and Karl Olsen, June 6, 1943, Henry LeRoy Finch Papers, Box 1, Reference Material re. CPS: statements against CPS or conscription, SCPC.

³⁴For this theme in relation to a pacifist church, see Perry Bush, *Two Kingdoms, Two Loyalties: Mennonite Pacifism in Modern America*, (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).

'automatons' of COs, 'Frankenstein monsters' who existed only on an 'animal' level. This mutilated humanity prevented the blossoming of individual personality, which God desired to 'remain inviolable.'³⁵

Paton Price left CPS in 1942 because the 'seizure of an individual' and his labour by the state, predicated a 'concept of political absolutism' which prevented men from realizing their heavenly ordained 'human personality.' The ultimate result was the degradation of the 'individual into a puppet of tyranny.'³⁶ Three years later, Donald Lehman echoed the worries of Brown, Kermiet, Price, and the Coshocton COs: 'if democracy is to survive,' the state must not be allowed to direct the 'working' of citizens along lines they did not deem 'socially useful.'³⁷

Throughout the war, then, CPS walkouts protested CPS as a symbolic assault on homegrown totalitarianism. Conscription of labour in CPS made COs cogs in the state machine, instruments rather than people, or, as Price worded it, 'means and never... ends.'³⁸ At the same time, relieving COs of control over their labour offended their religious sensibilities by denying them to actualize their individual 'personalities.' Labour in CPS, far from being a hallmark of democratic tolerance, emerged as a punishment, a denial of freedom of conscience. The servility that emerged from both the material fact of working under compulsion for no pay and being prevented from realizing one's individuality in turn threatened to undermine COs' sense of themselves as men. These threads knotted in COs' characterisations of CPS as an authoritarian weapon which, if left unchecked, promised to bludgeon the foundations of American democracy.

Democracy Begins at Home: The Murphy-Taylor Hunger Strike, 1943

In walking out of CPS and into prison, COs took the first steps in what for many became a long march of protest. Some saw imprisonment as the end of their dissent. Agard Bailey, the CO son of an Army colonel, petitioned the government to *return* to prison after having been paroled to CPS because he found 'prison conditions more satisfactory and prison work more important than the work in the CPS camp.'³⁹ Others, to varying degrees of extremity, redoubled their protests against CPS labour once imprisoned.

³⁵Paul J. Kermiet to Henry LeRoy Finch Jr. and Karl Olsen.

³⁶Paton Price to Frances Biddle.

³⁷Lehman, *Civilian Public Service: A Conscription of Conscience*.

³⁸Paton Price to Frances Biddle.

³⁹Agard Bailey, quoted in Henry LeRoy Finch, Jr., *A Note on CPS 'Walkouts, 1946*, Henry LeRoy Finch Papers, Box 1, Reference Material re. CPS: statements against CPS or conscription, SCPC.

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The most dramatic of these protests had its origin in October 1942, when twelve COs at the camp at Big Flats, New York, initiated a work strike protesting Selective Service's refusal to pay for car insurance for COs who drove trucks on CPS assignments. Following several failed attempts to resolve the dispute, two of the camp's labour representatives, Stanley Murphy and Louis Krawczyk (who preferred the English equivalent surname, 'Taylor'), walked out of the camp.⁴⁰ War Resisters League (WRL) chairman Frank Olmstead had singled Murphy and Taylor out as 'somewhat restless' in their application to CPS as early as November 1941; the incident at Big Flats fanned their simmering restlessness into open revolt.⁴¹

Though they expressed their opposition to CPS in terms far more dramatic than most COs, Murphy's and Taylor's protest hinged on the same trifecta of labour dignity, religious freedom, and pacifist manhood that animated the walkouts discussed above. Again, this trifecta had as its corollary the idea that American democracy was at stake in the treatment of the nation's COs. Taylor, an apprentice letter-carrier before the war, argued that CPS represented the state's failure to recognize 'fundamental, religious freedom' and that only complete exemption from the draft would allow COs to realize their human personalities by fulfilling their individual 'social responsibilities.'⁴² Murphy, previously an apprentice mechanic at La Guardia Airport, emphasised that Christianity was 'insistent upon righteousness' and that 'no deviation' was possible once a man had dedicated himself to a principle. Any man who accepted the state's direction to murder his fellow man betrayed his own righteousness, and in doing so became 'irresponsible and los[t] his manhood.'⁴³ From the outset, Murphy and Taylor shared other walkouts' conviction that CPS failed to uphold the dignity of labour and religious freedom, which in turn prevented COs' maintenance of proper manliness.

Following their sentencing, Murphy and Taylor entered the Federal Correctional Institution at Danbury, Connecticut, on February 12, 1943. Within hours they initiated the next stage of their protest, a 'fast unto death' against the conscription of pacifists' labour into CPS. Prisons Bureau Director James Bennett later noted that the COs had been preparing this protest since they had walked out of Big Flats, and that they

⁴⁰Bennett, *Radical Pacifism*, pp. 101–102.

⁴¹Frank Olmstead to Paul Johnson, 17 November 1941, Center on Conscience and War Records [hereafter CCW] 1A, Box 32, Correspondence, Etc. Organizations/Denominations/Peace Leaders: Frank Olmstead, (War Resisters League), 1940 (Dec.)-1941, SCPC.

⁴²Louis Taylor, Statement of Louis Taylor-Krawczyk: Thoughts for the Second Anniversary of Conscription, *Grass Roots*, October 1942, American Friends Service Committee [hereinafter AFSC], CPS Records, CPS Camp Periodicals, Box 11, SCPC.

⁴³Statement of Stanley Murphy, *Grass Roots* (Big Flats, NY), October 1942, AFSC CPS Records, CPS Camp Periodicals, Box 11, SCPC.

'refused food beginning with the first meal after their arrival' at Danbury. Seventeen days later, the prison's medical director advised that they be tube-fed. After eighty-two days, they ended their strike, believing Selective Service to be on the verge of liberalizing parole conditions in the mental health and charity sectors. When it became clear that the COs and Selective Service would not come to an acceptable resolution as to what constituted 'liberalized parole,' Murphy and Taylor determined to remain in prison. The Bureau transferred them to the medical centre at the prison complex in Springfield, Missouri, where they continued to aggravate penal authorities.⁴⁴

At Springfield, Murphy and Taylor protested the general mistreatment of prisoners. While arguably this critique represented an extension of COs' denunciation of antidemocratic, corporatised tendencies within CPS, their hunger strike from Danbury is of most relevance here.⁴⁵ Murphy and Taylor articulated their 'fast unto death' as a direct continuation of the protest they began by leaving Big Flats. As Bennett noted, they told prison officials that they had been preparing their non-cooperation since leaving the camp.⁴⁶ Their decision to refuse food was undoubtedly an incredibly dramatic step, but its premise was the same as that of the CPS walk-out: CPS denied the dignity of labour, religious freedom, and CO manhood. Allowed to continue, it undermined democracy's survival in America.

What should we extrapolate from these radicals' actions? Radicals they certainly were. Multiple COs engaged in hunger strikes during the war, making their bodies the site of their protest: in summer 1942, Corbett Bishop refused food in solidarity with Mohandas Gandhi and the Indian independence movement; in 1943, he began another hunger strike, this time against the maintenance of 'peonage and involuntary servitude in CPS.'⁴⁷ Radical pacifists fasted to protest Jim Crow at Danbury and later censorship at Lewisburg Penitentiary.⁴⁸ Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolent resistance, *Satyagraha*,

⁴⁴James V. Bennett, Inquiry into Charges of Mistreatment of Inmates of the Medical Center for Federal Prisoners at Springfield, Missouri, March 3, 1944, CCW-1B, Box 90, Prisons/C.O. Prisoners: COs in Springfield Federal Prison Camp/Medical Center for Federal Prisoners (MO) [includes lists of COs and Jehovah's Witnesses, and reports etc. re: brutality toward COs and other prisoners., SCPC.

⁴⁵See Sibley and Jacob, *Conscription of Conscience*, pp. 413-416, for a discussion of Murphy and Taylor at Springfield. For COs' attempts to reassert the individual's autonomy in "corporate" society, see Tracy, *Direct Action*, p. 40.

⁴⁶Bennett, Inquiry into Charges of Mistreatment of Inmates of the Medical Center for Federal Prisoners at Springfield, Missouri.

⁴⁷Protest, *The Reporter*, Washington, D.C., 1 July 1943.

⁴⁸On Bishop, see Sibley and Jacob, *Conscription of Conscience*, pp. 401-9. On Dellinger, see Bennett, *Radical Pacifism*, pp. 126-31. For another pacifist's recollections of protest

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faith in the efficacy of dramatic demonstrations of willingness to peacefully struggle for one's principles – what Don DeVault called the Mahatma's 'law of suffering' – won many American CO converts as they socialised in CPS.⁴⁹ Adherence to such methods, though, was rare, and did not always draw praise, even from those sympathetic to the pacifist cause. In 1945, the historian Harry Elmer Barnes suggested that if COs were 'lined up and shot in the next war,' it would be because people had no sympathy for the 'exhibition and eccentricities' of men like Murphy and Taylor.⁵⁰ The Murphy-Taylor hunger strike, though, is less important for what it reveals about the men themselves than for the insights it provides into how those across the country who sympathised with pacifists (and even many who did not) came to accept the warnings of CPS walkouts concerning the program's totalitarian bent.

At CPS Powellville (Maryland), COs took up Murphy and Taylor's cause. Fifteen COs wrote directly to President Roosevelt to announce that from March 10-12, 1943, they would stage a hunger strike of their own in sympathy with the Danbury strikers. Their most immediate concern was for the 'demoralizing effects of wasting energy and talent' in CPS. They lamented that their labour was 'made insignificant by the suffering around us,' and that they operated under 'slave labor conditions.' Here again, protest against CPS hinged on the idea that the programme undermined the dignity of labour.⁵¹

The Powellville COs' concern for democracy's survival was less pronounced, but they hinted at it all the same. They felt a duty 'as citizens' to protest 'the present situation.' They wedded the idea that citizens of a democracy should protest authoritarian infractions to the idea that to do so represented a moral and, if we accept contemporary rhetoric which equated aggressive patriotism with masculinity, manly failure.⁵² To 'waste our prime and resources' was 'not only immoral, but unpatriotic,' charged the Powellville COs. At the same time, they voiced their appreciation for their 'courageous and conscientious comrades at Danbury,' again indicating the valorised position of the masculine-coded qualities of bravery and steadfastness within the CO milieu.⁵³ At Coshocton, another group of COs reiterated the point a month later:

at Danbury, see Harold Schoenfeld, "The Danbury Story," in *The Pacifist Conscience*, ed. Peter Mayer, (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1966), pp. 332–45.

⁴⁹Don DeVault to Caleb Foote. On Gandhi's influence on American COs, via the work of Krishnalal Shridharani, see Kosek, *Acts of Conscience*, pp. 179–81.

⁵⁰Harry Elmer Barnes to Facts-On-Murphy-And-Taylor-Committee, Washington, D.C., February 3, 1945, Caleb Foote Papers (MS 1013), SCUA-UMA.

⁵¹CPS #52 to Franklin Roosevelt, 10 March 1943, RG147, Conscientious Objectors General File, Container 194, Danbury Prison Strike Materials, National Archives and Records Administration [hereinafter NARA 2], College Park, Maryland.

⁵²On this association, see Stewart-Winter, "Not a Soldier, Not a Slacker."

⁵³CPS #52 to Franklin Roosevelt.

'Men with such strength of character' could 'never be broken.'⁵⁴ In June, the seven COs who walked out of the camp, reproduced Murphy and Taulor's concern for democracy by arguing that remaining in the programme would give 'tacit and moral approval' to 'the trend toward totalitarianism.'⁵⁵

The actions of the Powellville and Coshocton COs are somewhat unsurprising: Murphy had spent time at Coshocton, and the COs there expressed no shock that he took a dramatic stand for 'freedom of conscience.'⁵⁶ The Murphy-Taylor strike, in this sense, indicated only that many CPS men shared their concern for labour dignity, religious expression, and manly character. The strike's greater significance lay in the fact that it disseminated this concern beyond CPS. Led by the WRL and the FOR, concerned citizens across the United States petitioned for Murphy's and Taylor's release and for the recalibration of the CPS labour regime in more meaningful directions. These sympathisers occasionally addressed their concerns to the President, and often to the Attorney General. Their primary target, however, was Selective Service Director General Lewis B. Hershey, the man charged with presiding over CPS. Hundreds of pages of epistolary protest survive in letters to Hershey; they offer a window into a different wartime America, one receptive to COs' critiques of CPS and the threat it supposedly posed to American democracy. Their authors' fears rested on the same concerns about labour dignity, religious persecution, and pacifist masculinity that animated the protests of CPS walkouts and the Danbury hunger strikers.

For Horace Berg, a Midwesterner who had a 'son in the army' and who was 'not a CO himself,' CPS clearly constituted involuntary servitude, rather than a gracious accommodation of pacifist oddities. He praised Murphy and Taylor for taking a stand that would make them 'unpopular and persecuted more or less by society as a whole.' He then attacked CPS for reducing COs to a 'basis of labor that is lower than slavery.' In logic uncomfortable to modern ears, he argued that COs were actually *worse off* than the enslaved had been because COs had to pay for their own maintenance in CPS. Linking the indignity of CPS labour to the notion that America was a Christian nation, Berg claimed that 'Christian principles' were 'absolutely fundamental to national progress.' The relegation of COs to this 'reduced basis of labor' evidenced the rejection of these 'Christian principles' and, by extension, America's stunted

⁵⁴CPS Side Camp, Sherrodsville, Ohio, to Lewis B. Hershey, April 12, 1943, RG147, Conscientious Objectors General File, Container 194, Danbury Prison Strike Materials, NARA 2.

⁵⁵Protest, *The Reporter*, Philadelphia, 1 July 1943.

⁵⁶CPS Side Camp, Sherrodsville, Ohio, to Lewis B. Hershey.

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progress as a democratic state. Murphy's and Taylor's release would offer a step toward such progress.⁵⁷

Berg was no socialist, but his complaints mirrored those the Socialist Party sent Hershey's way. The Party's Committee on Conscientious Objectors wrote to Hershey after the Powellville COs announced their sympathy strike. Characteristically, the Committee's concerns centred largely on the labour issue: CPS work was 'made work' and the 'conditions of work without remuneration were equivalent to slave labor.'⁵⁸ A Congregationalist from Chicago similarly wrote to Hershey that work in CPS was 'more "made work" than "work of national importance."⁵⁹ From New York, Julius Eichel, one of the few radical COs to be arrested for their objection in both World Wars, argued that CPS labour was 'enslavement.'⁶⁰ In a letter to Roosevelt, he called for the unconditional and immediate release of Murphy and Taylor, labelling their imprisonment the oppression 'of men who refuse to submit to involuntary servitude.'⁶¹ Clearly, across the country pacifists and non-pacifists alike bought into COs' arguments that CPS erased the dignity of their labour and unleashed those arguments at powerful figures in government office.

Walkouts' arguments about the threat CPS posed to freedom of religion won similar purchase among concerned Americans. Historians generally downplay the religiosity of the Murphy-Taylor strike, implying that the main object of their worship was the WRL's anti-war position.⁶² Contemporary observers saw differently. A New York correspondent, Frances Stewart, wrote to Hershey to describe Murphy and Taylor as 'men of sufficient courage to endure persecution and hardships in defense of their spiritual convictions,' highlighting again an overlap between appreciation for male-

⁵⁷Horace H. Berg to Lewis B. Hershey, April 24, 1943, RG147, Conscientious Objectors General File, Container 194, Danbury Prison Strike Materials, NARA 2.

⁵⁸Socialist Party Committee on Conscientious Objectors to Lewis B. Hershey, March 20, 1943, RG147, Conscientious Objectors General File, Container 194, Danbury Prison Strike Materials, NARA 2.

⁵⁹George Vician to Lewis B. Hershey, March 24, 1943, RG147, Conscientious Objectors General File, Container 194, Danbury Prison Strike Materials, NARA 2.

⁶⁰Julius Eichel to Grover M. Moscowitz, April 15, 1943, RG147, Conscientious Objectors General File, Container 194, Danbury Prison Strike Materials, NARA 2.

⁶¹Julius Eichel to Franklin D. Roosevelt, March 22, 1943, RG147, Conscientious Objectors General File, Container 194, Danbury Prison Strike Materials, NARA 2. For another CO who was arrested in both wars, see Max Sandin, *I Was Sentenced to Be Shot: Autobiography of a Political Objector*, ed. Ruth Benn and Ed Hedemann, (Brooklyn: Max Sandin Pacifist Cell, 2024).

⁶²Bennett, *Radical Pacifism*, pp. 88–94.

coded bravery and religious steadfastness.⁶³ A Bostonian reverend made the same connection: Murphy and Taylor were serving God, and God was 'higher than the State and conscience is supreme.' Their actions proved not just their own bravery, but the 'sincerity, courage, and character' of all COs.⁶⁴ These correspondents saw the hallmarks of pacifist masculinity in the hunger strike and stressed how Murphy and Taylor utilised these traits to protest the suppression of Christian spirituality.

Other commentators emphasised the connections between Christianity and labour. Agnes Schultz implored Hershey to release the hunger strikers, claiming that being forced to work 'for nothing' was 'against all the laws of God and man.' She drew on the same Biblical imagery as Art Brown to stress that God's will was for labourers to receive their just rewards, and for labour itself to be worthy. 'If America is a Christian country,' Schultz concluded, then it had to uphold this 'Golden rule.'⁶⁵ Walkouts' insistence that CPS depended on a violation of Christian principles concerning the dignity of labour had clearly won adherents beyond the boundaries of their camps and jail cells.

The frequent invocations of 'courage' and 'endurance' in letters to Hershey demonstrated how, in a general sense, the COs' preoccupation with defending their manhood had also spread beyond the confines of CPS and prison. The people closest to Murphy and Taylor, though, identified that ideas about manhood played a more fundamental role in their protest, one concerned not with defending COs' individual masculinities, but with ensuring that all COs received treatment befitting their positions *as men*.

Lena Jaffe, the mother of a Jewish CPS assignee, attended a meeting of the Parents of Conscientious Objectors in Jersey City in March 1943. There she met the 'mothers of Stanley Murphy and Louis Taylor.' The next day, Jaffe related to Hershey the stories of these 'heartsick but proud mothers.' They told Jaffe that, at heart, their son's protest reflected a desire 'to be treated like men.' In a move which highlighted how concerns over labour dignity, freedom of conscience, and CO manhood often combined into a broader warning about the fate of American democracy, Jaffe concluded with a

⁶³Frances B. Stewart to Lewis B. Hershey, March 31, 1943, RG147, Conscientious Objectors General File, Container 194, Danbury Prison Strike Materials, NARA 2.

⁶⁴L. H. Paine to Lewis B. Hershey, April 14, 1943, RG147, Conscientious Objectors General File, Container 194, Danbury Prison Strike Materials, NARA 2.

⁶⁵Agnes E. Schultz to Lewis B. Hershey, March 20, 1943, RG147, Conscientious Objectors General File, Container 194, Danbury Prison Strike Materials, NARA 2.

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reminder. The United States was 'fighting for the four freedoms.' But it had to 'begin at home by allowing sincere men freedoms of Conscience.'⁶⁶

A Californian teacher shared Jaffe's concerns. Helena Nye criticised a politics of masculinity which privileged combat service above all other forms of labour when she lamented that the Murphy-Taylor strike demonstrated that there was 'no service acceptable to our great country except under arms.' While she only hinted at the masculine independence needed to make this 'valiant stand for freedom of conscience' – she knew 'how rare these young men' were – Nye nevertheless argued that America was failing in its democratic duties when it prevented COs from exercising their conscience at meaningful labour: 'our country of all countries... must respect' freedom of conscience.⁶⁷

Jaffe's and Nye's criticisms had potentially international implications. Elaine Freeman, a Brooklyn pacifist, compared 'arbitrary laws' against freedom of conscience and the imprisonment of COs, the 'highest in American manhood,' to the practices of 'the totalitarian governments which we are fighting today.' Until Selective Service instituted a 'democratic overhauling' of CPS so that 'real pacifists' could do meaningful 'social work,' the United States would signal to the oppressed of the world that they would not 'be better off under an Allied victory.'⁶⁸ Arthur Mekeel similarly argued that America's critics would be justified if the United States did not earn 'the right to support... a war against fascism' by ceasing its 'prosecution of men of such moral fiber.'⁶⁹ Jaffe, Nye, Freeman, and Mekeel reproduced the CPS walkouts' critique, signalling its advance beyond the walls of CPS: an international war for democracy was a hypocritical undertaking so long as the United States did not uphold its democratic promise to recognize conscience in the domestic sphere.

Conclusion

Selective Service eventually relented: as the war progressed, CPS expanded into mental and public health, as well as medical experimentation and forest-firefighting, fields in which many COs were happy to work.⁷⁰ But Murphy and Taylor remained in

⁶⁶Lena Jaffe to Lewis B. Hershey, March 23, 1943, RG147, Conscientious Objectors General File, Container 194, Danbury Prison Strike Materials, NARA 2.

⁶⁷Helena Nye to Lewis B. Hershey, April 27, 1943, RG147, Conscientious Objectors General File, Container 194, Danbury Prison Strike Materials, NARA 2.

⁶⁸ Elaine Freeman to Lewis B. Hershey, April 2, 1943, RG147, Conscientious Objectors General File, Container 194, Danbury Prison Strike Materials, NARA 2.

⁶⁹Arthur J. Mekeel to Lewis B. Hershey, April 24, 1943, RG147, Conscientious Objectors General File, Container 194, Danbury Prison Strike Materials, NARA 2.

⁷⁰See, for instance Tucker, *The Great Starvation Experiment*; Matthews, *Smoke Jumping on the Western Fire Line*; and Taylor, *Acts of Conscience*.

prison long after their strike ceased. Hershey did not reply to letters clamouring for their release, and most of the country likely agreed with James Bennett's assessment that the pair were largely irrelevant to national democratic life, that they possessed 'serious personality problems,' and that their protest represented only a constitutional aversion to the kinds of authority to which other Americans were expected to adhere.⁷¹ That assessment was not entirely inaccurate: the war did not hinge on the protests of CO walkouts or the Danbury hunger strike, and Murphy and Taylor were some of the most radical characters in the CPS story. Perhaps the strike represented a crisis of masculinity for these radicals, whose opposition to the war rendered them social and political outliers in a nation almost romantically obsessed with the heroism of the combat GI.⁷²

On the other hand, the Murphy-Taylor strike hit a nerve for Americans from many walks of life and many corners of the national map. Murphy and Taylor took the arguments of other CPS walkouts to a physical extreme, spreading those ideas even further beyond the boundaries of the CPS and penal systems. According to Frank Olmstead, even 'reluctant prison officials' admitted they had never before seen men of such strength of character or such fine spirit.⁷³ Their protest shed light on a pervasive culture of anxiety that emerged among the CO population as they viewed what they interpreted as a democratic retreat in the United States. The petition campaign to secure their release, while unsuccessful, gave concerned citizens like John Butler the opportunity to remind their government that 'Democracy, like charity, begins at home.'⁷⁴ Ultimately, the walk-outs and the hunger strike demonstrated how COs and their allies transformed a targeted critique of the CPS labour regime into a broader warning about the dangers of preaching democracy internationally while practicing totalitarianism at home.

⁷¹Bennett, *Inquiry into Charges of Mistreatment of Inmates of the Medical Center for Federal Prisoners at Springfield, Missouri*.

⁷²James Sparrow argues that the GIs sacrifices became the "master key to wartime political culture." See James Sparrow, *Warfare State: World War II Americans and the Age of Big Government*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), esp. pp. 160–77.

⁷³Frank Olmstead, Report, March 1943, CCW-1A, Box 32, Correspondence, Etc. Organizations/Denominations/Peace Leaders: Frank Olmstead (War Resisters League), 1943-1944 (May), SCPC.

⁷⁴John Butler to Lewis B. Hershey, May 2, 1943, RG147, Conscientious Objectors General File, Container 194, Danbury Prison Strike Materials, NARA 2.

‘WE MUST! WE WILL! WE CAN!’: American identity in the newspapers of Japanese American incarceration camps, 1942-1945

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the treatment of Japanese Americans on the West Coast during the Second World War and investigates definitions of Americanness, with a focus on the newspapers of civilian incarceration camps. The incarceration challenges stereotypical legacies of the Second World War as the ‘good war’ and exemplifies the paradoxical nature of American identity. However, vehement support in the newspapers for ‘American’ values and the war effort contradicts the evident unconstitutionality of the incarceration. Emphasis is also placed on the representation of women in the newspapers, to provide new perspectives regarding the legacies of the Second World War.

Introduction

On 7 December 1941 Japan attacked the American military base at Pearl Harbor. Just two months later, on 19 February 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 which was used as the basis for the incarceration of more than 110,000 Japanese Americans from the West Coast of the United States, many of whom were legal American citizens.¹ They were first moved to temporary Wartime Civil Control Administration (WCCA) Assembly Centers, and then to more permanent War Relocation Authority (WRA) Relocation Centers.

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¹National Archives Catalog (NAC), NAID 5730250, Franklin D. Roosevelt, *Executive Order 9066*, 19 February 1942. <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/5730250>. Accessed 23 April 2025. The Western Defense Command (WDC) gave a total of 117,116 Japanese Americans incarcerated. John L. DeWitt, *Final Report, Japanese Evacuation from the West Coast*, (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1943), p.356.

Japanese Americans' race affected the way in which they were treated by the government, particularly following the Pearl Harbor attack, and this led to a desire or need to prove their loyalty to the United States. This article will discuss American identity as represented throughout the entire run of the camp newspapers, with a particular focus on those of the Assembly Centers, which hold the immediate response of Japanese Americans to the incarceration, but are largely neglected in the existing historiography. It will also consider the depiction of women in the newspapers, many of which contained women's features and columns, another unexplored aspect of the experience of Japanese Americans in the camps.

The unconstitutionality of this forced removal and mass incarceration evidently contradicts the notion of the 'good war'. The Second World War is often seen as the 'good war', as the US professed to fight for honourable ideals against a dishonourable enemy. This overlooks the many contradictions in the manifestation of these supposedly 'American' virtues on the home front. The camp newspapers, however, in professing patriotism and supporting the defending of 'American' ideals, such as democracy, freedom, and unity, reinforce the narrative of the 'good war', in the face of the incarceration.

Assessment of the incarceration began before the war had ended, but even in the present there is confusion about the terminology that should be used. As a means of legitimising the incarceration, the government used euphemistic language such as 'evacuation' or 'internment'. While many historians still use these contemporary terms in order to prevent confusion, as noted by Stephanie Hinnertshitz, it is important that the term 'incarceration' be used instead, as it more accurately reflects the legal definition of the process, and avoids the perpetuation of euphemistic terminology.²

²Stephanie Hinnertshitz, *Japanese American Incarceration: The Camps and Coerced Labor during World War II*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2021), p.5. On terminology see: Roger Daniels, 'Words Do Matter: A Note on Inappropriate Terminology and the Incarceration of the Japanese Americans', *Discover Nikkei*, 2, 1 (2008), n.p. <https://www.discovernikkei.org/en/journal/2008/2/1/words-do-matter/>. Accessed 23 April 2025, Densho, *Terminology* (2019) <https://densho.org/terminology/>. Accessed 23 April 2025, Yoshinori H.T. Himel, 'Americans' Misuse of "Internment"', *Seattle Journal for Social Justice*, 14.3 (2016) pp.797-837, Karen L. Ishizuka, *Lost and Found: Reclaiming the Japanese American Incarceration*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), National Japanese American Historical Society (NJAHS), *Due Process: Americans of Japanese Ancestry and the United States Constitution 1787-1994*, (San Francisco: NJAHS, 1995), National Park Service (NPS), *Terminology and the Mass Incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II* (2022) <https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/terminology-and-the-mass-incarceration-of-japanese-americans-during-world-war-ii.htm>. Accessed 23 April 2023, and Raymond www.bjmh.org.uk

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The incarceration itself was not only unjust, but illegal, and the government's use of the word 'internment' was a deliberate attempt to frame the mass removal and detention of tens of thousands of Japanese Americans as constitutional. In a simpler sense, the term 'internment' is an inaccurate one. As Yoshinori Himel notes, 'internment' was a legally justified scheme which allowed for the 'selective imprisonment of alien civilians, ... with rudimentary due process', so using this term to refer to the indiscriminate incarceration of 110,000 Japanese Americans is 'a deceptive whitewash'.³

Korematsu v. United States (1944) determined that the terms 'Assembly Centers' and 'Relocation Centers' were euphemisms for prisons and concentration camps, respectively.⁴ While 'concentration camp' is an accurate description, many historians avoid using the term due to the enduring connection of the term in the popular imagination to the Nazi 'extermination camps', as noted by Alice Yang Murray.⁵ Use of 'concentration camps' will be avoided here, in favour of the less controversial, but still accurate terms, 'incarceration camps' or 'prison camps'. 'Assembly Centers' and 'Relocation Centers' will be used in this article to distinguish between the earlier and later camps, but these are not precise descriptions, as they were all, in fact, prison camps. There were also specific words used to describe the different generations of Japanese Americans: first generation Japanese Americans, born in Japan, were known as 'Issei'; their American-born, citizen children were 'Nisei'; and those born in the US to Nisei parents were 'Sansei'. A separate categorization was 'Kibei': second generation Japanese Americans who had returned home to Japan for education.⁶

In early 1941, Curtis B. Munson was commissioned by President Roosevelt (FDR) to investigate the loyalty of Japanese Americans. The so-called 'Munson Report' was

Y. Okamura, 'The American Concentration Camps: A Cover-Up Through Euphemistic Terminology', *Journal of Ethnic Studies*, 10, 3 (1982), pp.95-109 (p.95).

³Himel, Yoshinori H.T., 'Enough With the Euphemisms. They're Not 'Family Residential Centers.' They're Jails.', *The Washington Post*, 11 July 2018 https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/enough-with-the-euphemisms-theyre-not-family-residential-centers-theyre-jails/2018/07/11/7e1eb22c-8399-11e8-8553-a3ce89036c78_story.html. Accessed 11 November 2025.

⁴*Korematsu v. United States*, 323 U.S. 214 (1944) <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/323/214/>. Accessed 11 November 2025.

⁵Alice Yang Murray, *Historical Memories of the Japanese American Internment and the Struggle for Redress*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), p.7 and Hinnershitz, *Japanese American Incarceration* (2021), pp.255-256.

⁶There is no consensus amongst scholars regarding the presentation of these generational names, but this article will follow the example of Densho and capitalise, but not italicise, the terms 'Issei', 'Nisei', 'Kibei', and 'Sansei'.

submitted on 7 October, and the three generations of Japanese Americans were addressed and characterised distinctly. The Issei were 'probably loyal romantically to Japan' but Munson acknowledged that many had assimilated; the Nisei were considered 'pathetically eager' to show their loyalty to the US, whereas the Sansei were exonerated entirely; the report remarked that 'the Third generation of Japanese is a baby and may be disregarded for the purpose of this survey'; significantly, the report concluded that 'there will be no armed uprising of Japanese'.⁷ Despite these findings, all Japanese Americans on the West Coast, men, women, and children, were removed and imprisoned in camps.

When Japanese labourers began to emigrate to the United States at the turn of the twentieth century, there was already an entrenched, indiscriminate anti-Asian sentiment on the West Coast.⁸ The growing Japanese population, alongside Japan's early twentieth century military successes, engendered anti-Japanese racism and provoked fears of a 'fifth-column' invasion or organised sabotage on the West Coast. The Pearl Harbor bombing exacerbated these fears, but the Americanness of Japanese Americans had been doubted long before the war. There was no evidence of *Japanese American* collusion in carrying out the attack on Pearl Harbor, but they were blamed nonetheless.⁹ On 12 February 1942, influential journalist Walter Lippmann published an article in the *Los Angeles Times*, in which he suggested that the lack of Japanese American sabotage was not 'a sign that there is nothing to be feared. It is a sign that the blow is well-organized and that it is held back until it can be struck with maximum

⁷Curtis B. Munson, 'Japanese on the West Coast,' in *American Concentration Camps: A Documentary History of the Relocation and Incarceration of Japanese Americans, 1942-1945*, Volume 1, July, 1940 - December 31, 1941, ed. by Roger Daniels, (New York: Garland Publishing, 1989), n.p.

⁸On anti-Asian racism: Angela N. Ancheta., *Race, Rights, and the Asian American Experience*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2006), Roger Daniels, *Asian America: Chinese and Japanese in the United States since 1850*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1998), Roger Daniels, *The Politics of Prejudice: The Anti-Japanese Movement in California and the Struggle for Japanese Exclusion*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), John W. Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), Sonia Gomez, "'Yankee, Why Does a Big Man like You Fear My Baby?': The Politics of the Anti-Japanese Movement, 1908-1924", *Amerasia*, 46, 2 (2020), pp.162-179, and Erika Lee, *At America's Gates: Chinese Immigration during the Exclusion Era, 1882-1943*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

⁹Owen J. Roberts, *Attack Upon Pearl Harbor by Japanese Armed Forces* [Roberts Commission], 28 January 1942. <https://www.ibiblio.org/pha/pha/roberts/roberts.html>. Accessed 28 May 2025.

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effect.¹⁰ The *Los Angeles Times* also published a now infamous article on 2 February 1942, stating that:

Perhaps the most difficult and delicate question that confronts our powers that be is the handling - the safe and proper treatment - of our American-born Japanese, our Japanese-Americans, citizens by the accident of birth, but who are Japanese nevertheless. A viper is nonetheless a viper wherever the egg is hatched.¹¹

Leader of the Western Defense Command (WDC) General John L. DeWitt wrote in his 1943 report that the forced relocation was a military necessity, arguing that 'along the vital Pacific Coast over 112,000 potential enemies, of Japanese extraction, are at large today' and 'the very fact that no sabotage has taken place to date is a disturbing and confirming indication that such action will be taken.'¹² Reiterating Lippmann's earlier suggestion, their innocence was characterised by DeWitt as evidence of inherent guilt. The report went on to suggest that 'the Japanese race is an enemy race and while many second and third generation Japanese born on United States soil, possessed of United States citizenship, have become "Americanized", the racial strains are undiluted.'¹³ Race was a key factor in the decision-making of DeWitt, and the lack of large-scale incarceration of German and Italian Americans shows the difference in how white and non-white 'enemy' Americans were treated.¹⁴

¹⁰Walter Lippmann, 'The Fifth Column on the Coast', *Los Angeles Times*, 12 February 1942, p.32.

¹¹W.H. Anderson, 'The Question of Japanese Americans', *Los Angeles Times*, 2 February 1942, p.26.

¹²John L. DeWitt., *Final Report, Japanese Evacuation from the West Coast*, (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1943), p.34.

¹³DeWitt., *Final Report*. p.34.

¹⁴While German and Italian Americans were detained and interned, they were not subject to the same process of mass removal and incarceration that Japanese Americans were. German and Italian immigrants also faced less suspicion by virtue of their ability to become naturalised US citizens, although being a citizen did not save many from arrest. On German and Italian Americans, see: Nancy C. Carnevale, "'No Italian Spoken for the Duration of the War": Language, Italian-American Identity, and Cultural Pluralism in the World War II Years', *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 22,3 (2003), pp.3-33, Lawrence DiStasi, *Una Storia Segreta: The Secret History of Italian American Evacuation and Internment during World War II*, (Berkeley: Heyday Books, 2001), Stephen Fox, *America's Invisible Gulag: A Biography of German American Internment and Exclusion in World War II*, (New York: Peter Lang, 2000), and John E. Schmitz, *Enemies Among Us: The Relocation, Internment, and Repatriation of German, Italian, and*

31 www.bjmh.org.uk

The FBI had carried out surveillance from 1940, compiling lists of German American, Italian American, and Japanese American organisations and individuals who were deemed to be dangerous. Following the attack on Pearl Harbor, these lists were used, in conjunction with similar Department of Justice lists, to carry out the arrest of over one thousand Issei under the terms of 1798 Alien Enemies Act.¹⁵ In a memoir of her family's incarceration at Manzanar Assembly Center, Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston described the arrest of her father:

He had become a man without a country. The land of his birth was at war with America; yet after thirty-five years here he was still prevented by law from becoming an American citizen. He was suddenly a man with no rights who looked exactly like the enemy.¹⁶

These initial arrests were of first generation, non-citizen Japanese Americans, but the forced removal and mass incarceration affected Issei and Nisei alike. In implementing the incarceration of Japanese Americans, the US government showed that it saw no difference between the immigrant Japanese Issei and the American-born citizen Nisei; they were the 'enemy' not because of their actions, but because, as DeWitt had suggested, they were an 'enemy race'. While fighting the 'good war' for democracy and equality, the United States was imprisoning tens of thousands of innocent American citizens on the basis of their race.

A series of Exclusion Orders were issued between 23 March and 22 July 1942, giving Japanese Americans notice of their impending relocation and incarceration.¹⁷ Between March and October 1942 they were imprisoned in sixteen temporary Assembly Centers, thirteen of which were in California, and the remaining three in Arizona, Oregon, and Washington. From May onwards, Japanese Americans were moved to ten permanent Relocation Centers, one each in Idaho, Utah, Wyoming, and Colorado,

Japanese Americans during the Second World War, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2021).

¹⁵As Roger Daniels notes, this process, while unjust, was conducted legally, in accordance with the Alien Enemies Act of 1798, and fulfils the actual legal definition of the process of 'internment'. Daniels, 'Words Do Matter', *Discover Nikkei* (2008), n.p. and 'Alien Enemies Act' 50 U.S. Code § 21, 6 July 1798. <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/50/21>. Accessed 25 April 2025.

¹⁶Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston and James Houston, *Farewell to Manzanar: A True Story of Japanese American Experience During and After the World War II Internment*, (Random House, Inc., New York, 1983).

¹⁷Online Archive of California (OAC), Western Defense Command, *Civilian Exclusion Orders*, nos. 1-108, 1942 <https://oac.cdlib.org/ark:/28722/bk0014b1k1d/>. Accessed 23 April 2025.

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and two in California, Arizona, and Arkansas.¹⁸ The perimeters were surrounded by barbed wire, and manned by armed guards who had been ordered to arrest those who attempted to leave. While many were able to relocate to non-West Coast areas before the end of the war, they were still legally prohibited from returning to the West Coast until 18 December 1944, when the Supreme Court ruled that loyal American citizens could not be legally detained, and the WRA prepared to close its camps.¹⁹ All of the camps except one were closed by the end of 1945.²⁰

The administrative effort of maintaining provisions for more than 110,000 Japanese Americans was immediately evident, and newspapers, written by Japanese Americans, were quickly established in all but one of the sixteen WCCA camps. The WCCA camps were in operation for varying amounts of time and with different numbers of people in each camp, so the number of issues published varied greatly; the *Santa Anita Pacemaker*, Santa Anita Assembly Center, had fifty issues, whereas the *Arbo-Gram*, Marysville [Arboga] Assembly Center, had only four. All of the WRA Relocation Centers had a newspaper, and, as these camps were more permanent, there were many more issues. The onus for the creation of the camp press was on Japanese Americans; they were responsible for the writing, production, and distribution of the newspapers, although the WRA retained final say. The Relocation Center newspapers were able to rely upon advertisements for funding, but the WCCA camps had to contend with very limited funds and resources, with paper shortages often impacting publication.²¹ The newspapers were mimeographed, apart from in a few WRA camps which were later able to print their issues. Many of the papers included Japanese-language sections, as many Issei could not read English. The newspapers generally contained administrative information; news related to Japanese Americans, both inside and outside of the camps; birth, death, and marriage statistics; recreation schedules; sports pages; as well as editorials, humorous columns, and letters-to-the-editor segments.

The Assembly Center newspapers had a similar tone overall; while there tended to be more detail or personality in some of the more established newspapers at the larger

¹⁸For an overview of the individual camps see: Jeffrey F. Burton, et al, *Confinement and Ethnicity: An Overview of World War II Japanese American Relocation Sites*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002).

¹⁹Ex parte Mitsuye Endo, 323 U.S. 283 (1944), via Library of Congress (LOC) <https://www.loc.gov/item/usrep323283/>. Accessed 27 May 2025.

²⁰Tule Lake Relocation Center closed on 20 March 1946. It became a 'Segregation Center' on 15 July 1943, for 'disloyal' Japanese Americans,

²¹n.a., 'Arbogandering', *Arbo-Gram*, [1, 1] 23 May 1942, p.2, n.a., 'Notice', *Evacuazette*, [1, 2] 22 May 1942, p.2, and n.a., 'This Week's Angel', *Camp Harmony News-letter*, [1, 6] 12 June 1942, p. 1.

camps, criticism of the incarceration was largely non-existent across all of the papers. At the WRA camps, however, the character and focus of the individual newspapers did differ: the *Minidoka Irrigator* dedicated most of its pages to the exploits of Nisei soldiers; the *Heart Mountain Sentinel* included impassioned discussion of the draft resistance movement; whereas the *Denson Tribune* almost exclusively focused on encouraging Japanese Americans to relocate as soon as possible. While the Relocation Center newspapers did differ largely in what they printed, the voice of the newspapers in terms of criticism remained generally the same. They acknowledged the injustice of the situation, occasionally calling out certain individuals or groups for their role, but this was followed by an encouragement to try and make the best of their circumstances and to get on with it, in order to help the war effort.

The newspapers themselves described the reasons for their creation. The *Santa Anita Pacemaker* suggested that its purpose was to 'cover every activity of this center from the administration to vital statistics ... to who celebrated what birthday when'.²² The *Pomona Center News*, Pomona Assembly Center, asserted its aim was 'to make the stay of everyone just a little better'.²³ The *Manzanar Free Press*, Owens Valley [Manzanar] Assembly Center, suggested that it would 'try to make it as informative and as entertaining as any of the big dailies running on multiple presses'.²⁴ In stating the aims of the camp press, the editors attempted to normalise an exceptional situation: the camp newspapers were just like any other American newspaper.

American identity was a key theme in the newspapers, something that is difficult in itself to define. No reasonable attempt can be made here to comprehensively define Americanness, what is most important is the way in which it is defined by Japanese Americans in the camp newspapers. The nature of the incarceration meant that Japanese Americans were unavoidably confronted with the question of their American identity and the newspapers provided a medium for them to contemplate and present specific notions of Americanness. The wartime context meant that American identity was under a microscope more generally, with 'American' ideals, principles, and characteristics, such as freedom, unity, democracy and patriotism, offered as answers to the essential wartime question of 'Why We Fight?'. The US' national identity is often rooted in a varyingly defined but rigid ideological framework, which emphasizes specific and distinctly 'American' values which had been conceived and developed from the very beginnings of its settlement. G. K. Chesterton famously remarked that 'America is the only nation in the world that is founded on a creed'.²⁵ On 4 July 1942,

²²n.a., 'It's Yours', ??? [*Santa Anita Pacemaker*], [1, A] 18 April 1942, p.1.

²³n.a., 'The Policy of the Pomona Center News', *Pomona Center News*, [1, 1] 23 May 1942, p.2.

²⁴Ibid., p.2 and 'Editorial,' *Manzanar Free Press*, Vol. I, No. 1, April 11 (1942), p.1.

²⁵G.K. Chesterton, *What I Saw in America*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1922), p.7.

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the *Tulare News*, Tulare Assembly Center, evoked the particular belief system of the Declaration of Independence and US Constitution, claiming that 'We, the free people, with the United States of America leading the charge, must fight, bleed, and die, that as we may preserve our unalienable rights to life, Liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.'²⁶ This 'creed' or these values may not necessarily be unique, or even accurate, representations of the reality of the United States, but what matters is that they were believed and even used as the justification for America's involvement and actions during the Second World War.

Through the newspapers, it is possible to see how Japanese Americans defined Americanness and what they considered to be 'American' values. They did not have complete freedom in publishing, but the papers provide an opportunity to see how they understood Americanness and how they presented themselves as 'American' to those outside the camps. On 11 July 1942, the *Tanforan Totalizer*, Tanforan Assembly Center, asked Japanese Americans what it meant to be an American: 'The replies were all in complete unanimity, saying that they are all Americans who believe in America's democratic principles; and by this tenet, we are all Americans – we, who firmly, steadfastly hold to our faith in the American way of life.' Individual responses included that of 18-year-old Martha Abe, who suggested that '[m]y ancestors are Japanese; but I am an American, since the word means belief in a free way of life, opposition to dictatorship and following America's Constitutional principles.' Thus, the championing of freedom and the importance of adhering to the Constitution were emphasised. Thirty-nine year-old Issei Harry Yoshida stated 'it is what I believe that makes me an American. ... Any good American would stand up 100% for the ideals and beliefs set down by the forefathers of America.'²⁷ The values espoused in the newspapers are: democracy, freedom or liberty, patriotism or a respect for America, and enthusiasm for the war effort. The discussion of identity in the newspapers cannot be read simplistically as a sincere declaration of support for the incarceration, however, and the multiple audiences of the papers should be considered. Their primary audience was those living in the camps, but the external audience was likely a consideration; the incarcerated Japanese Americans wished to declare their loyalty and patriotism to the watchful eyes of the local population and the camp administrators.

The optimism and positive tone employed by many of the WCCA camp newspapers inadvertently emphasised the irony of the incarceration. The *Pinedale Logger*, Pinedale Assembly Center) stated that 'in the year 1942 on this 4th of July we say, "We have liberty and we intend to keep it; we are serving notice to all aggressors that we Americans would welcome death rather than their rule of tyranny."²⁸ The notion of

²⁶Hiroshi Takusagawa, 'We must fight!', *Tulare News*, [1, 17] 4 July 1942, p.3.

²⁷n.a., 'Your Opinion, Please!', *Tanforan Totalizer*, [1, 9] 11 July 1942, p.7.

²⁸n.a., 'Message to the Axis', *Pinedale Logger*, [1, 7] 3 July 1942, p.3.

fighting a war for freedom, both for Americans and for the entire world, is a common theme in the newspapers. This evidently contrasts with the nature of the incarceration itself, as well as the fact that those in camps were prevented from fighting in the military until 1943, and were only able to fight in segregated units.

An article in the *Evacuazette* (Portland Assembly Center) entitled 'WE MUST! WE WILL! WE CAN!' stated that 'as a model democratic country, it is for the freedom loving people of the world to insure [sic] the preservation of all democratic governments and it is mandatory that we aid the peoples of those countries who have lost their freedom.'²⁹ In the 'Four Freedoms' speech of 6 January 1941, President Roosevelt had proclaimed support for the Allies in their 'defense of freedom' and expressed a determination to protect freedom of speech, of religion, from want, and from fear.³⁰ Japanese Americans were not unaware of the fact that they were excluded from these freedoms that the US professed to be fighting the war for. The newspapers make apparent the lack of freedom of speech in particular. The 'Four Freedoms' are referenced in an editorial of 2 November 1942, in the *Manzanar Free Press* which argued that 'American citizens of Japanese ancestry want an equal partnership and share in the enjoyment and struggle for the Four Freedoms.'³¹ Therefore, in the early months, the irony of the incarceration and the unfair treatment of Japanese Americans was acknowledged in the newspapers, without explicit criticism of the government.

The level of military control over the content of the newspapers varied. The incarceration was unconstitutional and the military would likely have been keen to avoid this being acknowledged. A policy of censorship would have been a clear violation of many American citizens' First Amendment rights in relation to freedom of the press. A certain level of censorship was to be expected and approved of, however, in line with the fact that Japanese Americans were seen as 'potential enemies'.³² Research regarding the camp newspapers is limited, as the majority of the relevant historiography focuses on the causes of the incarceration, but censorship has been the subject of several articles. Takeya Mizuno has discussed these censorship policies, arguing that the newspapers were used by the WRA as a 'public relations tool'; the positive tone of the newspapers created an optimistic and cheerful image of the camps

²⁹n.a., 'WE MUST! WE WILL! WE CAN!', *Evacuazette*, [1, 13], 30 June 1942, p.2.

³⁰The American Presidency Project (APP), Franklin D. Roosevelt, *Annual Message to Congress on the State of the Union*, 6 January 1941.

<https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/209473>. Accessed 23 April 2025.

³¹D.T., 'Positive and Negative Propaganda', *Manzanar Free Press*, [2, 45] 2 November 1942, p.2.

³²DeWitt, *Final Report*. p.34.

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to counter accusations that the incarceration was unconstitutional.³³ Mizuno also investigated the Assembly Centers, arguing that the censorship was extreme, in comparison to the government's more relaxed overall policy. A number of more general analyses have been undertaken. Lauren Kessler discusses three camp newspapers, concluding that censorship was administered covertly to varying degrees in the different camps. The lack of mention of dissent in the newspapers shows that there were things that were not mentioned.³⁴ E. J. Friedlander has focused on Jerome Relocation Center's newspaper, arguing that restriction varied between camps and the *Denson Tribune* had more freedom than others, and notes that censorship was harshest in the initial months of the incarceration.³⁵ John D. Stevens also recognises that restriction was harshest in the earlier years; it largely depended upon the individual camp's relationship between the WRA administrators and the newspaper staff.³⁶ Catherine Luther investigates identity in the WRA camp newspapers, arguing that the earliest months of the incarceration saw a significant emphasis on American identity and a lack of criticism of the incarceration. As the war progressed, more acknowledgement was made of their Japanese heritage, but pride in American citizenship was still emphasised, alongside more open criticism.³⁷ Luther discusses only the WRA camps, but, importantly, this trajectory regarding identity is further confirmed by analysis of the WCCA camp press; the earliest months of the

³³Takeya Mizuno, 'Censorship in a Different Name: Press "Supervision" in Wartime Japanese American Camps 1942-1943', *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 88, 1 (2011), pp.121-141, Takeya Mizuno, 'Journalism Under Military Guards and Searchlights: Newspaper Censorship at Japanese American Assembly Camps during World War II', *Journalism History*, 29, 3 (2003), pp.98-106, and Takeya Mizuno, 'The Creation of the "Free" Press in Japanese-American Camps: The War Relocation Authority's Planning and Making of the Camp Newspaper Policy', *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 78, 3 (2001), pp.503-518.

³⁴Lauren Kessler, 'Fettered Freedoms: The Journalism of World War II Japanese Internment Camps', *Journalism History*, 15, 2-3 (1988), pp.70-79. See also: Stacia Bensyl, 'Lives in Print: The Literary Magazine in Japanese American Internment Camps', *Japan Studies Association Journal*, 8 (2010), pp.84-100, and Glen Feighery, "Now We Are One": How Japanese American Internment Camp Newspapers Helped Create Communities, 1942-1943', *American Journalism*, 42, 1 (2025), pp.70-87.

³⁵E. J. Friedlander, 'Freedom of Press behind Barbed Wire: Paul Yokota and the Jerome Relocation Center Newspaper', *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, 44, 4 (1985), pp.303-313.

³⁶John D. Stevens, 'From Behind Barbed Wire: Freedom of the Press in World War II Japanese Centers', *Journalism Quarterly*, 48, 2 (1971), pp.279-287.

³⁷Catherine Luther, 'Reflections of Cultural Identities in Conflict: Japanese American Internment Camp Newspapers during World War II', *Journalism History*, 29, 2 (2003), pp.69-81.

incarceration saw the heaviest censorship and the strongest commitment to the US and the war effort.

Heavy censorship was framed by the WCCA as 'supervision' or 'guidance.'³⁸ It is, naturally, impossible to know what was *not* published in the newspapers, although an example of censorship in the *Camp Harmony News-Letter*, Puyallup [Camp Harmony] Assembly Center, shows that some articles were removed from the newspaper after publication, with entire sections struck from the pages. It is unclear why these articles were removed, but certain phrases are still visible, including the words 'lost faith' and 'with the United States', which suggests that this was a topic not to be mentioned.³⁹ It is also likely that self-censorship was performed by the newspaper staff as they knew what would or would not be published. As Hisaye Yamamoto, a columnist of the *Poston Chronicle*, Poston Relocation Center, recalled in a 1994 interview:

HY [Hisaye Yamamoto]: Well, we pretty much knew the rules so we didn't write stories that would be subversive or anything like that.

EO [Emiko Omori]: So what were the rules?

HY: Patriotism, patriotism. That was the rule. ...

EO: Would you call it censorship?

HY: Oh, yeah. Sure.

EO: I mean, did you have, was the press free to speak its mind –

HY: Well, like the Manzanar press called itself the Manzanar Free Press. But I doubt it, you know.⁴⁰

The presence of censorship was also noted during the incarceration. An anonymous publication entitled *The Evacuee Speaks Newsletter* was circulated from Santa Anita Assembly Center in August 1942. It noted that the 'rigid censorship' meant appeasing the administrators took precedence over 'the more important and immediate task of maintaining the morale of center residents'.⁴¹

The role of self-censorship is important; the camp press cannot be taken as an accurate representation of Japanese Americans' views, but it shows how they responded to the war and incarceration, and how they presented this to an audience which included those outside of the camps. In 1942, the *Santa Anita Pacemaker* stated in its farewell

³⁸DeWitt, *Final Report*. p.213.

³⁹*Camp Harmony News-Letter*, [1, 11] 1 August 1942, pp.2-3.

⁴⁰Hisaye Yamamoto, 'Hisaye Yamamoto Interview', interviewed by Chizu Omori and Emiko Omori, Densho Digital Repository (DDR), 21 March 1994. <https://ddr.densho.org/narrators/143/>. Accessed 25 April 2025.

⁴¹n.a., 'The Problems of an Assembly Center Newspaper', *The Evacuee Speaks Newsletter*, 15 September 1942, p.5.

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issue that several libraries and universities had requested copies of the newspapers, proudly proclaiming that 'Harvard uses our paper in its political science courses'.⁴² Editor Paul Yokota noted: 'the eyes of the nation see the Japanese Americans at Santa Anita, ... determined to prove to America that they, too, are Americans'.⁴³ The newspaper staff were aware that their every move was being watched, and that the newspapers would be used as a historical document in years to come. For many years before Second World War, Japanese Americans' American identity had been repeatedly questioned, and the newspapers exemplify how many felt it was necessary to emphasise their Americanness, rather than openly criticise the government or military, as might be expected.

While the Assembly Center newspapers were almost entirely free of criticism, there is evidence of contemporary dissent outside of the camp newspapers. In 1942, *The Evacuee Speaks Newsletter* described the incarceration as 'a violation of the principles that our country is fighting for' and as a 'violation of the Constitutional rights of American citizens.' The initial banning of Japanese-language literature in the WCCA camps was described as 'a milder form of the Nazi "burning of books"', an opinion not proffered in the camp newspapers.⁴⁴ *The Evacuee Speaks* was critical of the camps, but still provided a diplomatic assessment of the incarceration that encouraged cooperation and loyalty to America overall. It proves that there was dissent amongst Japanese Americans during the war, and the lack of evidence of this in the newspapers shows that even the more restrained expressions of discontent were not accepted by the WCCA camp administrators.

As the years progressed, Japanese Americans were by no means free to publish whatever they pleased, but criticism of the incarceration did appear. Critical editorials from other newspapers were sometimes reprinted, but disapproval from the newspaper staff themselves usually maintained an optimistic tone. The *Gila News-Courier*, Gila River Relocation Center, stated on 9 January 1943 that 'we have missed liberty these past six months. ... We want it back again' and acknowledged that America 'is yet far from a true democracy', but still ended with a message of hope, and a belief in America's potential to be a democratic and equal nation.⁴⁵ As noted by Luther regarding the WRA camps, Japanese Americans felt it less necessary to hold

⁴²Paul Yokota, 'Records of a Curious Interval', *Santa Anita Pacemaker*, [Farewell Edition] 1942, p.21. The last dated edition of the *Santa Anita Pacemaker* is 7 October 1942, so it is likely that the farewell edition was issued in October 1942.

⁴³*Ibid.*, p.21.

⁴⁴OAC, 'Hearing Boards for the Evacuees', *The Evacuee Speaks News-Letter*, 1 August 1942, p.1. <https://oac.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/k6kd25z6/?brand=oac4>. Accessed 23 April 2025, and 'On Civil Liberties', *The Evacuee Speaks News-Letter*, 1 August 1942, p.1.

⁴⁵J.N. 'The Goal – Humanity', *Gila News-Courier*, [2, 4] 9 January 1943, p.2.

back their criticism as the war progressed, whether due to the fact that it was becoming increasingly difficult to justify the incarceration, or because they felt they had proved themselves, as exemplified by their increased role in the war effort and the successes of the all-Nisei Battalion.⁴⁶ The *Rohwer Outpost*, Rohwer Relocation Center, was more overtly critical; on 10 March 1943, it described the removal and incarceration as 'selfish and undemocratic measures' going 'against the fundamental tenets of the US Constitution.'⁴⁷ Again, on 17 April 1943, the *Outpost* highlighted the importance of the US being 'a unified nation' and criticised DeWitt for 'carry[ing] on Jap-baiting tactics' arguing that 'the safety of not only the West [C]oast but the whole of the United States is endangered' by such divisiveness.⁴⁸ The editorial importantly criticised the implication that Japanese Americans were incapable of assimilating, and becoming Americans.

This criticism in the Relocation Centers suggests that censorship had eased since the Assembly Centers, as evidenced by the alignment of editorials written in the camp with those written outside, many of which were reprinted in the camp newspapers. An article entitled 'My Only Crime is My Face,' was published in *Liberty* magazine, on 14 August 1943, by journalist Mary Oyama, a Japanese American, incarcerated first in Santa Anita Assembly Center and then Heart Mountain Relocation Center. She asserted that:

[A]lthough we still feel that the basis on which we were evacuated (because of racial extraction) was unjust, and although we believe our incarceration was illegal (because of our American Bill of Rights!), we have decided that the fullest cooperation with the government is the very best way to prove our loyalty to our country.⁴⁹

The *Heart Mountain Sentinel* referred to Oyama's article written with 'characteristic feminine sensitivity', acknowledging the importance of a national magazine printing 'a nisei's side of this great tragedy', and endorsing the article as 'required reading'.⁵⁰ The article acknowledged the illegality of the incarceration, but still encouraged

⁴⁶Luther, 'Reflections of Cultural Identities in Conflict', *Journalism History* (2003).

⁴⁷n.a., 'Democracy at Home', *Rohwer Outpost*, [2, 20] 10 March 1943, p.6.

⁴⁸n.a., 'Is a Jap always a Jap?', *Rohwer Outpost*, [2, 31] 17 April 1943, p.6, and n.a., 'DeWitt on Japanese', *Manzanar Free Press*, [3, 31] 17 April 1943, p.2.

⁴⁹Mary Oyama, 'My Only Crime is My Face', *Liberty*, 14 August 1943. pp. 11, pp.57-58 (p.58). See also: Eddie Shimano, 'Blueprint for a Slum', *Common Ground*, [Summer] 1943, pp.78-85.

⁵⁰n.a., 'Liberty Features Mary Oyama's Moving Article on Evacuation', *Heart Mountain Sentinel*, [2, 32] 7 August 1943, p.4, and n.a., "My Only Crime is My Face", *Heart Mountain Sentinel*, [2, 32] 7 August 1943, p.4.

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cooperation and loyalty. The similarity of the nature of the criticism in the camp editorials to Oyama's article demonstrates the importance accorded by Japanese Americans to how they were represented to outside audiences.

The voices of women, such as Oyama, have largely been ignored by scholarship of the incarceration. While several general studies of the incarceration have briefly discussed women's roles, there is a lack of research regarding women's experience in the camps, and even more specifically within the newspapers. A 'general' account of life in the camps is captured in the existing literature, but upon closer scrutiny the current historiography obscures the experience of women, as the 'general' is in actuality almost exclusively male. A focus on women's experiences provides an understanding of the ways in which Japanese American women engaged with American identity in distinct ways. There is a limited amount of work which provides either a brief survey of women's lives as part of a larger study, or focuses on specific themes such as sport, beauty, and military service.⁵¹ Women's voices in the camp newspapers are either given passing mention or are not discussed at all, and this constitutes a significant gap in the historiography.

Historical assessment of this omission of Japanese American women began in 1984, with Valerie J. Matsumoto's article entitled 'Japanese American Women during the Second World War'. Matsumoto argued that women's experiences in the camps were complex and diverse; while women faced racism and the obvious stresses that came with the upheaval of their lives, they were given more freedom in some facets of life. The communal living conditions meant that Issei women now had more leisure time, whereas Nisei women were untied from restrictive traditions of arranged marriage and had more freedom in terms of work opportunities.⁵² Evelyn Nakano Glenn's 1986 sociological study *Issei, Nisei, War Bride* focuses on the labour and family structures of three generations of Japanese American women in domestic service. Glenn, like Matsumoto, argues that the traditional patriarchal structure of family was weakened

⁵¹There are a number of articles that emphasise more specific aspects of the lives of Japanese American women, including: Evelyn Nakano Glenn, 'The Dialectics of Wage Work: Japanese-American Women and Domestic Service, 1905-1940', *Feminist Studies*, 6, 3 (1980) pp.427-471, Leslie A. Ito, 'Japanese American Women and the Student Relocation Movement, 1942-1945', *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, 21, 3 (2000), pp.1-24, Valerie J. Matsumoto, 'Desperately Seeking 'Deirdre': Gender Roles, Multicultural Relations, and Nisei Women Writers of the 1930s', *Frontiers*, 12, 1 (1991), pp.19-32, and Eileen H. Tamura, 'Gender, Schooling and Teaching, and the Nisei in Hawaii': Episode in American Immigration History, 1900-1940', *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 14, 4 (1995), pp.3-26.

⁵²Valerie J. Matsumoto, 'Japanese American Women during World War II', *Frontiers*, 8, 1 (1984), pp.6-14.

in the camps; Nisei who were wed in the incarceration years tended to have more equal marriages than those of their parents as well as more work opportunities.⁵³

Mei Nakano's book *Japanese American Women* also takes an intergenerational approach with a particular emphasis on the second-generation women.⁵⁴ Nakano notes the importance of increased leisure time for Issei women, as well as the weakening of patriarchal family structures. This change in family life through an enforced communal way of living meant that private family time was made largely impossible, and time was spent instead with friends and neighbours. Intergenerational studies such as these are significant, as scholarship tends to focus on Nisei women, largely due to the accessibility of sources related to their experiences. It is important that Issei voices are not overlooked, and interviews, memoirs, art, and other writings can be used to add nuance to the understanding of Japanese American experiences.⁵⁵

Samuel O. Regalado's 'Incarcerated Sport' focuses on the experiences of Nisei women by investigating the ways in which sport developed as a recreational activity in the WRA camps. Regalado argued that softball provided a means of maintaining women's morale, and that it helped to engender the sense of independence that they had come to experience in other areas of camp life. Mention is made of coverage of women's sports in the newspapers and how this differed from men's sports; the achievements of Japanese American women were underemphasised, and coverage, on occasion, focused instead entirely on their appearance.⁵⁶ Regalado's findings regarding the WRA

⁵³Evelyn Nakano Glenn, *Issei, Nisei, War Bride: Three Generations of Japanese American Women in Domestic Service*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986).

⁵⁴Mei Nakano, *Japanese American Women: Three Generations 1890-1990*, (Berkeley: Mina Press Publishing, 1990).

⁵⁵On Issei women, see: Yuji Ichioka, 'Amerika Nadeshiko: Japanese Immigrant Women in the United States, 1900-1924', *Pacific Historical Review*, 69, 2 (1980), p. 339-357, Kelli Y. Nakamura, 'Issei Women and Work: Washerwomen, Prostitutes, Midwives, and Barbers', *The Hawaiian Journal of History*, 49, 1 (2015), pp.119-148, Kazuhiro Oharazeki, 'Listening to the Voices of 'Other' Women in Japanese North America: Japanese Prostitutes and Barmaids in the American North West, 1887-1920', *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 32, 4 (2013), pp.5-40, Ryoko Okamura, 'Untold Stories of Issei Women: Collective Images and Individual Experiences in Japanese American Oral History', *Journal of American-East Asian Relations*, 28 (2021), pp. 9-40, Eileen Sunada Sarasohn, *Issei Women: Echoes from Another Frontier* (Palo Alto: Pacific Books, 1998), and Yukari Takai, 'Recrafting Marriage in Meiji Hawai'i, 1885-1913', *Gender & History*, 31, 3 (2019), pp.646-664.

⁵⁶Samuel O. Regalado, 'Incarcerated Sport: Nisei Women's Softball and Athletics During Japanese American Internment', *Journal of Sport History*, 27, 3 (2000), pp.431-444.

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camps are also evidenced in the WCCA camp newspapers, where women's sports columns used condescending language and often emphasised 'the shapely legs' and appearance of women over their sporting ability.⁵⁷

The experiences of the few Japanese American women in the Women's Army Corps are examined in Brenda Moore's *Serving Our Country*. Moore noted that the service of Japanese Americans had been largely forgotten in Second World War historiography, and that of Japanese American women had been ignored completely. Some Japanese American women remained in the military, but most returned to domestic work or marriage, fulfilling their desire to achieve the American dream.⁵⁸

Matsumoto's earlier article was developed in *City Girls*, which provides a useful study of Japanese American women prior to the war, and how this impacted their lives within the camps and the years that followed.⁵⁹ It considers the ways in which Nisei women navigated their lives as women, as daughters, and as Americans. Matsumoto argues that involvement in girls' clubs prior to the war allowed Nisei women to create similar clubs and communities within the camps, and provided them with skills to assist with new employment opportunities. The camp newspapers are discussed; women's features were similar to those of the mainstream press, focusing on women as homemakers, wives, and mothers, and showcased Nisei women's desire to connect to American culture. Malia McAndrew's article 'Japanese American Beauty Pageants and Minstrel Shows' investigates the newspapers' representation of gender and Americanness.⁶⁰ The article notes the ways in which girls and young women in the camps constructed an American identity aesthetically, by attempting to present themselves as what they believed was the American ideal; physically attractive and patriotic. The Assembly Center newspapers encouraged women to be beautiful for the benefit of men; the *Arbo-Gram* encouraged women to 'keep your feminine appearance' because 'a boy may be casting longing glances in your direction as you

⁵⁷n.a., 'Chance for Mrs', *Mercedian*, [1, 3] 23 June 1942, p.4. See also: Lillian Fukaye, 'The Feminine Side', *Turlock TAC*, [1, 1] 3 June 1942, p.3, n.a., "'A" Girls Frolic', *Camp Harmony News-Letter*, [1, 7] 17 June 1942, p.4, and n.a., 'Girls Sports', *Evacuazette*, [1, 6] 5 June 1942, p.4.

⁵⁸Brenda L. Moore, *Serving Our Country: Japanese American Women in the Military during World War II*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003).

⁵⁹Valerie J. Matsumoto, *City Girls: The Nisei Social World in Los Angeles, 1920-1950*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014). For postwar era, see: Precious Yamaguchi, *Experiences of Japanese American Women during and after World War II: Living in Internment Camps and Rebuilding life afterwards*, (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014).

⁶⁰Malia McAndrew, 'Japanese American Beauty Pageants and Minstrel Shows: The Performance of Gender and Race by Nisei Youth During World War II' *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, 7.1 (2014), pp.42-64.

saunter through this hot and dusty camp.⁶¹ General optimism was encouraged, the *Mercedian*, Merced Assembly Center, stated that 'when things are worst find something to smile about'.⁶² Support for the war effort was applauded, whether through 'building an enduring generation of finer Americans' as a mother, or 'keep[ing] up with women in war industries' by working on camouflage nets and in mess halls.⁶³ McAndrew also investigates the ways in which the Americanness of Japanese Americans was depicted as being superior to that of other minority groups, particularly through minstrel shows which denigrated and caricatured African Americans.

In both WCCA and WRA newspapers there were several women's features which provide a vital insight into the representation of women during Second World War. Some of the newspapers had individual women's articles dotted throughout, such as an article from the *Manzanar Free Press* entitled 'To the Ladies: Helpful Hints on Skin Care'.⁶⁴ Women's columns such as the *Tanforan Totalizer*'s 'With the Womenfolk' gave advice on dealing with unfamiliar conditions, such as hot weather and dry skin.⁶⁵ In the WCCA newspapers, there were the Arbo-Gram's 'Big Sister' column; the *Mercedian*'s 'Fem-a-lites' column; and the 'Feminine Forum' column in the *Santa Anita Pacemaker*. There was also a 'Girls Sports' column in the *Evacuazette* and various women's sports articles throughout the newspapers. In the WRA camps, the *Minidoka Irrigator*, Minidoka Relocation Center, had a women's column called 'Feminidoka', which included similar articles about hair and clothing. This column was edited by Cherry Kinoshita, who discussed the column in a later interview, recalling that she wrote 'light things, you know, like what do you do with your hairstyle when the dust is blowing and all that kind of silly stupid stuff'. Despite the column's frivolous content, Kinoshita noted the struggles of being incarcerated, stating that 'it really hit me that, you know, here we are prisoners. We're prisoners and we hadn't done anything wrong'.⁶⁶ There were also the *Granada Pioneer*'s, Granada [Amache] Relocation Center, 'Between us Girls' column; the *Topaz Times*'s, Topaz Relocation Center, 'Women's Mirror' page; and the *Tulean Dispatch*, Tule Lake Relocation Center, included women's articles in

⁶¹ n.a., 'Big Sister', *Arbo-Gram*, [1, 1] 23 May 1942, p.3.

⁶² Lily Shoji, 'Overheard', *Mercedian*, [1, 20] 21 August 1942, p.4

⁶³ n.a., 'Facing the Future', *Fresno Grapevine*, [Vignette] October 1942, p. 71 and n.a., 'Feminine Forum', *Santa Anita Pacemaker*, [Farewell Edition] 7 October 1942, p.11.

⁶⁴ n.a., 'To the Ladies: Helpful Hints on Skin Care', *Manzanar Free Press*, [1, 6] 29 April 1942, p.3.

⁶⁵ n.a., 'With the Womenfolk', *Tanforan Totalizer*, [1, 4] 6 June 1942, p.5.

⁶⁶ Cherry Kinoshita, 'Cherry Kinoshita Interview [Segment 9]', interview by Becky Fukuda and Tracy Lai, DDR, 26 September 1997

<https://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-densho-1000-34-1/>. Accessed 25 April 2025.

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several of its special editions. Overall, the women's features predominantly include articles regarding: clothing, hair, and make-up; relationships; motherhood; and sports.

This brief survey of the focus and emphasis of content in the camps reveals a stereotypically feminine focus on beauty, clothing, and relationships, and this was occasionally related directly to the war effort. A light-hearted article in the *El Joaquin*, Stockton Assembly Center, asked: 'Girls ... are you doing your part in this country's war effort? Are you doing your best to maintain morale in the United States? Are you beautiful? Are you doing anything tonight?'⁶⁷ 'Fem-a-lites' asserted: 'When things are worst find something to smile about. Keep your chin up and keep 'em smiling.'⁶⁸ Women's contribution to the war effort in the camps was to be 'beautiful', and to maintain morale by keeping a smile on their face. As Melissa McEuen noted 'if keeping morale high seemed the ultimate priority on the American home front, then women's bodies would be put into service of the goal'.⁶⁹ The women's war effort was very different from men's, and Japanese American women's experience in relation to wartime identity was even more complicated given that they could not, due to their imprisonment, participate in the ways that other women were able to. While they engaged in a range of work in the camps, such as making camouflage nets for the military or helping with war bond drives, they were largely excluded from serving in the auxiliaries or working in factories.⁷⁰

The nature of the women's features offers an opportunity to investigate the intersection of race and gender. Japanese Americans, especially women, are often seen as a monolith or a statistic, and future scholarship should aim to amplify their voices, and make use of the abundant material that is readily available. By using the newspapers alongside oral history interviews, written testimony, paintings, memoirs, and novels, it is possible to include Japanese American women in the historiography to add nuance to the greater understanding of women's experiences in the Second World War.⁷¹

⁶⁷n.a., 'The Public', *El Joaquin*, [1, 2] 3 June 1942, p.2.

⁶⁸Lily Shoji, 'Fem-a-lites', *Mercedian*, [1, 20] 21 August 1942, p.4.

⁶⁹Melissa A. McEuen, *Making War, Making Women: Femininity and Duty on the American Home Front, 1941-1945*, (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011), p.57.

⁷⁰Japanese American Citizens League, *They Work for Victory: The Story of Japanese Americans and the War Effort*, (c.1945)

<https://omeka.uvu.edu/exhibits/show/japaneseamericaninternment/item/237>.

Accessed 28 May 2025.

⁷¹Oral History Interviews, DDR <https://ddr.densho.org/narrators/>. Accessed 21 April 2025. Memoirs by Japanese American women include: Jeanette S. Arakawa, *The Little Exile*, (Berkeley: Stone Bridge Press, 2017), Mary Matsuda Gruenewald, *Looking Like the Enemy: My Story of Imprisonment in Japanese-American Internment Camps*, (Troutdale, Ore.: New Sage Press, 2005), Hisako Hibi, *Peaceful Painter: Memoirs of an Issei Woman*

Scholarship about women during the war generally focuses on the experiences of white women, and often reduces a diverse range of experiences into a seemingly singular narrative. The specific experience of incarceration is especially obscured by this.

The existing historiography of the incarceration requires examination and expansion. Despite the vast amount of source material, past scholarship has favoured a top-down approach. As Roger Daniels notes, 'much of the Asian American experience is [...] 'negative history' or 'history that recounted what was done to these immigrant peoples rather than what they themselves did.'⁷² Emphasising the voices of Japanese Americans through analysis of the camp press, prioritising women, allows for a greater understanding of what it means to be an American, and for a more complete and thorough understanding of the Second World War and its legacies. The incarceration itself also questions the prominent view of the Second World War as the 'good war'. While the US claimed to be fighting the war for democracy and freedom, tens of thousands of Japanese Americans were imprisoned unconstitutionally in incarceration camps. Despite this injustice, the newspapers often positively represent the US and the war effort, even in the cases of criticism of the incarceration; In Munson's words, Japanese Americans were 'pathetically eager' to emphasise their loyalty to the United States. This positive portrayal, however, was not a sign of a lack of dissent amongst Japanese Americans. The camp press was used rather as a vehicle for Japanese Americans to demonstrate their loyalty and Americanness which had so obviously been invalidated by the incarceration, and for decades prior. As Catherine Luther notes, changes in the newspapers over the course of incarceration show the developing perceptions of Japanese American loyalty and the incarceration, and this article's inclusion of the WCCA camp newspapers provides evidence of this in the very early months of the incarceration.⁷³ By the end of the war, Japanese Americans had gone some way to proving their loyalty, and felt more able to criticise the incarceration and the contradictions of the 'good war' narrative much more overtly.

Artist, (Berkeley: Heyday Books, 2004), Lily Yuriko Nakai Havey, *Gasa Gasa Girl Goes to Camp: A Nisei Youth behind a World War II Fence*, (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2014), Haru Matsui [Ayako Ishigaki], *Restless Wave: My Life in Two Worlds, a Memoir*, (New York: Modern Age Books, 1940), and Kiyo Sato, *Kiyo's Story: A Japanese-American Family's Quest for the American Dream*, (New York: Soho Press, 2009). On art in the camps see: Delphine Hirasuna, *The Art of Gaman: Arts and Crafts from the Japanese American Internment Camps, 1942-1946*, (Berkeley: Ten Speed Press, 2005) and Kristine C. Kuramitsu, 'Internment and Identity in Japanese American Art,' *American Quarterly*, 47, 4 (1995), pp.619-658.

⁷²Roger Daniels, *Asian America: Chinese and Japanese in the United States since 1850*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1998), p.xiii, p.4.

⁷³Luther, 'Reflections of Cultural Identities in Conflict', *Journalism History* (2003).

‘I was scared as hell, you know...’: African American POWs in Europe and the shaping and reshaping of U.S. national memories of the Second World War

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ABSTRACT

This article joins debates about prisoner of war experiences in the Second World War, with a focus on detainees' narratives and memories. The research finds that both racial identity and the availability of public accounts can have a profound impact on the way narratives about wartime captivity are shaped and re-shaped. Drawing on oral history interviews with veterans who were part of segregated units, and who were captured and imprisoned as POWs, the article brings to light previously unheard stories, and shows the extent to which this heterogeneity affected 'memory composure' within the Long Civil Rights Movement framework.

Introduction

The exact number of soldiers who were captured and imprisoned during the Second World War is still unknown, but historians estimate that roughly 35 million combatants – equal to almost half of the global fighting forces – were, for a period of time, prisoners of war (POWs).¹ Captivity however, was not experienced or remembered in the same way by all participants and while many stories of detention have been integrated into national narratives of sacrifice and endurance, others have been marginalised and hidden from the historical record. The voices of African American soldiers who became POWs are among the most striking absences, as their experiences have been excluded from historical discourses and left out of broader narratives about the American involvement in the war as well as from accounts of

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¹Juliette Pattinson, Lucy Noakes, and Wendy Ugolini, 'Incarcerated Masculinities, Male POWs and the Second World War', *Journal of War & Culture Studies* 7, no. 3 (August 2014), p. 180.

wartime captivity in general. This study looks at the experience of African American soldiers who were captured and held as POWs while deployed overseas and who, like many other non-white detainees, were left without recognition in post-war memories developed around narratives of national belonging that were divided along racial lines.² The article argues that resurfacing these stories challenges our understanding of wartime captivity and imprisonment, but also of the American experience of the conflict more broadly. Diversity, such as belonging to a culturally, ethnically or racially distinct group, plays a key role on the way former prisoners remember incarceration decades after the conflict.

Academic debates on wartime captivity have been rather lively in the last few decades, but very little has been published about the captivity and incarceration of African American soldiers.³ Recently, historians have shown increasing interests in the

²Thomas A. Guglielmo, *Divisions: A New History of Racism and Resistance in America's World War II Military*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2021).

³For a survey of key publications on prisoners of war and internees in the Second World War see Ilse Dorothee Pautsch, 'Review: Prisoners of War and Internees in the Second World War: A Survey of Some Recent Publications', *Contemporary European History* 12, no. 2 (2003), pp. 225–38. Other notable works include: S. P. MacKenzie, *The Treatment of Prisoners of War in World War II*, 2023, which looks at policies and practices of imprisonment; Juliette Pattinson, 'Playing the Daft Lassie with Them': Gender, Captivity and the Special Operations Executive during the Second World War', *European Review of History: Revue Européenne d'histoire* 13, no. 2 (June 2006), pp. 271–92; Juliette Pattinson, *Behind Enemy Lines: Gender, Passing, and the Special Operations Executive in the Second World War*, (Manchester; New York; Manchester University Press, 2011); Pattinson, Noakes, and Ugolini, 'Incarcerated Masculinities.'; Christina Twomey, 'Australian Nurse Pows: Gender, War and Captivity', *Australian Historical Studies* 36, no. 124 (October 2004), pp. 255–74; Twomey. Felicia Yap, 'Prisoners of War and Civilian Internees of the Japanese in British Asia: The Similarities and Contrasts of Experience', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 2020, p. 31; Daniel Milne, Anoma Pieris, and Beatrice Trefalt, 'Introduction: Prisoners of the Asia-Pacific War – Forgotten Locales, Transimperial Links, and Selective Memorialisation', *British Journal for Military History* 10, no. 2 (September 13, 2024), pp. 5–17; Daniel Milne and Takeo Sasamoto, 'Memorializing Prisoners of War in Japan: Local Activism, War Criminals, and Reconciliation', *British Journal for Military History* 10, no. 2 (September 13, 2024), pp. 100–125; Other recent publications focusing on allied POWs include Thomas Saylor, *Long Hard Road: American POWs during World War II*, (St. Paul, MN: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2007). Adrian Gilbert, *POW: Allied Prisoners in Europe, 1939-1945*, (London: John Murray, 2006). Arieh J. Kochavi, *Confronting Captivity: Britain and the United States and Their POWs in Nazi Germany*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005). is very interesting as it offers an analysis of living conditions in

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contribution and role of black Americans in the conflict, as well as in their stories. Lusane in his book *Hitler's Black Victims*, offers a very detailed historical reconstruction of the incarceration of African Americans in the context of Nazi racism.⁴ Parker's essay *Fighting for Democracy* situates black Americans' experiences of the conflict within the Civil Rights struggle, arguing that military service transformed their sense of citizenship leading them to articulate their grievances through a rhetoric of rights and sacrifice that criticised traditional memories of the 'Good War' while still remaining attached to national ideals.⁵ More recently Delmont published a comprehensive history of black Americans fighting the 'Double V campaign' (the national campaign started in 1942 promoting the idea of a 'double victory', over racism and discrimination at home and the Axis powers abroad), whereas Guglielmo's scholarly study *Divisions* examines how the wartime American military was divided along racial hierarchies and shaped by systemic segregation.⁶

These soldiers' experiences of incarceration, however, have been largely overlooked and the main publications focusing specifically on black POWs remain Kesting's and Killingray's.⁷ This article's ambition is to contribute both to academic discussions on wartime captivity and on African American soldiers' experiences in the Second World War. It discusses the way black POWs' memories of detention were shaped and

Nazi camps and of the actions taken by the British and American governments for the safety of their POWs, based on International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) reports and official protests sent to Berlin by the allied governments.

⁴Clarence Lusane, *Hitler's Black Victims The Historical Experiences of European Blacks, Africans and African Americans During the Nazi Era*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), chap. 6.

⁵Christopher S. Parker, ed., *Fighting for Democracy: Black Veterans and the Struggle against White Supremacy in the Postwar South*, Princeton Studies in American Politics (Princeton University Press, 2010); John E. Bodnar, *The 'Good War' in American Memory*, Paperback ed (Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 2012).

⁶Matthew F. Delmont, *Half American: The Epic Story of African Americans Fighting World War II at Home and Abroad*, (New York: Viking, 2022); Guglielmo, *Divisions*, 2021. Other publications on this subject include Christopher Paul Moore, *Fighting for America: Black Soldiers— the Unsung Heroes of World War II*, Presidio Press trade paperback ed (New York: Presidio Press/Ballantine Books, 2006). Robert F. Jefferson, *Fighting for Hope: African American Troops of the 93rd Infantry Division in World War II and Postwar America*, War/Society/Culture, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008).

⁷'The experience of black POWs is one of the least researched areas of World War II' states Lusane, *Hitler's Black Victims*, p. 135; Robert W. Kesting, 'Forgotten Victims: Blacks in the Holocaust', *The Journal of Negro History* 77, no. 1 (1992), pp. 30–36, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3031525>; David Killingray, 'African Americans in Enemy Hands', in *Prisoners of War and Their Captors in World World II*, (Oxford: Berg, 1996).

reshaped over time, the broader meanings of these accounts and their significance in the construction of identity within the context of the Long Civil Rights Movement.⁸ The article argues that combatants experienced capture and captivity as traumatic events, drenched in feelings and emotions, which are profoundly racialised and which will linger in their memories for decades and often resulting in self-empowering narratives. Being a POW is often described as a state of melancholy, because while significant events unfold for those who continue to fight, prisoners are at the mercy of their enemies. Wartime captivity often clashes with the revered image of masculinity that war expects from male combatants, the soldier hero ideal, that is deeply ingrained in collective memories of the Second World War, and in the 'traditional' narrative that emerged as prevalent in American public culture.⁹ Wartime incarceration was seen as the antithesis of battle, experienced as emasculating because soldiers were forced to passive roles. For this reason, most accounts of the early post-war represent particular aspects of captivity, e.g. escape, brotherhood and comradeship. These elements are overemphasised, while others, such as fear, capture, shame and trauma, are silenced. These 'critical' narratives never disappeared though, and over the post-war decades, there has been a transformation of accounts of detention from stories of humiliation and suffering, to a celebration of national identity, which brings to the fore the need to locate and examine more stories of wartime incarceration, including those of African American servicemen whose experiences have remained on the margins of national narratives.¹⁰ Recovering these overlooked accounts requires tracing the paths through which they can be re-inscribed in the historical record and this article explores those paths, analysing some elements that contributed to the resurfacing of these stories – both in archives and within broader narratives of national identity. The narratives of African American POWs were often overshadowed by accounts of achievement and the analysis of these memories' meanings highlights that wartime incarceration and the emotions connected to that experience were profoundly racialised. The meanings that narrators attach to captivity evolve from the

⁸Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, 'The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past', *The Journal of American History* 91, no. 4 (2005), pp. 1233–1263; Anne Stefani, 'Guerres historiographiques : interprétation et mémorialisation du mouvement pour les droits civiques aux États-Unis', *Cycnos* 32 'Les guerres culturelles aux États-Unis', no. 2 (2016), pp. 1–19.

⁹See for example Graham Dawson, *Soldier Heroes: British Adventure, Empire, and the Imagining of Masculinities*, (London ; New York: Routledge, 1994); Tom Brokaw, *The Greatest Generation Speaks: Letters and Reflections*, 1st ed, (Norwalk, Conn: Easton Press, 1999); Pattinson, Noakes, and Ugolini, 'Incarcerated Masculinities', 179–80; Bodnar, *The 'Good War' in American Memory*, p. 4.

¹⁰Bodnar, 166–199; Christina Twomey, 'POWs of the Japanese: Race and Trauma in Australia, 1970–2005', *Journal of War & Culture Studies* 7, no. 3 (2014), pp. 191–205.

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initial vulnerability to self-empowering narratives that emphasise the ability to overcome trauma and ultimately contribute to the double V campaign.

Resurfacing Black Combatants' Stories of Incarceration

In the Second World War many black Americans were called upon to serve in a racially segregated military, and they constituted roughly 12 percent of the total U.S. armed forces in all campaigns. Serving in various capacities, they fought on different fronts and contributed to secure victory in 1945.¹¹ When the U.S. joined the hostilities, the American armed forces were rigidly segregated and African Americans were disproportionately assigned to service and logistical units, and given unskilled jobs such as cleaning, maintenance or construction among others.¹² This reflected the military's racism and 'deep and longstanding commitment to segregation' that reinforced the broader social order of Jim Crow America, and the War Department's policies followed the belief that black soldiers were unfit for combat roles.¹³ As the war progressed, manpower shortages became more acute and the U.S. military could no longer afford to keep thousands of trained black soldiers confined to service roles. The numbers of black servicemen sent to combat in the European and Pacific theatres gradually increased as the conflict advanced, and one notable example was 92 Infantry Division, nicknamed 'Buffalo Soldiers' from the name of the post-Civil War regiments composed only of African Americans to serve on the frontier. 92 Division became operative in 1942 as a 'coloured' Infantry Division under the command of Major General Edward Almond, with black infantrymen serving under white officers. The division was assigned to Fort Huachuca, Arizona, where soldiers were trained for about two years before being sent to Europe. Following D-Day, the it was deployed in the Italian campaign, where, after landing in Naples in the summer of 1944, it took part in heavy fighting and sustained significant losses.¹⁴ Another well-known example is the Tuskegee Airmen, the first all-black flying unit in the U.S. armed forces. Created in 1941 as part of the Army Air Corps, the unit's objective was to train fighter pilots at the Tuskegee Army Air Field in Alabama. Their first missions were in the Mediterranean theatre and from 1944 they constituted the 332nd Fighter Group which was active in European campaigns with missions in Italy, France and central Europe.¹⁵ A number of Tank Battalions, including the 'Black Panthers' (761st Tank

¹¹Killingray, 'African Americans in Enemy Hands', p. 181.

¹²Delmont, *Half American*, pp. 25–43.

¹³Thomas A. Guglielmo, *Divisions*, p. 101, pp. 111–115.

¹⁴Christian O'Connell, 'A Roman Holiday? African Americans and Italians in the Second World War', *History* 106, no. 373 (December 2021), pp. 775–803; Delmont, *Half American*, pp. 229–243.

¹⁵On the history of the Tuskegee Airmen, see J. Todd Moyer, 'The Tuskegee Airmen Oral History Project and Oral History in the National Park Service', *The Journal of American History* 89, no. 2 (September 2002), p. 580; Charles E. Francis and Adolph

Battalion), 784 Tank Battalion, 614 and 827 Tank Destroyer Battalions were also deployed in France, Germany and Belgium, whereas 93 Army Infantry Division, 51 and 52 Defense Battalions of the U.S. Marine Corps were deployed in the Asia-Pacific theatres. These units were predominantly assigned to service roles, and were therefore far less likely to be captured, despite some fragmentary evidence suggesting the presence of black POWs on the Far Eastern fronts.¹⁶

Eventually, over one million African Americans served in the U.S. military in the Second World War, and over a half of these were deployed overseas.¹⁷ This meant that some of them were captured and became POWs in gradually growing numbers over the course of the conflict, although the exact figure remains unknown due to incomplete historical records.¹⁸ The U.S. National Archives hold a total of 143,374 records of Second World War POWs, out of which only 154 are listed as 'Negro'.¹⁹ Nevertheless, these records are imprecise, as data concerning U.S. prisoners was not always collected or recorded consistently.²⁰ Even more surprisingly, only one name is listed as Navy and one as Merchant Marine, and this is probably a consequence of the POW reporting protocols that varied across the different branches of the U.S. military. In the Navy, when a sailor was believed captured, the unit's commanding officer was responsible for reporting him missing in action (MIA) or as a possible POW. However,

Caso, *The Tuskegee Airmen: The Men Who Changed a Nation*, 5th commemorative ed. with class pictures (Boston [Mass.]: Branden Books, 2008); John Holway, *Red Tails: An Oral History of the Tuskegee Airmen*, Rev. Dover ed (Mineola, N.Y: Dover Publications, 2012).

¹⁶Chris Dixon, *African Americans and the Pacific War, 1941-1945: Race, Nationality, and the Fight for Freedom*, (Cambridge university press, 2018), pp. 206-219. Dixon details some examples, focusing especially on the treatment of incarcerated black servicemen by Japanese troops, rather than on their experiences and accounts. Dixon's work also shows that the context of the Far East was profoundly different from the one in Europe, for racial as well as geopolitical and military reasons, and it confirms that evidence is scarce and hard to locate. Consequently, the focus of the present study remains on European theatres of war.

¹⁷Delmont, *Half American*, xiii; Killingray, 'African Americans in Enemy Hands.', p. 182, p. 197.

¹⁸ Killingray, pp. 196-99.

¹⁹National Archives and Records Administration (hereinafter NARA), RG 389, Records of World War II Prisoners of War, created, 1942 - 1947, documenting the period 12/7/1941 - 11/19/1946, World War II Prisoners of War Data File, 12/7/1941 - 11/19/1946.

²⁰The 'Racial group' field is missing in many entries, and among the 154 black POWs identified, 18 are classified as 'civilians', 89 as 'Army', whereas for 45 POWs the service field is blank.

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the POW status was formally assigned if the U.S. authorities received reliable confirmation, such as POW camp rosters or International Red Cross reports. More importantly, racial information was rarely included in MIA or POW reporting procedures. As for the Merchant Marine, records indicate that 600-800 Mariners became POWs during the war and historians estimate that African Americans comprised 8 to 10% of this organisation. There are documented cases of black mariners being captured, for example when their ships were seized or sunk, and sent to the *Marlag und Milag Nord* POW camp near Bremen, or to other camps in the Pacific theatre.²¹ However, as with the Navy, most Merchant Marine POW lists do not record racial identity, making it difficult to assess the exact number of detainees. U.S. military records thus underestimate the real figure to quite a large extent. When it comes to 92 Infantry Division, 56 casualties are listed as 'Captured or interned' and out of the 992 pilots who graduated to become Tuskegee Airmen, 32 were imprisoned by the Axis.²²

The fact that black servicemen were captured and became POWs is nonetheless well established and was publicly acknowledged both during the war and in its immediate aftermath, as contemporary press coverage makes clear, even though this aspect of the African American wartime experience has been largely obliterated from dominant historical narratives. Black newspapers reported on the capture and imprisonment of black soldiers, as soon as they began to be deployed overseas in 1944. The *Cleveland Call and Post* in September 1944 published an explicit editorial calling on the War Department to provide transparent information about the fate of African American servicemen, including those who became POWs, insisting 'Let's have the facts' and highlighting that black GIs were among those captured.²³ Over the following months black newspapers documented the experience of these prisoners, including their liberation. The *Pittsburgh Courier's* London correspondent George Padmore reported that 'German leaders are making a desperate effort to discard the Nazi superiority doctrine by attempting to win the confidence of Negro prisoners of war', describing them as 'a great martial race' to flatter them in a last-ditch propaganda effort, which

²¹Greg H. Williams, *The United States Merchant Marine in World War I: Ships, Crews, Shipbuilders and Operators*, (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2017). It should also be noted that in the U.S. National Archives POW records, the cards for individuals held at the *Marlag und Milag Nord* POW camp list their service as 'Army'; therefore, we cannot conclude with certainty that those listed as 'Civilians' were in fact Merchant Mariners.

²² <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/citations/ADA438106>. Accessed on 10 June 2025, Charles River Editors., *The Tuskegee Airmen: The History and Legacy of America's First Black Fighter Pilots in World War II*, (Boston, MA: Charles River Editors, 2015), Loc. 602.

²³Library of Congress (LOC), ProQuest Black Studies pg. 8B, 'Let's have the facts', *Cleveland Call and Post* (1934-1962), 9 Sep 1944.

was not only yet another acknowledgement that they existed, but also that their treatment was a matter of military and political concern.²⁴ Similarly, the *Michigan Chronicle* published the story of Private First Class Uel O. Metcalfe of 92 Infantry Division, from Flint, Michigan, who had initially been listed as MIA in Italy, and was officially reported as detained 'somewhere in a German prison camp'.²⁵ On Good Friday, 30 March 1945, troops of the U.S. Third Army liberated the Ziegenhain prison camp in Germany and the American POWs detained there were immediately flown to Le Havre, France, and then sent to 'Camp Lucky Strike', the well-known tent town where thousands of American troops awaited to be transported back to the U.S. after 8 May 1945. Among the 1,879 servicemen repatriated on the same ship, seven black former POWs landed in Camp Kilmer on 12 May, New Jersey, and were part of the first to be interviewed and photographed following the official announcement of V-E Day.²⁶ None of them are listed as 'Negro' in official U.S. military records, but they were photographed and interviewed to give brief accounts of the hardships they experienced in the German prison camps where they spent between 5 and 107 days.²⁷

The U.S. military authorities themselves were aware of the presence of black POWs since early 1945, as evidenced by internal investigations into the ill treatment of prisoners. In the afternoon of Sunday, 17 December 1944, during the Battle of the Bulge, eleven black GIs walked to the house of Mathias Langer, Burgermeister of the Wereth hamlet in Belgium. They were bearing a white flag and had their hands up, and Langer and his family welcomed and fed them, until a German reconnaissance car approached. The soldiers surrendered immediately, but they were searched and made to sit on the cold and wet ground until dark: 'After it became dark, the men were

²⁴LOC, ProQuest Black Studies pg. 15, 'Discard Master Race Theory to Win Confidence of Negroes', George Padmore London Correspondent, *The Pittsburgh Courier* (1911-1950), Mar. 24, 1945.

²⁵LOC, ProQuest Black Studies pg. 17 'News of Flint: Prisoner of War', *Michigan Chronicle* (1939-2010), Apr. 28, 1945.

²⁶LOC, ProQuest Black Studies pg. A2, 'First Prisoners Of War Interviewed Following V-E Day: GIs Tell Of Suffering At Hands Of The Nazis', Constance Curtis, *New York Amsterdam News* (1943-1961), May 12, 1945; LOC, ProQuest Black Studies pg. 11, 'Democratic Spirit Reigns Among Freed Prisoners of War and Wounded GI's at Camp Kilmer', *Afro-American* (1893-), May 19, 1945.

²⁷NARA, RG 389, Records of World War II Prisoners of War, created, 1942 - 1947, documenting the period 12/7/1941 - 11/19/1946, World War II Prisoners of War Data File, 12/7/1941 - 11/19/1946. Albert DeByers's name, among those interviewed in the article, does not appear in the official records, for the others the 'Racial group code' field is blank, with the exception of Raymond Abney who is listed as white although he is included in the group of black POWs mentioned in the *New York Amsterdam News* Article as well as in the *Afro-American* article published on 19 May.

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lined up on the street and made to run in front of the vehicle carrying the German soldiers. Neither I nor any members of my family ever saw the Negro soldiers alive again.²⁸ Langer declared in his sworn deposition. The next day the African American GIs were found dead 800 meters from his house, with their bodies partially covered in snow. They were examined a few weeks later, in an investigation carried out by 395 Infantry Regiment in the first half of 1945, to reveal that they had been shot in the head.²⁹ This was only one of many cases of ill treatment of black POWs that were investigated but only rarely tried: while the atrocity itself and its racial motivation could both be established, the perpetrators' identities could not be definitively ascertained.³⁰ What is clear, however, is that such stories remained marginalised post-war narratives of national belonging. Tracing the implications of this obliteration and the processes through which they resurfaced and entered the historical record, are essential steps to understanding the dynamics of the construction of identity and memory.

For African American soldiers the celebration of their identity is linked to questions of race and ethnicity, in the Long Civil Rights Movement framework, that situates the struggle for social justice in the U.S. within broader national and international contexts and expands its chronological, geographical and cultural scope. In other words, the movement

took root in the liberal and radical milieu of the late 1930s, ... accelerated during World War II, stretched far beyond the South, was continuously and ferociously contested, and in the 1960s and 1970s inspired a 'movement of movements' that 'def[ies] any narrative of collapse.'³¹

The stories of captivity of African American combatants re-emerged in parallel to broader developments which deeply affected public memory and national narratives. After the 1980s the cultural turn first, and then the emotional turn legitimized personal accounts as valuable historical sources, contributing to the acceptance of subjectivity

²⁸NARA, RG 549, Records of United States Army Europe, JAG, War Crimes Files (cases not tried), Entry AI 2239, box 26, 'Ill treatment of prisoners of war', 26 February 1945.

²⁹NARA, RG 549, Records of United States Army Europe, JAG, War Crimes Files (cases not tried), Entry AI 2239, box 26, 'Memorandum, Case 6-102, Wereth', 28 July 1945.

³⁰Kesting, 'Forgotten Victims: Blacks in the Holocaust', 31–33; Lusane, *Hitler's Black Victims*, pp. 141–42.

³¹Hall, 'The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past', p. 1235.

and the development of cultural forms of war memories.³² Another crucial factor was the definition of a new psychiatric condition, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), added to the diagnostic Manual of Mental Disorders in 1980 by the American Psychiatric Association (APA). As the trauma suffered by prisoners became more accepted, it was no longer marginalised in their accounts, and black POWs stories of incarceration appeared after the creation of PTSD as a psychiatric category. Black POWs accounts also began to appear after an important evolution of the history of the Civil Rights movement, which after the 1980s was no longer the top-down history of the movement's leaders, but started to include more voices from the bottom-up, and grassroot participants became involved in the construction of Civil Rights narratives.

Stories of incarceration of African American servicemen have resurfaced as narratives of survival and recovery from a traumatic past, offering new ways to give meaning to wartime experiences. Nevertheless, compared to other POW accounts, these narratives share certain distinctive characteristics. They remain fewer in number and harder to find, which is only in part explained by the U.S. military's segregation, where black soldiers were deployed in combat roles later in the conflict and in smaller numbers. The accounts that do exist emerged decades after the war's end and are often drawn from units or divisions celebrated since the 1980s and integrated into broader public narratives about the African American wartime experience within the framework of the Long Civil Rights Movement. These stories of captivity were overshadowed by accounts of valour and achievement, as for example those of recipients of a Medal of Honor, or other heroic exploits such as those of the Tuskegee Airmen and 92 Infantry Division, which challenged and counterbalanced the wartime stereotypes about black troops.³³ In fact, these experiences contributed to transforming exclusion and discrimination in stories of triumph over adversity, thereby acknowledging racism without destabilizing the prevailing shared 'good war' narrative.³⁴

³²T. G. Ashplant, Graham Dawson, and Michael Roper, eds., *Commemorating War: The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration*, (Milton Park and New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 32–52.

³³Delmont, *Half American*, xiii. Guglielmo, *Divisions*, 2021, 317–19; Robert F. Jefferson, 'Interfaced Memory: Black WWII Ex-GIs' and Veterans' Reunions of the Late Twentieth Century', in *Oral History and Public Memories*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008), pp. 187–204.

³⁴'No story of African Americans in World War II fit better into the process of crafting a virtuous tale from wartime racial hostilities than the account of the Tuskegee Airmen', Bodnar, *The 'Good War' in American Memory*, p. 178.

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Some of these personal accounts are oral histories preserved at the Veterans History Project (VHP) of the Library of Congress.³⁵ The VHP collections' materials come from a range of different sources: some interviews are collected by in-house professional oral historians, but for the most part they are from grassroots projects, institutions, associations or even individuals from across the country.³⁶ In total, there are ten African American narrators who were POWs in wartime. Half of these were part of

³⁵<https://www.loc.gov/programs/veterans-history-project/about-this-program/>. Last accessed on 12 June 2025. The Veterans History Project was created in 2000 by the U.S. Congress. The authorizing legislation (Public Law 106-380) received unanimous support and was signed by President William J. Clinton in October 2000.

³⁶At present VHP preserves 121,975 personal narratives, and the vast majority of these, 64,717, are about the Second World War. This can be explained by the fact that the VHP was created in 2000, when there was a clear intention to capture the stories of the 'greatest generation' who had participated in the war, as members were coming near the end of their lives. There are 3,677 stories of POWs and by restricting the selection to 'Black or African American', 18 items can be found. In an interview conducted by the author with Megan Harris, Senior Reference Specialist for VHP on January 11, 2022, the nature of the archival process was discussed. The VHP is a public program as well as an archival program, and it is conceived as part of the Library of Congress' identity as the library of average Americans. In line with this vision, laymen and women can act as interviewers, and the materials preserved at VHP come from school projects as well as community projects. There is an effort to offer a mechanism by which voices are not silenced, as there is no active selection of the materials. The institution publishes a toolkit which indicates some basic criteria (such as interviews' minimum duration, technical requirements, etc.), but it does not actively control what is included in the archive, as long as the criteria are met. Personal narratives also include diaries, letters and other types of written accounts. The VHP database offers the following selection criteria: Wars and conflicts; Service branch; Service unit; Location of service; Battles and campaigns; Highest rank; Prisoner of war; Race; Gender. The list of these collections includes:

Isham George Benton, 92 Infantry Division, 365th Infantry Regiment - two items;

Harold H. Brown, Tuskegee Airmen - two items;

Thurston L. Gaines, Tuskegee Airmen - two items;

Alexander Jefferson, Tuskegee Airmen - six items;

Callie Johnson, 274 Quartermaster - one item;

George Jordan, 499 Battalion - one item;

John Pierce, Third Army - one item;

Luther H. Smith, Tuskegee Airmen - one item;

Rothacker Childs Smith, 92 Infantry Division, 366th Infantry Regiment - one item;

Leon Woodie Spears, Tuskegee Airmen - one item.

the Tuskegee Airmen and among the other half, only two narrators offer a clear account of their captivity. Both of them were part of 92 Infantry Division.

Tuskegee Airmen's stories are often featured in the few published works that mention black POWs in the Second World War and for the most part they are the only ones mentioned, as they were particularly well suited to reframe wartime racial divisions into heroic narratives.³⁷ Overall, 992 pilots were trained at Tuskegee throughout the war, they earned 150 Distinguished Flying Crosses, and came to be celebrated as 'public legends' in the postwar.³⁸ As a consequence, they were more likely than other groups to tell their stories on public platforms. Methodologically this study positions itself with the post-positivist approach, distanced from typicality and representativeness. Its focus is instead on meaning, and personal narratives are considered of value however unusual or unique their experiences were.³⁹ Historians who adopt 'the luminosity of the single case' axiom use personal accounts to explore constructions of identity, subjectivity and memory in relation with contemporary shared discourses, the wider culture and society.⁴⁰ The concept of 'memory composure' shows that memory is not only selective, but it also shapes and reshapes narratives into meaningful accounts which change as they are affected by the narrator's subjectivity, by the historical moment when the testimony is recorded, and the shared histories and collective memory of events.⁴¹ The idea of 'public legends' defines

³⁷Killingray, 'African Americans in Enemy Hands.'; Kesting, 'Forgotten Victims: Blacks in the Holocaust.' Adrian Gilbert, *POW: Allied Prisoners in Europe, 1939 - 1945*, Paperback ed, (London: Murray, 2007), 263–65; Bodnar, *The 'Good War' in American Memory*, p. 178.

³⁸The term 'public legends' is used in reference to the theory of memory composure as developed in Alistair Thomson, *Anzac Memories: Living with the Legend*, New ed, (Clayton, Vic: Monash University Press, 2013); Alistair Thomson, 'Anzac Memories. Popular Memory Theory Into Practice in Australia', *The Oral History Reader*, 2016th ed., (London ; New York: Routledge, n.d.), pp. 342–53.

³⁹Alistair Thomson, 'Four Paradigm Transformations in Oral History', *The Oral History Review* 34, no. 1 (January 1, 2007), pp. 53–57, <https://doi.org/10.1525/ohr.2007.34.1.49>; Alessandro Portelli, 'The Peculiarities of Oral History', *History Workshop* Autumn, 1981, no. 12 (1981), p. 99.

⁴⁰Penny Summerfield, *Histories of the Self. Personal Narratives and Historical Practice*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2019), pp. 135–61.

⁴¹Developed by the Popular Memory Group in Birmingham, the concept of 'memory composure' plays on the double meaning of the word 'composure' to explain that we compose our memories in a way that makes us feel in alignment with our past, present and future selves. See Thomson, *Anzac Memories*; T. G. Ashplant, Graham Dawson, and Michael Roper, eds., *Commemorating War*; Summerfield, *Histories of the Self*.

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selective national identities which intersect individual memories, as personal experiences and emotions are connected to public meanings.⁴²

The VHP materials were all collected in the early 2000s, when a composed identity and a shared memory of the POW experience already existed, and the traumas related to that experience were recognized and accepted.⁴³ As the Civil Rights Movement gained momentum in the 1960s, interest in the war experiences of African American soldiers grew and the story of the Tuskegee Airmen in particular increasingly attracted attention, as their contribution to the war effort was recognized and celebrated. National interest for the Tuskegee Airmen's story sparked particularly after President Bill Clinton signed a law directing the National Parks Service (NPS) to create a national historic site in Tuskegee, Alabama and escalated after 2007 when President George W. Bush awarded them the Congressional Gold Medal, and again after veterans were invited to attend the inauguration of Barack Obama in 2009.⁴⁴ Obama had already acknowledged his gratefulness in 2007 when he said: 'My career in public service was made possible by the path heroes like the Tuskegee Airmen trail-blazed'.

The Tuskegee Airmen 'public legend' was thus established and by the 2000s it was alive and present in the individual memory of most narrators. Furthermore, by the 2000s, public narratives on the Civil Rights Struggle were collected from the bottom up, and no longer just through the accounts of the movement's leaders. Stories of heroism, such as that of Lieutenant John R. Fox who was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honour in 1997 for his actions in December 1944 as part of 92 Infantry Division, and stories of prestige and national honour such as the Tuskegee Airmen's, resurfaced in the context of the long Civil Rights era, when minorities sought recognition by claiming a place within the national 'traditional' memory of the war.⁴⁵ These stories allowed narrators to assert their identities through military excellence, rather than victimhood, thus becoming symbols of integration and Civil Rights, although this overshadowed the realities of most black servicemen's experiences that did not fit these narratives. POWs' stories fit this framework because in a context where segregation and discrimination meant being relegated to support roles, denied combat and opportunities to demonstrate valour, captivity acquired a different meaning. It meant having been a combatant and having been part of the groups who had the chance to contribute to the double V campaign. When testimonies about wartime incarceration are collected in this context, narrators tend to frame their accounts in ways that accentuate particular aspects of their experiences, while toning

⁴²Thomson, *Anzac Memories*, pp. 414–49.

⁴³Pattinson, Noakes, and Ugolini, 'Incarcerated Masculinities', p. 180.

⁴⁴Moye, 'The Tuskegee Airmen Oral History Project and Oral History in the National Park Service', p. 580.

⁴⁵Bodnar, *The 'Good War' in American Memory*, pp. 166–199.

down others.⁴⁶ Some elements, explored in-depth in the following parts, emerge as key in the shaping of these memories: the treatment received by their Axis captors which reflected the emotional burden of the racialised experience of imprisonment and the question of ethnic identity, segregation and racism, often represented by self-empowering narratives in the achievement of memory composure.

Emotions, Identity and Meaning

‘Look at me. I can’t hide. They know what I am.’⁴⁷

The emotions African American POWs narrate are deeply shaped by the racialised nature of their incarceration, as they experienced fears, threats and humiliations in a certain way precisely because they were black, however they were treated by their Axis captors. These emotions shaped their wartime experiences and continued to structure the way they remembered and recounted them: emotions ‘may determine what is available in memory narratives ... lead directly to the past and bring the past somatically and vividly into the present’.⁴⁸ Narrators therefore confront their emotions and reshape their past in ways that negotiate both individual and collective identity intersecting the Long Civil Rights framework, which provides a powerful lens through which veterans construct these narratives and give meaning to their recollections of captivity. These memories are shaped and reshaped by racialised emotions, but also by myths and rumours about Axis racial policies and by the narrators’ spiritual beliefs, thus becoming forms of post-war activism and engagement in the movement for racial equality.

This is clearly evident in the narratives where memories of encounters with enemy captors are intensely emotional and often recalled in great detail, sometimes filling up to a third of an interview. Stories of capture are remembered as episodes of trauma, through the prism of broader shared narratives about black soldiers fighting for the double V campaign against the Axis as well as for equality in their own country. Interviewees often give thorough accounts of what they felt when they were captured and fear, in particular fear of the unknown and of death, is among the most pervasive emotions. It was also profoundly racialised. Harold Brown crashed in Germany near a village during a strafing mission. He found himself in the midst of an angry crowd ready to hang him, but the local authorities managed to hand him over to the military. His

⁴⁶Marie Francoise Chanfrault-Duchet, 'Narrative Structures, Social Models, and Symbolic Representation in the Life Story', in *Women's Words. The Feminist Practice of Oral History*, 1991st ed., (New York, N.Y: Routledge, n.d.), p. 65.

⁴⁷Harold H. Brown Collection (AFC/2001/001/76178), VHP.

⁴⁸Joanna Bornat, 'Remembering and Reworking Emotions: The Reanalysis of Emotion in an Interview', *Oral History* 38, no. 2 (Autumn 2010), pp. 48–49.

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story of capture is pervaded by fear: 'I was scared as hell, you know [laughter]. You don't know what's going to happen. You don't know the language. ... I was a young kid and just didn't know for sure what was going to happen, and that was the scary part of it, not knowing what was going to happen the next minute'.⁴⁹ His biggest fear seems to be that of the unknown, but he also connects his identity with a moment of bravery during his captivity, when he was with another pilot who was Jewish. Brown could not hide the fact that he was black, and in 2010 he retells this episode as a moment of courage: 'He ... he was frightened to death because he was Jewish, and I said, "well, you know, all you got to do is keep your mouth shut and nobody will ever know you are Jewish," "Look at me. I can't hide. They know what I am"'. While fear of the unknown powerfully shaped this narrator's memories, for others the fear of death took even greater significance as it was profoundly related to racial dynamics of captivity. 'I knew that I was going to die because it had been rumoured that the Germans took no black prisoners. I later found out that Hitler had issued a standing order to that effect and so I didn't expect to live' stated Rothacker Childs Smith.⁵⁰ The idea that no black prisoner could survive captivity in the hands of the Nazis because Hitler ordered it became quite widespread, but it was also not entirely accurate. When African and African American soldiers were incarcerated as military opponents they were considered different and inferior by their captors, as antiblack racism and Nazi and Fascist propaganda informed the way they were treated both by servicemen and civilians.⁵¹ Harsher treatment could result in more severe prison conditions or a poorer diet.⁵² There were also cases of arbitrary killings by German forces, such as in the case of the Wereth eleven, but there is no evidence of a policy to systematically execute black prisoners instead of incarcerating them, and the treatment of black POWs was 'inconsistent and contradictory'.⁵³ The rumours spread after a few occasions when SS officers told French investigators in October 1944 that they had received such orders.⁵⁴ It was later reinforced in a war crimes investigation carried out in February 1946 when a witness testified that the commander of I Battalion of 17 SS Infantry Division ordered that 'no Negro prisoners were to be taken alive'.⁵⁵ As a study of Judge Advocate General papers shows, race-based war crimes targeting black prisoners happened following the initiative of Gestapo or SS officers trying to

⁴⁹Harold H. Brown Collection (AFC/2001/001/76178), VHP.

⁵⁰Rothacker Childs Smith Collection (AFC/2001/001/44158), VHP.

⁵¹Lusane, *Hitler's Black Victims The Historical Experiences of European Blacks, Africans and African Americans During the Nazi Era*, pp. 134–41.

⁵²Killingray, 'African Americans in Enemy Hands', p. 182.

⁵³Kesting, 'Forgotten Victims: Blacks in the Holocaust', 31–33; Lusane, *Hitler's Black Victims*, pp. 141–42, p. 136.

⁵⁴Kesting, 'Forgotten Victims: Blacks in the Holocaust', p. 33.

⁵⁵Kesting, p. 31.

comply to Nazi ideology.⁵⁶ In the cases of complaints by the American government that German authorities had failed to provide adequate treatment according to the Geneva Conventions, official reports show that the treatment of POWs in German camps depended especially on the commander's attitudes.⁵⁷ German and Italian commanders were aware that the Allies were holding large numbers of Axis prisoners themselves, and in most cases the need to provide reciprocal treatment overcame discrimination and racial prejudice.⁵⁸ Things started to change after the Normandy landings in June 1944 and worsened during and after the Battle of the Bulge in December 1944, when the Axis intake of allied prisoners increased and the camps became overcrowded. Unprepared to receive too many prisoners, camp conditions deteriorated deeply.⁵⁹ The POWs' accounts told later in life echo this situation, for example in the case of prisoners captured after late-1944, but the racial references do not include specific complaints of harsher treatment.

Stories of survival are part of the narratives of black veterans as well. Pilots focus on their ability to survive a downed airplane, often in line with their spiritual beliefs. After describing the damage to his aircraft during a strafing mission, Tuskegee Airman Luther H. Smith tells in detail how he tried to invert the plane so that he could bail out, losing consciousness in the process, but still managing to operate his parachute while unconscious, before landing on a tree: 'God was with me on that. That was on Friday the 14 October 1944. That was my lucky day'.⁶⁰ Narrators zoom in on the facts leading to their survival, dwelling on every detail and creating a self-empowering narrative. Childs Smith had to march with his German captors trying to reach a safer location, despite being severely wounded in his legs:

I would count two telephone poles and I decided that when I got to the second telephone pole I would decide if I would let them shoot me or whether I go on. So I would just strain to get to that second pole, then after a while I said I can't make it to the second pole I only going to the first one. After a while I said I just can't go that far, I just going 15 steps, I cut it down to 10, then to 5, so every 5 steps I decided that I'm going to live just 5 more steps that's all I can do is just 5 more steps. That's the way I made it for the 50 miles.⁶¹

⁵⁶It must be underlined that this topic has been largely neglected by historians, with very few exceptions, and more work in this field is needed.

⁵⁷Kochavi, *Confronting Captivity*, pp. 81–86.

⁵⁸Killingray, 'African Americans in Enemy Hands', p. 191.

⁵⁹Kochavi, *Confronting Captivity*, pp. 97–101.

⁶⁰Luther H. Smith, Jr. Collection (AFC/2001/001/84629), VHP.

⁶¹Rothacker Childs Smith Collection (AFC/2001/001/44158), VHP.

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Storytelling, or history-telling, in this context is used as a way to reclaim agency and denounce discrimination back home.⁶² The value of personal accounts, oral history in particular, is to tell 'less about events as such than about their meaning'.⁶³ The subjectivity of memory is seen as part of the strengths rather than the weaknesses of this approach, because memory is not only selective, but it re-shapes the narratives into meaningful accounts which are inevitably affected by the subjectivity of the speaker, influenced by the passage of time and the shared histories and collective memories of certain events. Narrators select facts and events and organise them along a storyline that reflects both the past-present relationship and their personal identity.⁶⁴ In the postwar, veterans transition from soldiers to 'activists', participating in the Civil Rights movement and in political mobilisation with varying degrees of involvement.⁶⁵ Storytelling is another form of activism, that veterans use to construct self-empowering narratives which allow them to embrace their initial state of vulnerability due to their racial identity, to then emphasise their ability to survive and reclaim their agency, but also their contribution to the double V campaign. Thus, through storytelling, they become actively engaged in the Long Civil Rights struggle. As Reiss' study of detention camps for German POWs demonstrates, the presence of white Axis prisoners in the Jim Crow south further contributed to expose racialised vulnerability and contradictions in American racial ideologies.⁶⁶ The treatment of white German POWs featured prominently in the double V campaign narrative as evidence of deep social injustice in the U.S. However, everyday interactions in those camps were often characterized by shared marginalisation and instances of solidarity. In the Long Civil Rights framework, encounters between Axis prisoners and black soldiers or civilians help explain how contexts of captivity are reframed in postwar memory into narratives of empowerment in the broader struggle for social justice.

Veterans who are part of the Tuskegee Airmen and 92 Infantry Division tend to identify with the 'public legend' connecting 'personal experiences and emotions with public meanings'.⁶⁷ The emphasis they place on having been part of a segregated unit and having contributed to victory nonetheless, including in captivity, informs the way they compose their memories of building the path to a more just America, as the

⁶²Alessandro Portelli, 'History-Telling and Time: An Example from Kentucky', *The Oral History Review* 20, no. 1 (March 1, 1992), 51–66, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ohr/20.1.51>.

⁶³Alessandro Portelli, 'The Peculiarities of Oral History', *History Workshop* Autumn, 1981, no. 12 (1981), p. 99.

⁶⁴Thomson, *Anzac Memories*, pp. 521–40.

⁶⁵Parker, *Fighting for Democracy*, pp. 174–186.

⁶⁶Matthias Reiss, 'Solidarity Among Fellow Sufferers: African Americans and German Prisoners of War in the United States During World War II', *The Journal of African American History* 98, no. 4 (2013), pp. 531–61.

⁶⁷Thomson, pp. 431–49.

'critical memory' of the war that was once marginalised, intersects the dominant 'traditional' narrative without overturning it: from a place of vulnerability to the contribution to the double V campaign.⁶⁸ Harold Brown's account of his initial experience in the deep south, when he went from Minnesota to Biloxi for basic training, shows a certain shock: 'it was a rude awakening'.⁶⁹ Isham George Benton from Ohio was sent to Camp Wheeler, Georgia for training. His first memory about this experience is on the camp commander's instruction on 'socialization between blacks and whites' that existed in Georgia: 'Regardless of where you are from, you are now in Georgia' he recalls, showing the 'difference in status between the whites and the blacks'.⁷⁰ Alexander Jefferson is perhaps the most vocal narrator in this group as he has been interviewed several times, and including for a publication about the Tuskegee Airmen.⁷¹ He has a more negative stance on the question of segregation, and repeats this idea about racial discrimination in his various interviews almost as a refrain: 'This is America, this is the United States of America, racism and segregation and discrimination of the war'.⁷²

Relating to 'public legends' which counter the stereotype of the black soldier who is unfit for combat, gives meaning to past experiences even when the narrator was not part of those same units. Childs Smith makes sense of his account of captivity by linking it to that of Army First Lieutenant John R. Fox of 92 Infantry Division, whose story had become part of the public narratives about the contribution of African American soldiers in the war. Childs Smith was wounded by mortar fire on 26 December 1944 in Sommocolonia, Italy and incarcerated for four months: 'Fifty years later I found out that the fusillade of shells had been called for by a Lieutenant John Fox who was a forward observer for the artillery, and he had called for fire on his own position, because he said the Germans are about to surround us. ... I heard the shots that killed John Fox and I didn't know anything about this until 50 years later'.⁷³ John R. Fox' actions were acknowledged for the first time in 1982, when he was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, later upgraded to Medal of Honor in 1997, when his story came to be recognised as a 'public legend' to counter the narrative of unfit black soldiers, and as a testament to their bravery.⁷⁴

⁶⁸Bodnar, *The 'Good War' in American Memory*, pp. 166-199.

⁶⁹Harold H. Brown Collection (AFC/2001/001/76178), VHP.

⁷⁰Isham George Benton Collection (AFC/2001/001/28694), VHP.

⁷¹Francis and Caso, *The Tuskegee Airmen*, pp. 282-92.

⁷²Alexander Jefferson Collection (AFC/2001/001/90441), VHP.

⁷³Rothacker Childs Smith Collection (AFC/2001/001/44158), VHP.

⁷⁴It is believed that John Fox called his coordinates to overpower the enemy in the area of Sommocolonia, Italy, on December 26, 1944. This action meant sacrificing his own life; Rothacker Childs Smith Collection (AFC/2001/001/44158), VHP.

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When asked about what his experience meant to him, Harold Brown emphasizes the concept of excitement as a refrain: 'it was all just a great big experience, exciting looking forward to what we were going to do ... very excited about the whole thing, and it was just an adventure. ... That's about the best way I can describe it, very exciting. You know, something that we looked forward to. ... We just enjoyed the moment'.⁷⁵ The fact of having been in captivity does not change this account. The other element that gives meaning to these narrators' memories is ethnic identity, which they characterise as comradeship and brotherhood: 'just one big happy family' and precisely because they were a segregated unit, 'we all knew each other' and perhaps this was even 'one of the nice things about being segregated'.⁷⁶ The emphasis on these outcomes allows them to find agency, by constructing an empowering account that they can comfortably live within the present. The Long Civil Rights Movement framework offers these veterans a powerful lens through which they construct narratives of captivity that reaffirm their agency. Although they did formally not become activists, storytelling itself provides them a form of quiet resistance, allowing them to reflect on the legacy of segregation and find meaning in their wartime experiences.

Conclusion

The stories of black POWs remained hidden from the historical record for decades after the conflict and remained marginalised within broader national narratives that privileged white experiences of the Second World War. Non-white soldiers' experiences exposed the deep contradictions of the U.S. military, that demanded loyalty while denying basic rights to black servicemen and women. The reappearance of these narratives is influenced by wider historiographical and cultural developments, such as the cultural and emotional turns that legitimised personal accounts as historical sources and by the formal recognition of PTSD that reframed trauma as a framework to understand certain wartime experiences. At the same time, the evolution of Civil Rights historiography embraced stories from below which had been overlooked up to that point.

This article has shown how memories of capture and detention were marginalised and continually reshaped over time, and that incarceration constituted a traumatic experience whose meanings evolved in relation to changing frameworks of national memory of the conflict. African American veterans' accounts of captivity began to find new places in archives as well as in public memory decades after the war, and they remain fewer in number and more difficult to locate. Those that do exist, largely emerge from units that were later celebrated within public narratives of black wartime achievement, filtered through figures of military distinction that were already

⁷⁵Harold H. Brown Collection (AFC/2001/001/76178), VHP.

⁷⁶Harold H. Brown Collection (AFC/2001/001/76178), VHP.

legitimised at the national level. When these memories resurfaced, they voiced the hardships of the racialised experience of incarceration, from the threats posed by the Axis captors to the challenge of knowing that one's own armed forces failed to protect them. In other words, these memories gave voice to the emotional burden of systemic discrimination. Yet these narratives rarely entered postwar memory as stories of victimhood, as their re-emergence can be situated within the longer Civil Rights era, when black Americans sought recognition by claiming their inclusion within traditional shared accounts. This context partially explains the reasons why these memories are few and very difficult to find, but it also highlights their value in revealing the meaning that black veterans give to their captivity not simply as soldiers, but as black Americans facing the legacy of segregation and the continuing struggle for social justice. In a segregated military that denied black soldiers combat roles and opportunities to demonstrate valour, being captured confirmed participation in the fight and gives access to a form of legitimacy that would otherwise be denied. The emotions associated with incarceration were reframed through racialised lenses, as the narrators' initial vulnerability is rooted in racial identity. They then emphasize endurance and survival and reclaim agency through self-empowering narratives that transformed experiences of exclusion into accounts of triumph over adversity, thereby acknowledging racism without fundamentally destabilizing the prevailing 'good war' framework.

The Long Civil Rights movement thus provides a crucial framework through which these narrators reclaim their agency, using storytelling as an act of resistance: although these men did not become formal activists in the post-war, their engagement through oral history and public testimony is a tool to affirm their place in the pursuit of Civil Rights. Their memories of captivity and their self-empowering narratives are thus inscribed in contemporary struggles for equality and Civil Rights.

How to be an American Housewife: American Red Cross Brides' Schools of the Occupation of Japan

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ABSTRACT

This paper looks at the role of the soldier husbands in the establishment of the American Red Cross Brides' Schools in Japan and their influence on the schools' content. Without an American husband, these women would not have been able to immigrate to the United States, and without this immigration, these schools would not have existed. This paper argues that schools were created for the benefit of the American GI husbands of Japanese women, were a form of pre-assimilation, and an extension of American soft power during the occupation and democratisation of Japan.

Introduction

On 20 September 20 1945, *The New York Times* declared: 'It may be, with regard to Japan, that it is just as Kipling said – East is East and West and West and never the twain shall meet.'¹ Less than a year later, fraternisation was 'all right.'² This rapid policy change reflected the shifting landscape of the postwar order and the United States' ability to alter policy on a dime – when it suited its aims. On 19 January 1952, *The Saturday Evening Post* ran a story entitled: 'They're Bringing Home Japanese Wives' with the subtext noting 'all the little Madame Butterflies are studying hamburgers, Hollywood and home on the range.'³ With the impending end of Public Law 717, which facilitated the immigration of Asian women previously excluded from the War Brides Act of 1945, it was a race against time for these couples to make the jump across the

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¹Frank L. Kluckhohn, 'GI'S IN JAPAN OBEY FRATERNIZING BAN,' *The New York Times*, 21 September 1945.

²Burton Crane, 'GI'S FRATERNIZATION ALLOWED IN JAPAN,' *The New York Times*, 12 July 1946.

³'They're Bringing Home Japanese Wives,' *Saturday Evening Post* (SEP), 19 January 1952.

67 www.bjmh.org.uk

Pacific.⁴ When it was all said and done, almost fifty thousand Japanese women moved to the United States to be with their American husbands. Before they left, however, there was much to do. Mountains of paperwork and extensive logistical preparations were needed for a move across the world. Still, many wives also took it upon themselves to enrol in Brides' Schools run by the American Red Cross. Why? Amidst the bureaucratic headaches in a pre-Xerox era of marshalling paperwork in duplicate and sometimes in triplicate, taking on additional work before a move across the globe seemed ill-advised. Almost four thousand women enrolled in American Red Cross brides' schools, which claimed to teach formerly single women the skills necessary to be successful housewives in America. But it was not that simple. Students were Japanese women who married American men and learned the tenets of the archetypal American housewife. In the aftermath of the Second World War and the advent of the Cold War, these schools took on greater meaning.

This article seeks to shed more light on the role of the American soldier husband in the establishment and running of American Red Cross (ARC) schools.⁵ Although Japanese women attended the schools, the author argues that the schools were founded to benefit their American husbands. American GI's were the bridge between these Japanese women and their future lives in the United States. In the age of restriction, relationships with an American soldier enabled previously inadmissible women the ability to immigrate to the United States through the war bride visa route. Japanese women were not only in relationships with American men, but also starting

⁴The War Brides Act of 1945 only enabled would-be brides who were then admissible through American immigration laws which did not allow for the immigration of Japanese women. Thus, new legislation in the form of Public Law 717 was enacted in 1950 but had a temporal limitation which put even more pressure on an already stressful immigration process. The McCarran-Walter Act of 1952 ended blanket exclusion of Asian immigrants and introduced a preference system hinging on skilled status and family reunification.

⁵At the centre of the Japanese war bride experience are, of course, the women themselves. While this article has focused on the role of the husbands, the experiences and testimonials of the Japanese brides take on a greater role in the larger project. For oral histories of Japanese war brides see Kathryn Tolbert, Lucy Craft, and Karen Kasmauski's work in collecting the oral histories of Japanese war brides, including their own mothers, in the documentary film 'Fall Seven Times, Get Up Eight: The Japanese War Brides.' For a book of oral histories of Japanese war brides, see: Miki Ward Crawford et al., *Japanese War Brides in America: An Oral History*, 1st ed, (Location: Praeger, 2016). The work of Elena Tajima Creef explores her mother's experience as a Japanese war bride in her scholarship in Elena Tajima Creef, 'Discovering My Mother as the Other in *The Saturday Evening Post*,' *Qualitative Inquiry* 6, no. 4 (2000), pp.443–457.

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to form relationships with the United States more broadly. American Red Cross Brides' Schools offered Japanese brides the chance to learn how to be 'successful' wives and mothers in their new American families.

ARC schools started as grassroots efforts, but quickly evolved into something more robust. Volunteers started with a well-intentioned investment in 'teaching Japanese women the American way of life.' Still, the schools were more than that.⁶ Within the postwar context, the schools took on greater significance. The United States engaged in the democratisation of Japan following the Second World War; this project, I argue, extended not only to those who remained in Japan but also to those who emigrated to the United States. American ideals were present across all aspects of the curriculum, particularly as Americans predominantly taught acculturation classes. While skills such as 'cooking & home hygiene' and other tenets of homemaking were taught, the curriculum also included American 'culture, customs, and manners,' as well as religion, history, and geography. The schools' intensive scope and curriculum reflected not only the volunteers' dedication to offering a broad curriculum but also the students' desire to learn as much as they could before emigrating from Japan.

War bride scholarship is a re-emerging field. Susan Zeiger's work launched further study of the twentieth-century war-bride phenomenon, building on previous scholarship that shed initial light on the experiences of foreign women who fraternised with American soldiers.⁷ At the core of scholarship on postwar Japan is John Dower's

⁶National Archives & Records Administration II (hereinafter NARA II) RG 200 Box 1280 – Brides School ARC Volunteer Services and Armed Forces Women's Club of Yokohama Pamphlet Undated.

⁷Susan Zeiger, *Entangling Alliances: Foreign War Brides and American Soldiers in the Twentieth Century*, (New York: New York University Press, 2010), Elfrieda Berthiaume Shukert and Barbara Smith Scibetta, *War Brides of World War II*, (Novato, California: Presidio Press, 1988). For sources on British War Brides see Duncan Barrett, *GI Brides: The Wartime Girls Who Crossed the Atlantic for Love*, 1st ed, (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2014), Barbara G. Friedman, *From the Battlefield to the Bridal Suite: Media Coverage of British War Brides, 1942-1946*, (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2007), Jenel Virden, *Good-Bye, Piccadilly: British War Brides in America*, Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island Centennial Series, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996). For a source on British brides who married Canadian soldiers and immigrated to Canada see: Linda Granfield, ed., *Brass Buttons and Silver Horseshoes: Stories from Canada's British War Brides*, (Toronto, Ont: McClelland & Stewart, 2002). For a book about Japanese war brides and their role in shaping Japanese America, see Sonia C. Gomez, *Picture Bride, War Bride: The Role of Marriage in Shaping Japanese America*, (New York: New York University Press, 2024). For a book about Jewish war brides see: Robin E. Judd, *Between Two Worlds: Jewish War Brides after the Holocaust*, (Chapel Hill: The University

work, but the narrative has evolved.⁸ War brides were at a unique nexus of geopolitical and socioeconomic forces, which calls for a broad historiographical base. Historians Sarah Kovner, Robert Kramm, and Mark McLelland have built on Dower's foundation to examine personal and sexual relationships and the United States's attempted governance over them. Historian Brian Walsh has, however, challenged the supposed widespread nature of this sexual landscape. Historian Kristen Roebuck examines the next 'phase' of these relationships by exploring the relationship between kinship and country among mixed-race Japanese children born of relationships between Japanese women and American occupying forces. This scholarship situated Japanese war brides within their unique context, but the most relevant work for this article and the project is Mire Koikari's.⁹

Koikari's work examines the 'central role' that American women play in shaping Japanese women's lives. In particular, Koikari argues these women were driven by a 'zeal for racial uplift.'¹⁰ Within her scholarship, Koikari explores how women in the

of North Carolina Press, 2023). For a book on Pacific Islander war brides see Angela Wanhalla, *Of Love and War: Pacific Brides of World War II*, Studies in Pacific Worlds, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2023).

⁸John W. Dower, *War Without Mercy*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1986), John W. Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (New York: Norton, 1993), Sarah Kovner, *Occupying Power: Sex Workers and Servicemen in Postwar Japan* (Stanford University Press, 2020), Robert Kramm, *Sanitized Sex: Regulating Prostitution, Venereal Disease, and Intimacy in Occupied Japan, 1945-1952*, (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017), Mark J. McLelland, *Love, Sex, and Democracy in Japan during the American Occupation*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), Kristin Roebuck, *Japan Reborn: Race and Eugenics from Empire to Cold War*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2025), Naoko Shibusawa, *America's Geisha Ally: Reimagining the Japanese Enemy*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), Brian P. Walsh, *The Rape of Japan: The Myth of Mass Sexual Violence During the Allied Occupation*, (La Vergne: Naval Institute Press, 2024).

⁹Mire Koikari, *Cold War Encounters in US-Occupied Okinawa: Women, Militarized Domesticity and Transnationalism in East Asia*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), Mire Koikari, 'Exporting Democracy? American Women, 'Feminist Reforms,' and Politics of Imperialism in the U.S. Occupation of Japan, 1945-1952,' *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 23, no. 1 (2002), Mire Koikari, 'Feminism and the Cold War in the U.S. Occupation of Japan, 1945 - 1952,' *Asia-Pacific Journal* 10, no. S4 (2012), pp. 6-28, Mire Koikari, *Pedagogy of Democracy: Feminism and the Cold War in the U.S. Occupation of Japan* (Temple University Press, 2008), Mire Koikari, 'Rethinking Gender and Power in the US Occupation of Japan, 1945-1952,' *Gender & History* 11, no. 2 (1999), pp.313-35.

¹⁰Koikari, 'Exporting Democracy,' pp3-4.

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Civil Information and Education Section (CI&E) were 'chiefly responsible for instituting gender democracy in postwar Japan.'¹¹ This article, and the broader project, do not engage with these particular educational reforms. Instead, it looks at the schools as one element of this overall policy agenda. Against the backdrop of other reforms geared toward Japanese women, ARC schools were unique as they were created to shape Japanese women who would be emigrating to the United States. Here we can see how the United States' acculturation aims extended to Japanese emigrants.

By imposing American conceptions of the ideal homemaker and wife onto Japanese wives, the ARC schools played a significant role in the postwar American imperial project. The curriculum was more than an intensive home economics course. The schools functioned as micro incubators of American democracy and ideals under the guise of teaching American customs and helping women adapt to American culture. But schools did not have explicitly imperial intentions. Volunteers ran them, mostly the wives of American soldiers stationed abroad, some were Nisei, second-generation Japanese immigrants to the U.S., who genuinely wanted to teach Japanese women aspects of American life to ease their transition.

On the surface, ARC schools were established to teach Japanese women to help cushion their transition to the United States and to pre-assimilate them to living in the United States, but there was more to these schools than met the eye. At their core, schools were established to teach Japanese women how to be better wives for their American husbands. Yes, these women learned skills that would benefit them individually. But, throughout the texts, the emphasis was on how this new knowledge would benefit their husbands and families. All this was possible because of the American military husband. This article explores the centrality of the husband in sparking these schools and enabling this pre-assimilation project.

ARC schools' curriculum reflected the United States' imperial engagement in Japan. Through 'teaching' Japanese women how to be successful American wives, the United States engaged in civilising practices. Historian Benjamin Coates writes, 'the possibility of assimilation strengthened the ideology of civilisation because it suggested that non-Western people might become full members of the international community if they adopted certain practices.'¹² Despite the absence of the word 'civilisation,' Coates argues, these new 'formulations of 'development' and 'modernisation' still hinged on

¹¹Ibid., p.9. Koikari goes on to outline the roles of Lt. Ethel Weed, Beate Sirota Gordon, and Carmen Johnson in shaping these reform efforts in Japan within the broader context of foreign military occupations.

¹²Benjamin A. Coates, 'American Presidents and the Ideology of Civilization,' in *Ideology in U.S. Foreign Relations: New Histories*, ed. Christopher McKnight Nichols and David Milne (New York: Columbia University Press, 2022), p.55.

'similar assumptions about difference and tutelage.'¹³ Thus, tutelage and civilisation were extensions of the empire. While assimilation typically began when new immigrants set foot in their new nation, ARC schools moved up the timeline.

By pre-assimilating Japanese wives in Japan before they went to the United States, schools disrupted and accelerated previous patterns of assimilation. ARC schools were sites of a renegotiation of social, cultural, and national boundaries. Transforming Japanese citizens into American wives was a push-and-pull between each nation's influence and Japanese women's own negotiation of their changing circumstances. Cultural differences between the United States and Japan, and the exceptional nature of their migration, exacerbated the United States' government's concerns about Japanese women's ability to assimilate.

The United States believed it was important that war brides raise their children as Americans. As current and future wives of American soldiers and mothers to the next generation of mixed-race, multicultural Americans, ensuring these foreign brides passed along American ideals was critical. In reference to the U.S. occupation of the Philippines, President Theodore Roosevelt claimed the occupation 'would help them [the Filipinos] rise higher and higher in the scale of civilisation and of capacity for self-government.'¹⁴ This mindset extended to the occupation of Japan half a century later. Through the democratisation of Japan and the pre-assimilation of Japanese wives, we can see how the United States sought to civilise them.

ARC schools and their curriculum were part of the United States' transformation of Japan from a former enemy nation into what historian Naoko Shibusawa deemed the nation's 'Geisha Ally.' This feminisation of Japan mirrored that of the United States' feminisation of the German enemy and of an occupied nation after the war, but there was a notable difference. In feminising Japan, there was an undeniable racial component to this characterisation. Shibusawa talks about the 'prewar Western view of Japanese infantilism as a more or less permanent state.' Japan's meteoric rise over the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century flipped the script.¹⁵ Their rapid ascent into a global force was, at the time, unprecedented. But with this rapid ascent came a sharp decline. This boom-and-bust led to uncertainty regarding Japan's new postwar status. The West had to reconcile two Japans into the new 'United States-led liberal capitalist order.'¹⁶ The United States took the lead in carving out Japan's new role. Unlike Japan, the United States had the certainty and the agency, achieved

¹³Ibid., p.55.

¹⁴Ibid., p.55.

¹⁵Naoko Shibusawa, *America's Geisha Ally: Reimagining the Japanese Enemy*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), p.24.

¹⁶Ibid., p17.

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through military, political, and economic power, to dictate the terms of Japan's new role. This was rationalised by the belief that 'nonwhite nations could 'grow up' into modern, liberal capitalist democracies.'¹⁷ The schools were part of democratisation and the extension of American power not only over Japan but also on this group of Japanese women who left for the United States. Under the guiding hand of Uncle Sam, Japan and Japanese war brides could join this new order.

Tackling A Slippery Slope

The soldier was young and somewhat red in the face, but he stood his ground in the lobby of a Red Cross building. The girl beside him was black-haired, olive-skinned and obviously frightened. And her clothes looked too bulky on her, although they were new. The soldier addressed the nearest Red Cross worker, ignoring the awful possibility that this volunteer might very well be his colonel's wife. 'I've been hearing about this brides' school,' he said, 'so I brought her.' He indicated the girl. 'I don't know about this government and history stuff you teach – what I want her to learn is how to wear a slip. I bought her three of them now.' The volunteer blinked once or twice. She repeated, 'How to wear a slip?' 'Yeah,' said the boy. 'I tried and tried, but I can't make her understand. Like I told you, I bought her three of them – and she's got on all three right now.'¹⁸

To the twenty-first-century eye, a slip was a non-essential piece of clothing, today only worn in extraordinary circumstances, such as when under a skirt or dress of a particularly static-prone fabric, such as wool, rayon, or silk, slips are not now an everyday item. In the mid-century, however, slips were worn daily and were integral to Western women's fashion at the time and were a foreign object to a Japanese woman. The cultural disconnect was evident throughout this entire interaction – from the soldier's exasperation and his bride's lack of understanding to the worker's supposed confusion at the man's request. The schools' curriculum gave equal weight to abstract lessons on civics and history and concrete concepts such as cleaning, proper attire, and cooking. For this particular soldier, the concrete lessons were the more significant of the two. A simple everyday object, such as a slip, took on greater importance not only in this relationship but also in the fashioning of a new life. While this scenario and dynamic were not representative of every Japanese-American relationship, they did reflect the complex emotions that could arise in these interactions. The American soldier, wanting his bride to adopt Western customs, was frustrated by her lack of understanding.

¹⁷Ibid., p7.

¹⁸Janet Wentworth Smith and William L. Worden, 'They're Bringing Home Japanese Wives,' *The Saturday Evening Post*, 19 January, 1952.

In contrast, the Japanese woman, was understandably upset by her husband's lack of patience and understanding after she did her best to meet new American standards. While this relationship should not be judged solely on a single incident of frustration captured by journalists, the tension between the two parties was unmistakable. This friction represented the gap between two groups of people that the schools tried to smooth over. While the bride schools did not exist solely to teach Japanese women about Western dress customs, they sought to bridge the cultural divide between husband and wife and help Japanese women integrate into American society.

Learning to wear a single slip correctly was not only an important skill to master as a woman in mid-century America, but also a metaphor. Slips helped dresses and skirts hang smoothly, reducing static and providing modest coverage by covering visible lines from undergarments. Brides' schools provided a similar service for the Japanese women. In the Far East Area American Red Cross Brides School Textbook, students were encouraged to preserve selected aspects of Japanese culture, such as 'the virtues of love, honesty, faithfulness, cleanliness, and orderliness.'¹⁹ Just a few years prior, the United States and Japan were engaged in brutal warfare, but times had changed. Japan's militarist past was seemingly swept under the rug in favour of a value system devoid of its ardent patriotism, or perhaps this patriotism was shifted to support the United States.²⁰ With these schools functioning as the slip, patriotic values were repackaged and redirected to support an American husband, an American family, and the United States as a whole. Enabling this redirection while simultaneously concealing a complex past and pre-assimilating Japanese women, the slip was also transformative. Within the broader context of the American agenda of democratising Japan, ARC schools were one way in which Americanisation took place. In the words of the *Saturday Evening Post*, these 'little Madame Butterflies' were learning the American way and were well on their journey to becoming Americans – a journey enabled by their relationship and marriage to an American soldier.

¹⁹NARA II RG 200 Box 1280 – Far East Area American Red Cross Brides Schools Textbook.

²⁰For more on the brutality of the Pacific theatre of World War II see Gerald F. Linderman, *The World Within War: America's Combat Experience in World War II*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1999), John W. Dower, *War Without Mercy*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1986), Eugene B. Sledge, Samuel Hynes, and Alvin B. Kernan, *World War II Memoirs: The Pacific Theater*, ed. Elizabeth D. Samet, The Library of America 351, (New York, N.Y: The Library of America, 2021), Peter Schrijvers, *Bloody Pacific: American Soldiers at War with Japan*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

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Pre-assimilation

Through the establishment of schools and the material taught to Japanese women, the United States crystallised and disseminated its national identity as it cemented its status as a global superpower. Historian Gary Gerstle asserted that wars were an 'opportunity to sharpen American national identity against external enemies' but also a time to 'transform millions of Americans whose loyalty was uncertain into ardent patriots, to discipline those within the nations who were deemed racially inferior or politically and culturally heterodox, and to engage in experiments in state building that would have been considered illegitimate in peacetime.'²¹ This occupation project extended wartime liminality, with the United States exerting its influence long after the final surrender. First, American national identity, as seen through the history, geography, and civics lessons, was distilled and explicitly stated in ARC textbook materials. Second, schools transformed women from former enemies into suitable wives of American servicemen and future American citizens. Finally, ARC schools served as an extension of the American democratisation of Japan, which would not have been possible without the unique alchemy of the postwar context. The schools were a place to simultaneously reaffirm the American belief system while transforming women from Japanese citizens into future American citizens and patriots.

On a broader level, the schools served as a form of pre-assimilation for would-be immigrants. With crowds of young, impressionable Japanese women eager to learn everything there was to know about their future homes, the schools had a captive audience. Japanese women were already tied to the nation through their marriage to American soldiers, but they had not yet moved to the United States and assimilated into American culture. Between 1945 and 1955, the American Consulate in Tokyo recorded twelve to thirteen thousand marriages between Japanese nationals and American citizens, with more than five thousand in the Tokyo-Yokohama area alone.²² This amounted to about a hundred marriages a month. The scale of Japanese-American marriages and subsequent immigration marked a massive shift in population to the United States. While optional, ARC schools were attended by almost four thousand Japanese women. In the years since the war ended, 'Japanese girls observe Western manners everywhere, even if they find them hard to understand.'²³ ARC volunteers and schools claimed to bridge this gap. Japanese brides schools offered them the opportunity to formally acquire knowledge about their new homes. With over eighty thousand American occupiers present, this was not their first foray into American

²¹Gary Gerstle, *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), p.9.

²²NARA II RG 200 Box 1280 – Brides School – American Red Cross (ARC) Far East Area (FEA) – JWB A78.

²³NARA II RG 200 Box 1280 – December 1954 ARC Bride School Volunteer Informational Pamphlet.

culture, but it was unique. The purpose of the school was to 'lead the way to familiarisation and some understanding' of the United States and its customs.²⁴ Many women saw the appeal of learning about American customs and culture in a readily available, accessible format and enrolled in these schools. This article argues that this familiarisation was pre-assimilation and transformation of Japanese women into wives to American soldiers.

This transformation was not instantaneous, far from it. Assimilation was evasive and, at times, impossible for certain immigrants. While true assimilation was a white whale for most non-white immigrants, Japanese war brides did everything in their power to learn this previously unfamiliar American way of life. Japanese women had 'an almost complete lack of knowledge' of the United States and were preparing to step into terra incognita.²⁵ ARC schools promised to teach them. Students were told not to divest themselves of their Japanese identity and practices completely, but there was still the expectation that American skills and practices would take precedence. Japanese women were told to 'be proud of both [origin and country]' and to 'concentrate on the virtues of love, honesty, faithfulness, cleanliness and orderliness.' These tenets were carefully chosen cultural attitudes of Japanese culture that were deemed acceptable to perpetuate with other aspects of Japanese culture to be selectively jettisoned as they would not align with their newfound American values.²⁶ For Japanese war brides, Americanisation, as defined by University of Pennsylvania professor Grover Huebener, meant 'transcending diversity through assimilation into a uniform conception of national identity through the actual raising of the immigrant to the American economic, social and moral standard of life.'²⁷ This concept was built upon by political scientist Desmond King, who wrote not only of the dramatic shift in immigration policy in the decades leading up to the Johnson-Reed Act, but also the construction of a distinctly American identity as a 'product of melting-pot assimilationism' wherein immigrants were expected to 'conform' and become transformed into Americans.²⁸ This expected conformity and eschewing of ethnic identity and identity markers in favour of a 'uniform national identity' was clear in the schools' teaching. War brides were not expected to shed all aspects of their Japanese identity; however, they were expected to conform to the American way of life. Thus,

²⁴NARA II RG 200 Box 1280 – History of Bride Schools Memorandum 27 September 1956 (A36)

²⁵*Saturday Evening Post*, 19 January, 1952.

²⁶NARA II RG 200 Box 1280 – Far East Area American Red Cross Brides Schools Textbook

²⁷Grover G. Huebner, 'The Americanization of the Immigrant,' *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 27 (1906), p.653.

²⁸Desmond S. King, *Making Americans: Immigration, Race, and the Origins of the Diverse Democracy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), pp 86-125.

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ARC schools were both a crash course in the ways of the American housewife and part and parcel of the transformation of an immigrant into not just a hyphenated American but an American.²⁹

It was clear from the war bride legislation who was considered ideal. The ideal war bride was a woman who would be able to easily assimilate into American society with very few cultural barriers and little to no language barrier. Japanese war brides did not fit into this mould. Huebener proposed in a turn-of-the-century article, 'Some nationalities have a greater capacity to become Americanised than others,' with the number of immigrants each year being 'of nationalities who are inherently more difficult to Americanise than immigrants of the past.'³⁰ While Huebener was referring to southern and eastern European immigrants, this extended to non-European immigrants. Japanese women were seen as being difficult to Americanise. By teaching them Western ways of living, ARC schools attempted to pre-assimilate Japanese women into American life and bring them closer to the idealised war bride.

Japanese war brides had a unique immigration pathway. It was important to note ARC schools were only accessible through marriage or engagement to an American citizen, oftentimes a soldier, but sometimes a civilian. Historian Mae Ngai proposed 'access to naturalisation ensures that the condition of alienage, with its limited rights, is temporary', but only for those who were 'lawfully present.' Under the 1924 Johnson-Reed Act, Chinese, Japanese, Indians, and other Asian peoples were deemed ineligible for citizenship. The War Brides Act of 1945 and subsequent Public Law 717 enabled previously ineligible Asian women to enter the United States with their husbands, facilitating a lawful presence. In a presentation to a prefectural community relations council, Chairman of the American Red Cross Volunteers, Doris A. Kramer, declared herself and other volunteers to be 'interested in the welfare of your Japanese girls' and stressed the importance of this school's orientation 'to the future of these girls as American citizens.'³¹ ARC schools had a vested interest in teaching Japanese women and were clear about their objective in preparing them for their future as American citizens. Bride schools hold particular significance because their targeted audience consisted of people otherwise ineligible for immigration without their relationships to American men. Therefore, their relationship and marriage to an American soldier cleared an otherwise impossible path to immigration and citizenship. The husbands were key to their migration.

²⁹For more about hyphenated Americans see Theodore Roosevelt's 12 October 1915 Speech entitled 'Americanism' delivered at Carnegie Hall in New York City, NY.

³⁰Huebner, p.675.

³¹NARA II RG 200 Box 1280 – Brides' School Discussion as given by Mrs. Doris A Kramer (JWB A81).

Origin and Aim of the Schools

A fluorescent orange poster emblazoned with bold forest-green cursive script advertised the Brides' School taking place at the Tokyo Chapel Centre. Registration and class information were displayed in both English and Japanese, with 'Japanese wives of security forces are invited to attend', leaving no room for misinterpreting the intended audience. Flanked by imagery of pumpkins, wheat, and corn on one side and a kneeling Japanese woman in a kimono on the other, the advertisement leapt off the page.³²

Chopsticks to knife and fork, flowing kimono to Western chic, a jackknife bow to warm handclasp – even an un-Japanese kiss. That's how far daughters of Nippon break with customs a thousand years old after learning to make homes for their new American husbands in brides' schools conducted in Japan by the American Red Cross.³³

Wanting to help ease their transition to the United States, some Americans in Japan sought to teach Japanese women about the United States. The first school was established in collaboration with the Christian Women's Association (CWA) in the spring of 1948, with the second following later that year at the General Headquarters Chapel Centre. Additional schools sprang up in collaboration with the Japanese Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA). A few years after the first school, the American Red Cross (ARC) and the CWA launched the first ARC school, with two more following in 1953 and 1954.³⁴ While the schools were tuition-free for students, they cost hundreds of dollars to run, which was 'very unselfishly' funded by the YWCA and the ARC, with many Japanese brides contributing money or food to their homemaking teachers.³⁵ In this way, the schools were a collaborative effort. Following the successes of the first schools, more sprang up quickly across Japan to meet demand, with the first schools being 'swamped' by potential applicants. Brides' schools were so popular that students wanted to attend multiple times and praised the program, with one student quoted as saying, 'I just wish the school could last forever.'

³²NARA II RG 200 Box 1280 – Brides School Banner

³³NARA II RG 200 Box 1280 – December 1954 ARC Bride School Volunteer Informational Pamphlet. For more on this see Mark McLelland, "'Kissing Is a Symbol of Democracy!'" Dating, Democracy, and Romance in Occupied Japan, 1945-1952,' *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 19, no. 3 (2010), pp.508-535

³⁴NARA II RG 200 Box 1280 – December 1954 ARC Bride School Volunteer Informational Pamphlet.

³⁵NARA II RG 200 Box 1280 – October 18, 1955 Brief History of ARC FEA Bride Schools (JWB 36A).

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I love every minute of it.’³⁶ The only entrance requirement was that students were ‘legally married’ to a U.S. citizen or had ‘serious intent to wed,’ as evidenced by papers from a chaplain.³⁷ ARC bespoke schools were created for and accessible only to a select population – those already legally or intended to be legally tied to an American citizen. Again, the American husbands were the key to admission.

Just as military bases sprang up around the world during the war, so did these schools around Japan during the occupation.³⁸ Following the success of the Brides’ School in Yokohama, ‘the Military requested similar ARC projects’ be set up throughout the command.³⁹ What started as a ‘purely volunteer’ project by a group of Tokyo churchwomen quickly evolved into an institution.⁴⁰ By the time the schools closed their doors, the American Red Cross had run 102 schools between 1951 and 1957, with 3,979 graduates and 2,474 volunteers.⁴¹ The military provided ‘classrooms, printing of Brides’ School books, interpreters, speakers, posters and radio and newspaper publicity’ in addition to encouraging soldiers whose wives were Japanese to attend the schools.⁴² Volunteers were the backbone of the school’s success. Some volunteers were with the Red Cross, while others were the wives and daughters of U.S. servicemen (ranging from colonel to sergeant) stationed in Japan during the occupation. Collaboration between the American Red Cross and American military-adjacent personnel reflected their joint investment in teaching Japanese women the skills needed to succeed in their new lives in the United States.

The schools’ intentions were clear from both the press surrounding the school and their own internal documents and publications. In an Army Times article entitled

³⁶NARA II RG 200 Box 1280 – *The Tokyo Volunteer* (ARC Publication) Bride’s School Issue Vol. No. 3 (JWB A90)

³⁷NARA II RG 200 Box 1280 – October 18, 1955 Brief History of ARC FEA Bride Schools (JWB 36A).

³⁸For more on the expansion of the United States military bases during World War II, see Daniel Immerwahr, *How to Hide an Empire*, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2019), pp.216-219 and pp.355-372, Zach Fredman’s chapter entitled ‘Military Occupations and Overseas Bases in Twentieth-Century U.S. Foreign Relations’ in Christopher R.W. Dietrich’s *A Companion to U.S. Foreign Relations: Colonial Era to the Present*, (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2020).

³⁹NARA II RG 200 Box 1280 – Excerpt from Bi-Monthly Volunteer Services Report for July-August 1951 (B88)

⁴⁰SEP ‘They’re Bringing Home Japanese Brides’ January 17, 1952.

⁴¹NARA II RG 200 Box 1280 – Washington Heights Civilian Club Minutes of Meeting on Brides Schools 19 August 1957.

⁴²NARA II RG 200 Box 1280 – 18 October, 1955 Brief History of ARC FEA Bride Schools (JWB 36A).

'Soldiers' Jap Wives Clued on U.S.,' the field director of the Yokohama school, Mary Shaw, outlined the school's intentions: '[t]he objective of our school is simply to help the couples establish good and happy homes and to prepare the girls for life in the United States, since most of them plan to live there sometime in the future.'⁴³ Shaw was clear that Japanese ways of life would not be forgotten. The schools 'merely try to teach them the western way in addition to their own.'⁴⁴ This was backed up by an informational pamphlet from a Yokohama Brides School, which expanded upon Shaw's stated primary objectives of the school into three distinct aims:

To help the girls and their husbands build a good, happy home.

To introduce them to American customs and manners and the American way of life.

To teach them a few simple principles of American Democracy and the fact that for every privilege there is a corresponding responsibility.⁴⁵

The schools' aims were revealing in many ways. Firstly, they show how knowledge about the United States was a key component of ARC schools, two of the three aims were related to the education of American customs, manners, way of life, in addition to teaching American democratic principles. Secondly, the contrast between using 'girls' to describe the young Japanese women and 'husbands' to describe the American soldier husbands creates a dichotomy between the young, impressionable, and inexperienced Japanese female and the older, established, and experienced American male. This designation followed a pattern of racialised infantilisation, misogyny, and exoticisation against Asian women and furthered the inequity between Americans and Japanese women.⁴⁶ This paternalistic wording furthered the divide between the enlightened American teacher and the unenlightened Japanese student. Coupled with

⁴³'Soldiers' Jap Wives Clued on U.S.,' *Army Times*, 30 May, 1951.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*

⁴⁵NARA II RG 200 Box 1280 – Yokohama Brides School Informational Pamphlet, Undated (B9)

⁴⁶While this designation could be attributed to language conventions of the time period and the young age of the brides, this designation and word choice were still emblematic of these patronising patterns. For more on these patterns, see: Sylvia Shun Huey Chong, *The Oriental Obscene: Violence and Racial Fantasies in the Vietnam Era*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012) and Sheridan Prasso, *The Asian Mystique: Dragon Ladies, Geisha Girls, & Our Fantasies of the Exotic Orient*, (New York: Public Affairs, 2006). For more on this phenomenon as seen in the Vietnam War era, see: Gregory Daddis, *Pulp Vietnam: War and Gender in Cold War Men's Adventure Magazines*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021).

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phrasing such as 'learning to make homes for their new American husbands,' the power dynamics of the occupation carried over to bride schools.⁴⁷ While Japanese women were eager to learn and the American volunteers eager to teach, there was still an inherent power imbalance. Third, the establishment of a social contract between the privileges and freedoms afforded by American Democracy and the corresponding civic duties. These responsibilities included their new role as a homemaker and wife in the United States, as well as additional civic responsibilities. This established a transactional relationship between new immigrants and their new home. Japanese women would otherwise not be able to immigrate to the United States without their relationship to American men. In this era of immigration restriction, the privileged position as a war bride gave Japanese women the ability to bypass these restrictions. But by accepting the immigration pathway afforded to them through their marriage to American soldiers, there were strings attached.

Responsibilities were open-ended in these course aims and perhaps intentionally so. While the course literature describes the responsibilities of a homemaker that Japanese wives would take on, the course materials also describe the responsibility of raising and teaching American democracy to any future offspring. In this way, the schools will then ensure Japanese brides were not only taught American civic values for their own personal edification but also to pass down to their Japanese-American children. Thus, these women were not only being incorporated into the American nation but also would serve as the first educators to future generations. In a list of 'homemaker' duties, the fifteenth was 'Creator of Family Happiness.' The scope of this was broad,

A lot of your family's happiness can and should come from you. We who have come to your country to live for a while know how it feels to be in a strange place, to be stared at and regarded with curiosity. This can make you very unhappy, or you can remember several things:

- a) In America, every person you meet is different – height, weight, colouring.
- b) Your husband loved you enough to marry you and take you home with him. His love is going to be strong enough to help you get adjusted IF you do your part by trying, and then ask for help when you need it.
- c) There's an American phrase that says, 'It takes a heap of living and loving to make a house a home.'; and it's going to take a lot of work

⁴⁷NARA II RG 200 Box 1280 – December 1954 ARC Bride School Volunteer Informational Pamphlet.

on your part to make good family happiness so you have a HOME, and not just a house. (L. Young's 'Because of You')

- d) You can't learn about a new language or a new country or the members of your new family if you don't try. No one will mind your mistakes as much as you do; and people in American almost all love to help.⁴⁸

While many of the duties on this list of homemaker duties were full-time professions in their own right, this duty was one of the most onerous and abstract. Not only did Japanese war brides have to navigate moving to an entirely different country on the other side of the globe, but they were then, supposedly, solely responsible for ensuring their family's happiness. This inherent pressure was coupled with assurances that school volunteers had experienced a similar phenomenon, albeit under different circumstances, and had managed the transition, so that the Japanese brides should be similarly successful. This was a false equation. Volunteers had come to Japan temporarily and in a privileged position as occupiers. In contrast, these brides would be part of a very small minority when they arrived in the United States and would lack the same backing from their government on both social and economic fronts. The tone of these duties was not only patronising to the Japanese female reader but also implied that these women would not already be trying in earnest to meet the unwritten social standards. As emphasised by the second point, Japanese women should be grateful for the opportunity to be 'taken home' to the United States, and, rather than wallowing in 'unhappiness,' they should make a concerted effort to embrace the new roles and responsibilities with gusto.

Throughout the responsibilities, the woman's husband was central. The love of a husband was portrayed as a stabilising force. Strong enough to overcome the bureaucratic and social hurdles to sustain the relationship, this love was deemed 'enough' only if the woman did her part. This established a symbiotic relationship between the husband's romantic interest and the wife's efforts at assimilation. While the husband was, of course, a critical part of the woman's new life and the one who enabled her immigration to the United States, he was the reason for their founding and the judge of their success.

⁴⁸NARA II RG 200 Box 1280 – Customs and Manners in the American Home. Homemaker Jobs. (JWB Schools B18, B20). To discuss these responsibilities in their entirety would not be feasible in the scope of this article, however, this final responsibility was perhaps the most abstract and ripe for analysis. The other responsibilities were more straightforward and included 'cook', 'driver', and 'cleaner.'

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To the Husband

These bride schools were particularly unique as admission and attendance hinged on the woman's marriage or engagement to an American soldier. Thus, the husbands were a key component of the schools' histories. An American husband was an admission ticket to life in the United States and citizenship, and, by extension, these schools. Relationships were not only intercultural but also interracial. In the mid-twentieth century, before *Loving v. Virginia* (1967), interracial relationships were not only illegal in some states but also experienced backlash both in the United States and in Japan.⁴⁹ Therefore, these relationships were particularly exceptional. While Japanese women's migration was possible through the war bride migration exception, the relationships themselves could exist in the liminal space of American occupation abroad.⁵⁰ These schools and the husbands were of particular importance, as they served as the stepping stone between Japan and the United States.

While the husbands did not attend the schools with their wives, their influence was present in many ways. Student feedback was important to shaping the delivery of the lessons, but the husbands' opinions held more weight. They were the arbiters of the schools' success. Loleta Dean, Public Information Chairman of the Tokyo Office of Volunteers, stated husbands were 'encouraged to help their wives with their lessons' and 'glow visibly over the first pies their little Japanese wives make after a Brides' School cooking class.'⁵¹ The schools and their lessons proved so popular that many

⁴⁹Books on interracial relationships and anti-miscegenation laws: Paul R. Spickard, *Mixed Blood: Intermarriage and Ethnic Identity in Twentieth Century America*, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), Peggy Pascoe, *What Comes Naturally: Miscegenation Law and the Making of Race in America*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). Both books provide in-depth overviews of interracial marriage laws, public perceptions of these relationships, as well as source material from interracial couples during this time period reflecting upon their experiences. A more specific source is Renee C. Romano, *Race Mixing: Black-White Marriages in Postwar America*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003).

⁵⁰Until the passage of the McCarran-Walter Act in 1952, people from Asian nations were unable to migrate to the United States because of exclusionary policies; for sources on military occupations see: Susan L. Carruthers, *The Good Occupation: American Soldiers and the Hazards of Peace*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2016) and Camilo Erlichman and Christopher Knowles, eds., *Transforming Occupation in the Western Zones of Germany: Politics, Everyday Life and Social Interactions, 1945-55*, (London New York Oxford New Delhi Sydney: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020).

⁵¹NARA II RG 200 Box 1280 - Brides' School Scores New Record by Loleta Dean (Public Information Chairman, Tokyo Office of Volunteers) from American Red Cross Far East Review Vol. 5 No. 2 June 1955 (JWB A80).

brides took the course multiple times, and advanced cooking classes were offered to these 'second terms.'⁵² Testimonials from the brides' husbands praised the schools' curriculum and their wives' newfound talents. One husband remarked, 'My wife's cooking is 100% better than it was before, and I'm so grateful', and another praised an apple pie made by his wife because it was 'just like my mother used to make.'⁵³ While the attendees' opinions were important to the schools, the husband's opinion mattered more. As the schools were teaching these Japanese women American ways, it was the American husband who determined if these ways were being taught to a sufficient level.

Schools not only asked for feedback on the lessons' efficacy but also for suggestions on potentially expanding the curriculum to tailor the schools to the husbands' needs and desires. Notably, the schools asked the husbands to relay their wives' comprehension rather than asking the wives directly. To be sure, the women provided feedback to the schools, but this letter explicitly asked for the husbands' opinion, evoking a parent receiving a letter from their child's school. In a letter enclosed in the course materials, addressed to the husbands, the chairman of one of the Yokohama schools explicitly asked the husbands for their feedback on the current curriculum and whether their wives understood the material. And, instead of having them relay this to the schools directly, they were to put their suggestions in writing and have their wives pass the notes along to the school.

TO THE HUSBAND:

Please cooperate with us by telling us if your wife does not understand any subject or is getting the wrong impression. Let us know if there is anything you would like stressed which is not in our program. Please remind her it is important to be at the classes on time and perfect attendance is essential. Do not telephone but put your suggestions in writing and let your wife give it to Mrs. Johnstone, Chairman of the School.

Thank you for your help.

Mrs. Gerald B. Johnstone, Chairman⁵⁴

Addressing the letter directly to the husbands highlighted their centrality to this story. Without these American men and their relationship to Japanese women, the schools would not exist. While the women were ostensibly at the centre of the story, the husbands' opinions mattered more to the schools. Husbands judged whether existing

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³NARA II RG 200 Box 1280 – *The Tokyo Volunteer* (ARC Publication) Bride's School Issue Vol. No. 3 (JWB A90)

⁵⁴NARA II RG 200 Box 1280 – 'To the Husband' (JWB Schools B10)

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lessons were imparting knowledge to an acceptable level and shaped future curriculum changes. Wives were the students, but the husbands determined the coursework. In this way, the article has argued for the central role of American husbands in both the creation and the running of the schools.

Conclusion

The American Red Cross Brides Schools were unique for many reasons. From growing out of a grassroots volunteer movement to scaling up into a nationwide operation with the full backing of the United States military and government, the schools grew rapidly. They taught over four thousand in homemaking and civics lessons. But these schools were more than that. As this article has argued, ARC schools were founded for the purpose of supporting the American GI husbands by teaching their Japanese wives how to be 'successful' wives to them. With high ambitions, these schools sought to assimilate these Japanese women into acculturated wives of American servicemen. By examining the schools' stated aims and the responsibilities assigned to these women, we can see how the United States extended its influence over them before they even began their physical journey to American shores. While Japanese brides were undoubtedly the focus of these schools' attention, the husbands held equal, if not more, importance. Seeking the husbands' feedback and shaping the curriculum around what they wanted their wives to learn not only reflected the gender roles of the time but also reinforced their status as the linchpin of the entire operation. The intercultural and interracial nature of the relationships between American servicemen and Japanese women inspired the founding and rapid expansion of these schools. While Japanese war brides' histories are important to examine and study, this study would not be completed without interrogating the centrality of the husbands to this equation. What these schools taught these women offered insight not only into what the United States deemed important for an ideal wife of this period, but also into the knowledge they believed these Japanese women lacked. Thus, the schools served as bridges across cultures and nationalities, but also as a bridge between a husband and wife.

‘Life without you in the army – well, honey, I hate to even think of it.’: Esther Herbert, Marvyl Doyle and Lesbian Connection in Second World War America

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ABSTRACT

Lesbian life in the U.S. Women’s Army Corps (WAC) flourished on the bases, with intense social change and new opportunities for community bringing lesbians across the country together in previously unfathomable ways. Utilising both new primary source materials and existing scholarship on lesbian connection and experiences – specifically, Esther Herbert and Marvyl Doyle, who met in the WAC in 1943 and began a lifelong romantic relationship – this paper will discuss their relationship in the wider context of lesbian connection and culture formed as a direct result of lesbians joining the WAC.

Introduction

The period from 1930 to 1945 saw an immense level of social change that affected queer Americans more prominently than previous world events had, bridging two of these eras together; the more isolated decade of the 1930s with the sudden blossoming of a more widespread community in the 1940s. The emergence of the Women’s Auxiliary Army Corps (WAAC) in 1942 and its subsequent transition to the Women’s Army Corps in July 1943 was the beginning of a turning point specifically for lesbians, the extent to which is seen in the writings of Esther Herbert and Marvyl Doyle, with their letters and photographs making up the base primary source material for this article. Further sources, namely Pat Bond; an actress who joined the WAC in 1945, the wartime residents of the ‘St. Elsewhere’ building in Boston, MA, and contributors to popular magazines such as *Frontiers* and *Mother Jones*, support this claim. Allan Bérubé writes that ‘the current spirit of resistance and solidarity predates

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the 1960s. It was born under fire during the Second World War,' and the solidarity he refers to emerged in the United States with the creation of the WAC – the first instance of lesbians being able to connect on a large scale in US history.¹ Utilising these individual case studies, the author puts forward the argument that the unique environments and cultures across the bases, created by the intense internal migration of enlistees in a very short period, had a tangible effect on the wider lesbian scene in the United States, and aims to build upon existing scholarship by introducing new materials into the literature. By taking a deeper look at individuals whose lives have been memorialised, a more detailed picture of lesbians in the WAC can be built, and, in turn, a better understanding of how their lives help expand our historical understanding of the time.

Community spaces and groups weren't entirely absent from the landscape before the war – wider-known bars began to spring up in major cities through the 1920s and 1930s, and small-scale community groups were formed even before then, such as the Salt Lake City Bohemian Club in Utah, an explicitly-queer space which opened to women in 1891.² The WAC wasn't the first lesbian community, however, it was the first on a national scale – clubs and bars were, by necessity, site-specific, while the earliest known widespread lesbian periodical *Vice Versa* would not see publication until shortly after the war in 1947. To define community in this context is to emphasise that it rests on a feeling of belonging, solidarity, and mutual support; it isn't necessarily a physical place, indeed, it may be composed of several physical places. Much as the contemporary queer community transcends boundaries and borders, the WAC can be viewed in a similar way. It is an atmosphere, a shared commonality, a sense of belonging and affirmation. The WAC isn't a singular, defined, physical space, but a collection of spaces, which provide a sense of belonging and community. Pat Bond, an interviewee of historian Bérubé, states 'I just knew the army was full of lesbians, so I ran off and joined the army,' – the members, reputation, and ability to be together both physically and in spirit, made the introduction of the WAC a defining change in how a lesbian community had previously existed.³ It brought lesbians together from across the country in a way no other group, location, or media had previously been able to, making it an instrumental first in the formation of the United States' lesbian community.

¹Allan Bérubé, 'Coming Out.' *Mother Jones*, February 1983.

²Maren Peterson. 'Women in the LGBTQIA+ Community: Stories of Utah Women - Utah State Archives and Records Service.

<https://archivesnews.utah.gov/2020/06/30/women-in-the-lgbtqia-community-stories-of-utah-women/>. Accessed 1 May 2023.

³Pat Bond. 'Tapioca Tapestry.' In Marcy Adelman's *Long Time Passing: Lives of Older Lesbians*, (Boston: Alyson, 1986) pp.164-175.

Bérubé is very much the core voice at this particular area of queer history, and has done extensive work on the lives, struggles, and impact of queer military members, most famously through his 1990 book *Coming Out Under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women in World War II*. Much has been discussed on the Women's Army Corps in general, with notable texts such as *Creating GI Jane* by Leisa D. Meyer, in which Meyer takes an in-depth look at sexual policing and morality, including the pervasive public rumours on lesbians, *The Women's Army Corps* by Bettie J. Morden, *The Women's Army Corps* by Mattie E. Treadwell, and site-specific works such as *Colorado Women in World War II* by Gail M. Beaton, although the scope of these texts extends far beyond lesbian WACs. While these existing works and case studies are fundamental in this article, and in this research more broadly, particularly the experiences of Pat Bond, whose recollections will be used to contextualise later writing, this article will introduce the papers of Esther Herbert and Marvyl Doyle into the scholarship of this period, with the aim of building upon the established literature and utilising their lives to contribute to the wider picture of lesbianism within the WAC. Additionally, the depth of these materials, with hundreds of letters written between 1944 and 1958, hours of recorded interviews, multiple photographic albums, and extensive collection notes, gives an incredible insight into the day-to-day of lesbian romance in wartime. The explicit nature makes for astonishing reading, with an assortment of pet names, references to romantic and sexual acts, and clear intimacy in practically every letter. Moreover, they contain significant historic value; not only do they contain an in-depth look at Esther and Marvyl's relationship, but also to their day-to-day lives on the bases, helping paint a clearer picture particularly of San Bernardino Air Force Base, later the Norton Air Force Base, where Esther would spend the majority of her enlistment.⁴

Esther and Marvyl met in the WAC in 1943, beginning a lifelong relationship that would only end with Marvyl's death in 2001. The two began a deep friendship upon meeting in their enlistment, which quickly became a romantic relationship, one that changed upon Marvyl being transferred to Patterson Field, Ohio, while Esther remained at San Bernardino, California, but remained an intense, intimate connection even during their separation.⁵ Both would find their own communities, staying in touch in what reads through a contemporary lens as a lovers-on-a-break scenario, before reuniting in 1955 and remaining partners continuously from then on. During the war, Esther would meet Roberta 'Bobbie' Behr, pursuing a relationship with her while keeping close communication with Marvyl. Between them, there are hundreds of letters describing their daily lives in great detail, as well as the evident affection between the two of them even during their break. The strength and depth of their relationship is a remarkable case study, but not one that would have been wholly unusual – they represent huge

⁴ONE Archives at the University of Southern California. Coll2013-030, 'Esther Herbert and Marvyl Doyle Papers and Photographs'. Military Records of Marvyl Doyle.

⁵Ibid.

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numbers of lesbians who were able to emerge through the more isolated years of the 1930s and flourish in the new opportunities for connection and community that the WAC provided. Esther and Marvyl's lives strongly support the existing conclusion that the Women's Army Corps was a life changing institution for many, not just for the widely-applicable reasons of wartime changes, but because it specifically facilitated the formulation of a nationwide lesbian community in a way no other organisation had managed. And it did so entirely unintentionally.

The late-nineteenth to early-twentieth centuries were isolating eras for a number of reasons, societal attitudes were shifting, influenced by the rise of sexology, to become a lot more focused on singling out anyone displaying 'invert' behaviour, and source materials indicate a rising sensation of first-hand loneliness within queer people. Sexology, the study of human sexuality and sexual behaviour, saw a particular rise through the late nineteenth century into the turn of the twentieth, with sexologists such as Havelock Ellis, Magnus Hirschfeld, and Richard von Krafft-Ebing publishing materials on human sexuality, fetishism, and homosexual, or 'invert', behaviour. While many of these materials focused on male sexual behaviours, Havelock Ellis briefly touches upon what he terms 'sexual inversion in women', discussing homosexual behaviour between women with somewhat less moral or ethical judgment than many of his peers, albeit with a heavily-pathologised focus. Much of this work was happening in Europe, and the pathologisation and medicalisation of human sexuality had certainly taken root across the western world. Historian Ronald Beyer writes that 'many homosexuals who were willing to express themselves publicly welcomed the psychiatric effort to wrest control of the social definition of their lives from moral and religious authorities. Better sick than criminal, better the focus of therapeutic concern than the target of the brutal law'.⁶ As Beyer goes on to discuss, much of this view had dissipated by the late 1960s, but speaks to the desperation of queer Americans in the earlier decades. 'They [hospitals and asylums] ended up with whole wards full of homosexuals. A lot of these people had never before been with other people like themselves. Perhaps they never knew before that there were other people,' writes Bérubé in the *Chicago Reader*.⁷ Common 'treatments' within the wards included aversion therapy, in which, for example, patients were given chemicals to induce nausea and vomiting when they looked at photographs or tokens from their lovers, electroconvulsive therapy, and hypnosis.⁸ The fierce isolation queer people faced during the thirties and prior is evident in these accounts, particularly in reflections

⁶Ronald Beyer. *Homosexuality and American Psychiatry: The Politics of Diagnosis*, (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1981) p.9.

⁷Allan Bérubé. 'Past Times: Unearthing the History of Gay GIs', (Chicago: *Chicago Reader*, 1982)

⁸Tommy Dickinson. "Curing queers": *Mental nurses and their patients, 1935–74*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), pp.39-90.

where survivors looked back on psychiatric incarceration as the first glimpse into a community they'd ever had.

The 1930s in particular saw a peak of this loneliness – Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy and Madeline Davis, authors of *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold: The History of a Lesbian Community* wrote: 'Narrators identify the 1930s as qualitatively more difficult than any period to follow. They consider World War II the turning point in lesbian life and judge it impossible for anyone who did not live through the 1930s to imagine what they were like.'⁹ Additionally, many of the public spaces gay men had carved out for themselves were not always receptive to lesbians – many were actively hostile to them. Kennedy and Davis write 'open spaces like parks or beaches, commonly used by gay men, were too exposed for women to express interest in other women without constant male surveillance and harassment.'¹⁰ Even the tentative spaces queer Americans had begun to gather in and use for themselves disadvantaged lesbians – it was uncommon for women to be out without a male escort, and social convention remained an additional barrier to the use of private spaces. While many single gay men would have the option of using their own homes, women commonly lived in the family home until marriage; if they chose to live alone, it was often in smaller spaces with neighbours either side and heavy scrutiny. The haven of the bars was a privilege, often providing the only escape from the constant surveillance of unaccompanied and unmarried women, but queer bars were far from ideal for anybody who did not fit their typical, white-male clientele, and were difficult to find outside of major metropolitan areas.

The background of Prohibition added a layer of difficulty for any Americans looking for nightlife, but to find a lesbian-specific bar through the 1920s into the early 1930s was no mean feat; those that existed were shut down fast, and the necessity for word-of-mouth as their main method of attracting new clients meant that anybody not in certain circles would likely go through life with no idea the bars existed in the first place. A popular, and formative, lesbian bar in New York City was Eve's Hangout, run by Eva Kotchever, born Chawa Złoczower in Poland in 1891. The bar was shut down in a brutal raid in 1927, with Kotchever deported from the United States and patrons caught in the raid arrested.¹¹ Not only was this a devastating loss for the lesbian

⁹Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy and Madeline Davis. *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold: The History of a Lesbian Community*, (New York: Routledge, 1993) p.102.

¹⁰Kennedy and Davis, *Boots of Leather*, p.98.

¹¹Emily Palmer. 'Overlooked No More: Eve Adams, Writer Who Gave Lesbians a Voice' <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/07/02/obituaries/eve-adams-overlooked.html> Accessed 6 November 2025; and Elizabeth Evens. 'Policewomen, Plainclothes, and Pelvic Examinations: NYPD Abortion Investigations, 1913 – 1926.'

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community within Greenwich Village, but it also sent a clear message of the way their spaces would be dealt with. Eve's Hangout existed only for two years, but even that was considered a lengthy time by those who had been burned by the closures of other bars. Even when these bars did manage to surface, the necessity for community support and patrons often restricted them to urban areas. As such, the existence of a handful of lesbian bars across the country isn't necessarily synonymous with a prominent community, nor is it representative of the landscape for the majority of lesbians across the US. The bars provided valuable spaces for those who could access them, but contextually, that was a very small percentage of the wider community – the isolation of individuals and the lack of access to a community space, while allowing lesbians to often slip under the radar in a way that afforded them protection in the anti-queer landscape, was ultimately responsible for the disconnect and separation from other lesbians that the vast majority of them faced.

The WAC would inadvertently offer a certain level of protection to its members; a degree of caution had to be exercised throughout, but, and as was also seen with male GIs, there was a degree of safety in knowing that the necessity of enlistees was the immediate priority for the higher-ups. A pamphlet entitled 'Sex Hygiene Course' from May 1945 was distributed to some WAC officers, with a four-page section on homosexuality, giving us first-hand insight into official attitudes and guidelines.¹² Immediately, it is emphasised that the role of officers is not to go searching or persecuting individuals, but to escalate only if same-sex interest or activity 'undermine[s] the efficiency of the individuals concerned and the stability of the group'.¹³ There is heavy insistence on acting only with proof of homosexual behaviour, rather than theorising or listening to hearsay, however, the booklet is clear that any woman who is found to be engaging in lesbian behaviour should be immediately discharged. Considering the emphasis on concrete proof, combined with a general historic dismissal of female sexuality and agency, it seems it would have taken a lot for a WAC to be dismissed on grounds of lesbianism – even these guidelines acknowledge that finding appropriate evidence would be difficult, and encourage officers to attempt to guide, supervise, and transfer enlistees to other bases before discharge is considered. There are even steps laid out on redirecting lesbian desire into a 'hero-worship' for officers, who were also encouraged – even reassured – that 'barracks life on the whole reduces the opportunity for such indulgence'.¹⁴ As the women in this

<https://socialhistory.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Evens-SHS-poster-updated.pdf>. Accessed 8 June 2025.

¹²*Sex Hygiene Course*, (Washington DC: United States War Department, 1945), p.24-27

¹³*Ibid.*, p.24.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, p.26.

article prove, barracks life may have reduced some opportunities and privacy, but it certainly did not dissuade or eliminate lesbian activity altogether.

For many, joining the WAC would be the first time they had left their home state, for some, it would be the first time they had left their hometown, and the bases quickly became an area of opportunity for lesbians seeking connection. Some of those enlisting came from larger cities like Chicago, IL and Rochester, NY, places where the chances of encountering other lesbians were statistically higher, some came from rural towns with less than a thousand residents. By 1944 the WAC already had a reputation; Pat Bond jokingly remembers that 'it was one reason I wanted to join. It was 90 percent gay.'¹⁵ This particular statistic is, naturally, a little facetious, even bases with a higher anecdotal number of lesbians would not be reaching numbers anywhere close to ninety percent, but does provide some insight into the rumours that caught the ears of young lesbians considering a military career. Enlistees would have known, objectively, that they weren't running off to a lesbian utopia, particularly as much of this spreading reputation was designed to discredit the WAC and its enlistees, however, even a hint of community could have been enough of a promise to prompt them to join. Nicky Jones, a lesbian enlistee, jokingly said 'so what does one do when one's heart is broken? One joins the Army!' in *Frontiers* magazine, in the context of discussing a string of encounters with women in the time up to her enlistment.¹⁶ Jones makes it sound like a simple process, and indeed, the loosening of screening standards was subject of much debate throughout the war. However, as Leisa D. Meyer writes, many components of screening policy could be utilised as a kind of informal method to avoid recruiting lesbians: 'class background, education, personality, and behaviour' are all used, with WAC leaders honing in on 'masculine' women as particular targets.¹⁷ Throughout the course of the War, screening policies targeting lesbians developed further, even getting as explicit as instructing officers to look out for 'local reputations' and 'homosexual tendencies' in recruitment by the end of 1942, asking enlistees if they were seeking to 'be with other girls', and escalated throughout 1943 and 1944 in response to external slander campaigns against the WAC.¹⁸

Pat Bond's experiences diverted somewhat from the earlier 'golden age' of the WAC through to the purges that began in the later part of 1945. In her initial enlistment, her training saw her in Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia, which – alongside San Bernardino, where Esther and Marvyl would both be stationed – had a flourishing lesbian

¹⁵Pat Bond. Interview with Allan Bérubé for the World War Two History Project. May 1981.

¹⁶Nicky Jones. 'In The Beginning.', in *Frontiers*. 1 February 1991.

¹⁷Leisa D. Meyer. *Creating G.I. Jane: The Regulation of Sexuality and Sexual Behavior in the Women's Army Corps during World War II*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

¹⁸Meyer, 1996. p.157-158.

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community within it. Bond recalls entering the mess hall for the first time, being promptly greeted with the quote of 'good god, Elizabeth, here comes another one!'.¹⁹ Not only was a community established, but the tells, codes, and giveaways had quickly become a form of communication among enlisted servicewomen; certain clothes, attitudes, and phrases could be used as indicators of one's proclivities. Bond tells Bérubé 'there were all these dykes with their feet up on the table in fatigues, you know, with Lil' Abner boots', painting a clear picture of what she walked into the mess hall to find.²⁰ Bond also recalls that it was common for butch and otherwise-masculine lesbians to cut their hair short, above the collar, despite warnings from units to avoid this (such as the WAAC handbook at Fort Des Moines warning that 'mannish haircuts are taboo' for enlistees).²¹ Bond's desire for community and belonging had never been met on such a scale, 'I was in heaven. We understood each other exactly. And then everything was okay for a while.'²²

A particularly surprising development for Bond was not only the complacency of her straight counterparts, but the willingness of some heterosexual women to lie to cover for their colleagues. Bond would later say within the purges:

I know at one point in Japan they put an extra woman in the room in case you and your lover wanted to room together. Well, they put a straight woman in with you. Because our officers were all gay they knew who was straight and who wasn't. And there was a straight woman in with us for a while and they called her up when we were having the trial. "Did you ever see these women do anything of a lesbian nature?" (sound) "No, not ever." Ho, ho, ho. They were really nice and supportive and never said a word against me.²³

As with the rest of the WAC, this could not be relied upon as a rule of thumb; this is far too specific an anecdote to make assumptions about the wider culture of the WAC. Bond is speaking only of her own experiences, and it would be a very dangerous risk for any lesbian in the WAC to assume her heterosexual counterparts could be trusted to cover for her. Nonetheless, the establishment of a cover system was an unexpected development in Bond's life, and provides an interesting look at just how drastically

¹⁹Pat Bond. *Word Is Out: Stories of Some of Our Lives*. Film. United States: New Yorker Films, 1977.

²⁰Bond and Bérubé. 1981.

²¹Allan Bérubé. *Coming Out Under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women in World War II*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1990), p.87; *Handbook for the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps, Fort Des Moines, Iowa*, (United States War Department, 1943).

²²Bond and Bérubé, 1981.

²³Ibid.

experiences of enlistees differed. Some straight women in her life *could* be relied upon to provide alibis or help facilitate relationships, something unimaginable in the wider world outside of the WAC (or for many others within it). The combination of the difficulties faced by active service members and the complete change from the more rigid outside-world morals is a potential reasoning for this unexpected solidarity, alternatively, it is not out of the question that Bond was just spectacularly fortunate.

A WAC member known as Jean S, her name changed upon request, was assigned to the Boston Army base, and lived in Franklin Square, frequenting the South End and the safety of the nightlife within it. Numerous bars for gay men existed and were known about in a surprisingly public manner, but the hotspot for lesbians was Bernstein's, which was located a few blocks away from Franklin Square. Jean had found queer friends and her partner Louise Y, her name also changed upon request, during her time there, but in downtown Boston, the culture was a little different outside of the bases. 'You just didn't [cruise] at the time. You just wouldn't make reference to it,' Jean recalled.²⁴ Her commanding officer 'had a partner in Georgia,' a fact commonly known among their rank.²⁵ In this instance, the Square comes across as a more open space for its lesbians than the bars that accommodated them off base. Jean and Louise's recollections provide an insight into how community was forming outside of just the bars; while nightlife was indeed a key aspect, particularly in major cities, it was not the be all and end all – as written, a community is not necessarily a singular physical space. For lesbians in Boston WAC units, their lived experience of lesbian community superseded a single bar or building; for some, it was the spirit of the downtown nightlife, for others, it was a group of friends in a dorm room.

Jean and Louise were far from the only couple who found each other through the community the WAC unintentionally provided. Esther and Marvyl, the central figures of this article, joined the WAC separately in 1943, following its evolution from the WAAC in July 1943. Marvyl worked as a radio mechanic, and Esther a technical sergeant, both remaining enlisted through to the end of the War.²⁶ Esther describes Marvyl as her lesbian awakening, telling interviewer Ellie Dozier that 'I had no idea I was really romantically attracted to women until I met Marvyl.'²⁷ She explains that Marvyl knew who she was from a young age, however, the extent to which she pursued relationships in her younger years seems minimal; the strength and depth of their wartime connection was clearly a turning point for both. Esther writes on 14 October 1944, 'through our letters and readings we can keep in closer contact than most people would think possible,' and indeed, the degree of openness within the

²⁴Jean S., 'Gay Life in 1940s Boston', *Boston Spirit*, (July 2014).

²⁵*Ibid.*

²⁶ONE Archives. 'Military Records of Marvyl Doyle'.

²⁷*Ibid.*, Interview with Esther Herbert and Ellie Dozier, 2006.

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letters is remarkable.²⁸ Both frequently start letters with 'my darling', 'my love', 'honey', and a number of other pet names, writing to each other every day, occasionally, multiple times a day, with timestamps in the top corner indicating the hour at which each part of the letter was being written. There is very little left to the imagination between them. On 20 February 1944, Esther writes,

the answer is yes, this morning, yes - I love you - I really love you - ... there seems to be no other way to say it - we have the certain something - yes we make love well together, we play well & we talk well together ... - you and me and this wonderful something we share. This love which encompasses all things - am I getting too profound for so early in the morning? If so its [sic] because I want you & miss you.²⁹

The explicitness of Esther's writing is staggering, particularly during wartime, and leaves a major question: how is it possible for such explicit letters to have been sent, back and forth, for almost three years without consequence?

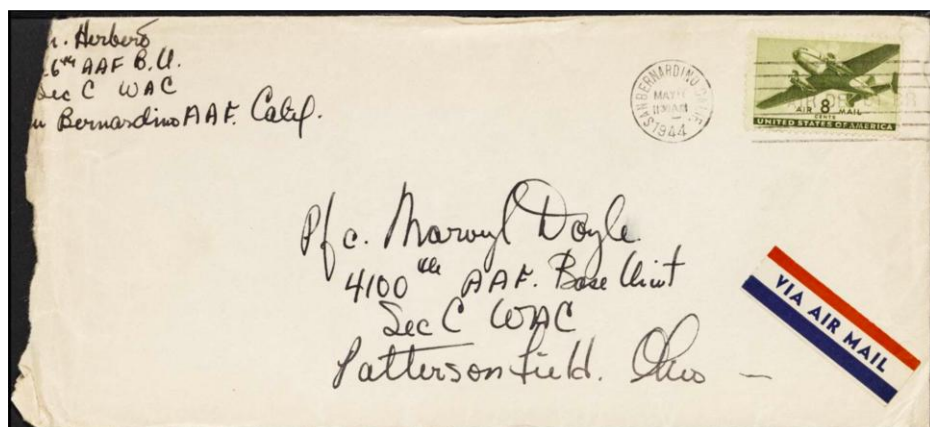


Figure 1: Letter to Marvyl, notably without a censorship stamp.³⁰

The answer to this seemingly lies in the absence of a very particular stamp. Letters coming from military personnel abroad featured an envelope stamp to show they had been approved by a censor; in a little over two years of letters between these two women, not a single envelope has any stamp indicating it has been through any kind of censoring process. Typically, one would expect to see a stamp with PASSED BY

²⁸Ibid., Letter to Marvyl Doyle, 14 October 1944.

²⁹Ibid., Letter to Marvyl Doyle, 20 February 1944.

³⁰Ibid., Letter to Marvyl Doyle, 10 May 1944.

CENSOR or PASSED BY EXAMINER to confirm that the contents had been checked and approved; mail that did not pass censorship would be withheld and queried, and anything that failed on morality grounds would have been escalated to the relevant parties.

Looking at the papers of Dorothee Gore, a lesbian who enlisted in 1945, a few assorted pieces of her incoming mail had been checked by censors, but the majority had not, creating more questions than answers. Even more interestingly Gore received a letter from overseas in May 1945, addressed from a 'Junior' in St. Germaine-en-Laye, France, which also does not feature a censor stamp despite it being sent from a soldier in the midst of the European battlefield. There are stamps from the Post Office, stamps, or occasionally handwritten notes, confirming delivery by air mail, but nothing to indicate the letter has been through any kind of censorship, as was exactly the case with Esther and Marvyl. In his influential book *Coming Out Under Fire*, Bérubé discusses that 'gay male and lesbian GIs and their loved ones befriended sympathetic censors, used their own secret codes or gay slang, or changed the gender of names and pronouns,' and of these options, the only feasible one for Esther and Marvyl is that Marvyl had befriended the censors; they haven't changed names or pronouns, and they certainly aren't encoding anything.³¹

The likelihood of this seems slim, as Marvyl would have had to go out of her comfort zone to befriend censors at several bases; there are letters in which Esther is encouraging her to befriend other lesbians, implying she was hesitant to do so. Her military records place her at San Bernardino Army Air Force Base, CA; Patterson Field, OH; and Chanute Field, IL across her enlistment. She would have had to maintain relationships in each of these places for multiple years, and this is assuming that the same people stayed in the same roles and locations and were able to intercept all her mail. Given the scale of this, with the two of them writing almost daily, combined with the fact that Esther's references to Marvyl's letters make it clear that hers are just as explicit, meaning that Esther would also have had to pull her own strings with censors, it seems drastically unlikely. Looking through both Marvyl's journals and Esther's typed collection notes sadly does not provide any clarity.

This implies that domestic mail between WACs wasn't subject to the same scrutiny that mail from or between male soldiers deployed overseas was, and therefore provided Esther and Marvyl – and potentially thousands of other lesbians, if one is to assume the lack of censor stamps is evidence of a wider lapse in censorship – with the opportunity to speak relatively freely, at least in writing. An intimacy developed in

³¹Bérubé. *Coming Out Under Fire*, p.120.

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written communications, both through use of words and the ability for their lovers to have a physical, private keepsake.³² Public opinion of female friendships had changed from prior generations, however, the belief of women having more intimate friendships than men was still wholly in effect; historian Lillian Faderman writes extensively of female friendship in *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers*, noting in particular the idea of the 'romantic friendship', in which women 'found kindred spirits primarily in each other', something that was encouraged, and even expected.³³ As far as keeping letters, Esther and Marvyl would still most likely have had to take certain precautions, although which precautions, specifically, are unfortunately unknown with the available material; keeping the letters they received well-hidden, and potentially storing them off-base where possible are the only somewhat-solid inferences one can make. The strains of wartime significantly deepened people's need for community and connection, particularly across enlisted personnel; regular letters from a female friend would not in themselves have raised any eyebrows, but the explicitness of Esther and Marvyl's communication is astounding. In a statement that is unquestionably something written between lovers, Esther writes to Marvyl: 'your letters take my breath away. They fill me with a mixture of unendurable happiness and sadness ... all I want is to take you in my arms and keep you there, warm, safe and secure.'³⁴ Two months prior, Esther wrote 'I seem to be in love with Marvyl - the more I talk to them [others on a train], the more I realise what I have & just how precious it is - the more I meet people (bad construction, I know) the more I repeat to you - ... I want you and miss you.'³⁵

Clearly the openness of their writing was not an occasional, but a frequent event, one enabled by the lack of scrutiny their letters were under. It's impossible to say definitively whether this would have been the case on a larger scale across WAC units, due to the constraints of available materials, but both Esther and Marvyl worked at relatively large bases, and felt able to refer to others, such as Bobbie, by their real names. It can be inferred that they did not feel the need to hide at any point in their relationship – the level of openly romantic discussion remains consistent across all their letters, even during their romantic break. Esther writes on 7 April 1944, 'Hope all my letters and telegrams don't arouse too much comment,' referring to the near-daily communication between the two.³⁶ Their letters were unusually frequent and remained vividly descriptive of their relationship throughout. 'We went to Savio's and it brought back so many memories of that night when we had too much, when I knew

³²Bérubé. 'Coming Out Under Fire'. 1990. p.120.

³³Lillian Faderman. *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), p.6.

³⁴ONE Archives. Letter to Marvyl Doyle, 7 April 1944.

³⁵Ibid., Letter to Marvyl Doyle, 20 February 1944.

³⁶Ibid., Letter to Marvyl Doyle, 7 April 1944.

I loved you & made you kiss me there & leaned on your shoulder in the taxi going home,' Esther reminisces on April 30, 1944.³⁷

Esther and Marvyl are the perfect illustration of the WAC as a turning point, forming a bond through circumstance and emerging from the war as lifelong partners. Other communities outside of the military would continue to pop up, in the bar scene, in small-scale media publications, in covert community gatherings, but even by the mid-1940s, none of them could have hoped to achieve the level of getting people together in the way the war recruitment efforts did, they simply did not have the reach or the cross-country mobilisation. Nor could they promise what a career in the WAC could: the chance to get away from home, avoid marriage without question, a fixed salary with chances of promotion, or housing security, to name a few. 'We expect 10 more new girls in - 8 drivers - God only knows what we are going to do with them', Esther writes on 15 April 1944, shortly followed by 'I have something to tell you - I suppose it's confidential but you're me - so I'm not really telling anyone else - we got a call for 2 or 3 girls to go overseas.'³⁸ Her letter further corroborates the existing knowledge that the war recruitment calls only increased as time went on, as well as the movement between bases; earlier in the same letter, she writes 'do you suppose I could get myself transferred to Patterson & take care of you - nothing would phase me if we were together.'³⁹ Esther is never transferred, but it's an open dialogue between the two of them, particularly when the distance between their lives became more difficult to cope with than usual.

While their letters certainly reinforce the argument that the WAC was an important site of relatively open lesbianism, to refer to the WAC as a wholly open or accepting space is incorrect. However, a certain level of protection was inadvertently offered to many of the lesbians working within it, and this is precisely what allowed these new communities to flourish. An unknown author writes in an article on lesbians within the WAC that the WAC 'understood that intimacy among enlisted women helped to unite the corps - even that a significant number of women in the corps were lesbians,' and this attitude, if shared elsewhere, potentially would have been another factor in Esther and Marvyl's constant communication continuing without raising questions.⁴⁰ The separation of the two for the majority of the war, Esther in California, Marvyl in Ohio, also would have provided a certain safety, with WAC officials far more concerned with those in close physical proximity. As is laid out in the *WAC Crackdown* article and corroborated by Bond's statements, there were straight women within the WAC who were indifferent to the preferences of their lesbian colleagues, 'always the

³⁷Ibid., Letter to Marvyl Doyle, 30 April 1944.

³⁸Ibid., Letter to Marvyl Doyle, 15 April 1944.

³⁹Ibid., Letter to Marvyl Doyle, 15 April 1944.

⁴⁰Unknown Author, 'WAC Crackdown', in *Mother Jones* (February 1983).

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straight women I ran into tended to ignore us, tended to say “who cares?” It leaves all the men for us.”⁴¹ For heterosexual WAC members to be what in a modern context would be referred to as ‘allies’ would have been unusual, but not entirely impossible. Esther and Marvyl both write of heterosexual friends, and in their situation it seems that the attention to avoid was from more official positions, rather than their colleagues.

As well as having each other, both would go on to forge connections with other queer women in their respective WAC units. Esther writes of finding community on 21 October 1944, in response to Marvyl’s expression of hesitation about connecting with other lesbians in her section of the WAC: ‘doesn’t it keep to have a group of gals with whom you can exchange banter? With whom you can speak freely?’⁴² It is evident that Marvyl has found a community, whether or not she has decided to include herself as a part of it. While there is anecdotal evidence of a certain freedom within WAC units, they still had to be careful in what they said and who they said it to; Esther likely enjoyed a little more freedom than Marvyl due to her deployment location. California saw a flourishing queer community during this period, particularly in the coastal cities; San Francisco was quickly establishing itself as a hotspot, and Los Angeles, the closest major city to Esther’s location, also enjoyed an increase in gay and lesbian bar cultures, a trend in many other urban American cities.⁴³ Conversely, Marvyl found herself stationed in the Midwest, with the closest city being Dayton, Ohio, which had a significantly different atmosphere. The presence of a cohesive community within her location was certainly brought to the surface by the War, if not created by it entirely. Marvyl’s hesitation is understandable, Esther writes in the same letter: ‘I did know the meaning of the word ‘gay’, ‘cause Bobbie uses it,’ implying that even fairly commonplace terminology for the period was foreign to Marvyl, foreign enough for her to write to Esther of her discovery of the word.⁴⁴ Marvyl, having grown up in Hampton, Iowa (a city with a population of just 3,473 in 1930, when she would have been a teenager), would not have been presented with the opportunity to find other women like herself before the War.⁴⁵ Sarah Davis, an emergency services volunteer also known as ‘Sammi’, wrote of her first encounter with another woman ‘We were sitting next to each other on the couch ... eventually we got in bed together. She said that she had never related to a woman before.’⁴⁶ Without the WAC, many of these

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Ibid., Letter to Marvyl Doyle, 21 October 1944.

⁴³Kennedy and Davis, *Boots of Leather*, 1993. ch.2-3.

⁴⁴ONE Archives, Letter to Marvyl Doyle, 21 October 1944.

⁴⁵<https://www.iowadatabase.org/datatables/PlacesAll/plpopulationbypopsize18502006.pdf>. Accessed 5 June 2026.

⁴⁶Unknown Author, *WAC Crackdown*, in *Mother Jones* (February 1983); and Bérubé, *Coming Out Under Fire* 1990, p.69.

women would never have found each other, or indeed, anyone else – the impact on the ending of the decades of isolation leading up to the war is undeniable.

The creation of the WAC and the increase of women in the workforce also contributed heavily to the new freedoms for lesbians who were not enlisted. ‘The important effect of the war was to give more independence to all women, thereby making lesbians more like other women and less easy to identify,’ write Kennedy and Davis. Changing social attitudes allowed for women to wear trousers without being singled out for it, walk down the street without male companions, and gave rise to the idea of women focussing on a career instead of looking for marriage.⁴⁷ These values had been seen briefly during the First World War, but had been heavily repressed in post-war life, only seeing daylight again during the Second World War, a combination of wartime chaos and the efforts of women’s labour unions seeing a sharp increase in working women’s autonomy. Kennedy and Davis look back on the social changes as bringing these practices, both major and minor, into a much more socially-condoned arena: ‘Narrators remember World War II as having a tremendous impact on lesbian life, offering lesbians more opportunities for socializing and meeting others.’⁴⁸



Figure 2: Marvyl at work.⁴⁹

⁴⁷Kennedy and Davis, *Boots of Leather*, 1993. p.113.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*

⁴⁹ONE Archives, Coll2013-030, ‘Esther Herbert and Marvyl Doyle Papers and Photographs’. Photograph album I 1943-1951.

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As a result of both WAC units and outside manual labour jobs, the expansion of acceptable clothing and presentation made it particularly easy for butch lesbians and other lesbians leaning away from femininity to lean into their identity without being so closely questioned. As with many of the wartime jobs that had sprung up for women – agriculture and factory work especially – it was common for WAC members to walk around in trousers and work boots. The official uniform still centred the pencil skirt and nipped-in blazer combination, but when working in the field, women had more freedom to wear loose-fitting, practical clothing. In almost all photographic evidence of Marvyl – working as a radio mechanic – she’s wearing trousers and a bomber jacket, her hair tied back and her face seemingly free of makeup. There are not explicit references to her clothing in the donated letters, but in the photographs of Marvyl taken by Esther on their days off, she still is primarily seen in trousers, implying that even off duty the preference continued.



Figures 3: Marvyl on an off-day, reading in the park.⁵⁰

Esther states that neither she nor Marvyl identified as butch or femme, and it is impossible to assign this identity to either of them retroactively; both categories extend far beyond physical appearance and clothing choices, not to mention, both categories were still shifting, and arguably less fully-realised than they became later in the century; but out of her uniform skirt, it seems that Marvyl preferred a more masculine style of dressing.⁵¹ The WAC, and in particular, her job within it, allowed

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Ibid., Interview with Esther and Ellie Dozier.

for a freedom of physical expression that she was unlikely to find back home. This freedom extended to lesbians who weren't comfortable engaging in relationships, but still wanted to experiment with their identities and presentations which they could do so without being questioned for the first time. While discussions of transgender men are beyond the scope of this project, they are still worth keeping in mind when it comes to freedom of gender expression. Just as the butches found comfort in presenting as masculine, one can safely assume that any trans men in WAC units – even if they did not have the terminology or understanding required to label themselves as such – would have had similar feelings.

Returning to Esther and Marvyl's letters, the two are as frank in their discussions of the dangers of any visible queerness as they are in their expressions of love. Later during their separation, while Esther and Bobbie are pursuing a relationship, Esther writes to Marvyl 'Bobbie and I decided against a room together ... - it's just not a good idea,' with much of the letter pertaining to living together being a step too far in arousing suspicion.⁵² There is an understanding that their written openness can only exist within their private correspondence, if Esther and Bobbie were to be caught beyond doubt, following Army policy, they would have been transferred apart or discharged, and the undertone of concern is present throughout their discussion. While some WAC officials across the country must have been aware of lesbians within the Army, particularly if the aforementioned anecdotes are taken as credible evidence of lesbians as higher-ranking officers, there were limits to how much those women could get away with, an uncited quote in the 'WAC Crackdown' article discusses the WAC discharging women who they could prove to be 'addicted to the practice', the author's wording, rather than official policy.⁵³ There is a vagueness to this sentiment, which could be hugely open to interpretation depending on the sympathies of the person responsible for it. Glances across a room, affection behind closed doors, under-the-table discussions of one's preferences could have a blind eye turned if the right person saw, but for a couple to be cohabiting, especially on Army grounds, was certainly a situation that would have been escalated.

The WAC would not in itself have been a safe space, nor an open one. To presume it was does a dangerous disservice to the women who were outed, persecuted, and dishonourably discharged; it erases the very real dangers that were still present within the military, many of which remain present in modern times. The later purges of lesbians in the WAC reinforce the key point that none of these benefits were deliberate. However, the opportunities created inadvertently by the WAC cannot be ignored. For Esther and Marvyl, the WAC was instrumental in their respective abilities

⁵²Ibid., Letter to Marvyl Doyle, October 1944.

⁵³Unknown Author, *WAC Crackdown*, in *Mother Jones*, February 1983.

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to connect - with other lesbians, with their community, and with each other. Esther wrote during their separation:

You and our life together after WAC are the 2 things I am able to project into the post-war world and know definitely - without hesitation whatsoever - that they will be there like a beacon waiting for me to come - lighting my way.⁵⁴



Figure 4: Esther (left) and Marvyl (right), 1944.⁵⁵

Esther and Marvyl are just two of the women who found connection and community within the WAC and the wider context of the War, but they are far from the only ones. The WAC may not have been the perfect solution to the isolation of the thirties and prior, but its existence certainly formed the foundations for lesbians to find each other, making it an indescribably and undeniably important institution in the progression of a lesbian community.

⁵⁴ONE Archive, Letter to Marvyl Doyle, 13 April 1944.

⁵⁵ONE Archives, Coll2013-030, 'Esther Herbert and Marvyl Doyle Papers and Photographs'. Photograph album I 1943-1951.

‘The Danger Lies in the Future’: Student draft deferment and the atomic cloud over US higher education

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the impact of the postwar decision to defer college students from selective service. The understanding within both the US government and the general populace that the Second World War had been won with science spurred increased federal interest in the organisation and delivery of university-level education in the early years of the Cold War, alongside an acute need for scientific manpower. Patriotic duty was no longer measured only in terms of military service, but also in scientific advancement. This widespread acceptance that college students were central to the achievement of national goals paved the way for an increase in governmental involvement within the tertiary sector and, by the outbreak of the Korean War, came to impact the understanding of the national ‘value’ of a degree.

Introduction

On 6 August 1945 the Enola Gay dropped an atomic bomb on the Japanese city of Hiroshima, ending the War and ushering in a new age of science. No longer were soldiers the only people capable of protecting the USA; scientists, mathematicians and engineers suddenly found themselves as central to defence as the military. The contributions of the sciences to victory in the Second World War established the field as a national concern; military funding for defence related research became commonplace and the federal government began to shape scientific research on campuses across the nation.¹ Yet as Vannevar Bush, head of the Office of Scientific Research and Development (OSRD) recognised, just as the War had improved the status of science, it had also decimated the field. Bush informed US President Harry S. Truman in 1947 that American science was fragile not in spite of, but precisely because

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¹Roger L. Geiger, ‘Science, Universities, and National Defense, 1945-1970’, *Osiris*, Vol. 7, (1992), pp.26-48, p.26.

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of US policy during the War.² Neither working scientists nor science students had been exempt from military service and America embarked upon its brave new world without a robust stockpile of scientific manpower.

American higher education faced a myriad of challenges in the years after the Second World War.³ As the postwar period gave way to the early Cold War, however, anxiety over the state of scientific advancement in the USA – and the desire for a solution – contributed to these woes.⁴ Nowhere is this situation more clearly portrayed than in *Science and Public Policy* (1947), a report written for President Truman by his trusted advisor, and the closest he had to a Chief of Staff, John R. Steelman. The ‘Steelman Report,’ as it is known, echoed Bush’s assessment from two years prior; scientific manpower was paramount to the long-term safety of the nation, and the war had seriously impacted the health of American science.⁵ The Report noted a further problem, however: scientific research in the USA was suffering without an influx of basic research from Europe. Before the war, US labs had relied upon Europe to produce the type of research upon which America’s more profitable applied research was built. The destruction encountered by European laboratories in the decade prior to the war was comprehensive, however, and this pipeline had dried up. Without it, US science had no starting point. Foreshadowing the Marshall Plan, the Steelman Report called for US support for the re-establishment of the European laboratories, specifically noting the impact upon US national security. Yet another similarly timed report from the White House’s Program for Research and Development (1947) identified that the devastation in Europe was so complete that this effort would take decades. The authors warned that ‘if we want a stock of

²Vannevar Bush, ‘Report to the President on the Office of Research and Development in the War,’ p.19. October 1945, VB, 3091: Report of the President, *quoted in* Jonathan Engel, *Transforming American Science: Universities, the Government, and the Cold War*, (New York: Routledge, 2023), pp.34-49.

³For a comprehensive overview of the postwar University, see Roger L. Geiger, *American Higher Education since World War II: A History*, (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2019).

⁴For more information on the significance of, and anxiety surrounding American ‘intelligence’ more generally in the postwar period, see Aaron Lecklider, *Inventing the Egghead: The Battle over Brainpower in American Culture*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).

⁵John R. Steelman, *Science and Public Policy: A Report to the President*, vol. I, (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1947), p.35; NB. The quote in the title of this article is taken from this report, p.4.

increasing knowledge about the nature of the physical world we'll have to build it ourselves.⁶

Once again, the issue identified was the availability of American-made scientists, and the country's ability to find, train and safeguard these men and women. Military initiatives such as Operation Paperclip sought to solve this pressing issue in the short term. Nazi scientists were recruited and brought to the USA, improving the USA's stockpile of scientists while simultaneously inhibiting post-war Germany and preventing vital knowledge from falling into the hands of the Soviet Union.⁷ This measure, however, was a finite prospect and did little to address long-term concerns. Recruiting foreign scientists could not solve the USA's manpower issues; a long-term solution required a long-term plan. If the USA intended to be competitive in the burgeoning battle with the Soviet Union, and any other modern conflicts that presented themselves in the coming decades, then scientific research, and in turn a vast increase in the number of scientists, had to become a national priority. Achieving such a feat was easier said than done: government, industry and higher education institutions needed to work together to develop a robust and sustainable approach to postwar science. A nationally co-ordinated strategy was required, alongside a fundamental change in the relationship between the federal government and the Universities, and the public understanding of the status of science. The solution presented itself in the decision to defer college students from the USA's first peacetime military draft.

This article examines the impact that the college draft deferment programme had upon the study of science in the USA in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War. By bringing to light this often-understudied element of the federal government's wider response to the postwar atomic anxiety, this piece will demonstrate both the intended and unintended impacts wrought by this response. Exempting some, but not all, college students from the draft bolstered a valorisation of the 'science degree' that elevated it above its counterparts in the humanities and social sciences. This process exacerbated existing educational disadvantages, not only for those young men who were not able to attend university, but also poor and minority youths who did matriculate. The primary evidence examined demonstrates the influence wrought by

⁶Robert Colborn, 'Double Industrial Research, Says White House: An Exclusive Preview of the Administration's Program for Research and Development', *Washington Report – Capitol Developments from the McGraw-Hill Bureau*, No. 88 (May 27 1947), p.2, File 192 (1945–1947) [Office of Scientific Research and Development], Box 818, Official File, Truman Papers, Harry S. Truman Presidential Library.

⁷For more information on Operation Paperclip, see Annie Jacobsen, *Operation Paperclip: The Secret Intelligence Program to bring Nazi Scientists to America*, (New York: Little, Brown and Co., 2014).

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the deferment programme itself. Ensuring a steady supply of science graduates took top priority in American universities during the postwar period long before the launch of Sputnik caused a public panic. In making science a priority, this programme of student deferment from selective service altered the course of countless students' lives and contributed to the remaking of the public understanding of the relative values of the disciplines.⁸

The Science Pipeline

When the USA desperately needed scientific manpower, the system responsible for producing it revealed itself to be woefully lacking. The Engineering Manpower Commission of the Engineers Joint Council (1947) summed up the problem well:

The number of young engineering graduates who can reasonably be expected to be available for scientific employment over the next ten years will be far below the estimated annual need of 30,000 men. It may drop to as low as 12,000 by 1952. From 1954 until 1957 it will be about 17,000 per year. After 1957 it should start increasing, but will not equal the annual need until about 1965.⁹

This shortage was the result of a perfect storm; the Great Depression had affected the birth rate, which in turn affected the number of teenagers available to take up

⁸This article is underpinned by, and seeks to contribute the excellent work already undertaken in this area, such as the histories of science during the postwar period, including Audra Wolfe's *Competing with the Soviets: Science, Technology and the State in Cold War America*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013) and Paul Boyer's *By the Bomb's Early Light: American Thought and Culture at the Dawn of the Atomic Age*, (New York: Pantheon, 1985). The numerous, assessments of the postwar university conducted by Roger L. Geiger, especially *American Higher Education Since World War II*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019) and Herbert M. Kliebard's seminal study of the US education more broadly, *The Struggle for the American Curriculum*, (New York and London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987), have proven invaluable when preparing this assessment. Federal science policy specifically has also been well documented by Bruce L. R. Smith in *American Science Policy since World War II*, (Washington DC: Brookings Institute, 1990). More recently both Jonathan Engel and Amy Rutenberg have furthered these initial assessments in, respectively *Transforming American Science: Universities, the Government, and the Cold War*, (New York: Routledge, 2023) and *Rough Draft: Cold War Military Manpower Policy and the Origins of Vietnam-Era Draft*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2019).

⁹Conclusions of the Engineering Manpower Council quoted in Henry H. Armsby 'Young Engineers for Industry – How Many?' (4 June 1951) Circular No. 296, (US Department of Health Education and Welfare: Washington DC), p.6, File – Circular #207 – #299, Box 43 – Record Copies of Publications, 1875 – 1963, RG12, NACP.

university places in the late 1940s. The Depression also significantly impacted the number of men and women who could afford to attend college or university. Following this, thousands of capable young men were lost on the battlefield during the Second World War, with little heed paid to the postwar impact on science.¹⁰ The war also directly affected the number of Americans who matriculated in college between 1942 and 1946, as so many college aged men and women chose to enlist instead of enrol. Steelman, identified that 'in the years from 1934 to 1938 about 1400 doctorates in science were awarded yearly and in 1941 nearly 1900 were conferred' but 'it is estimated that our manpower pool today is smaller by 90,000 bachelors and 5,000 doctors of science than it would have been if pre-war trends continued.'¹¹ The availability even of experienced scientists to train the next generation was seriously impeded. The men who had already undergone extensive training in Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics (STEM) subjects before the War had been indiscriminately called upon to fight.¹²

The Serviceman's Re-adjustment Act (1944), better known as the GI Bill, made a vast difference to the number of students matriculating in US universities after the war. Over the course of the programme, more than 2,232,000 veterans attended college.¹³ Yet the GI Bill was not equipped to solve the manpower problem; it was a reconversion measure primarily intended to prevent returning veterans from re-entering the workforce *en masse*. Concerns were also voiced by leading commentators about the lack of entry requirements for returning veterans; an increase in numbers alone was not deemed sufficient to meet the national need.¹⁴ Crucially, the tenets of the GI Bill exerted no influence over what returning veterans chose to study.¹⁵ Education historian Herbert Kliebard noted a popular lament, that 'while American schoolchildren were learning how to get along with their peers or how to bake a cherry pie ... Soviet children were being steeped in the hard sciences and mathematics needed to win the technological race.'¹⁶ The fashionable postwar philosophy of 'Life-adjustment Education' encouraged patriotism and citizenship education rather than

¹⁰George F. Zook, *Higher Education for American Democracy: The Report of the President's Commission on Higher Education*, V.I, (New York: Harper, 1947), p.92.

¹¹Steelman, *Science and Public Policy*, p.16.

¹²Engel, *Transforming American Science*, p.4.

¹³Keith W. Olson, 'The G. I. Bill and Higher Education: Success and Surprise', *American Quarterly*, Vol. 25, No. 5 (1973), pp.596–610, p.596.

¹⁴M. H. Trytten, 'Accrediting as a Means of Improving Undergraduate Training in Science', *Eos, Transactions American Geophysical Union* Vol. 27, No. 4 (1946), pp.556-558, p.558.

¹⁵Olson, 'The G. I. Bill and Higher Education,' p.597.

¹⁶Herbert M. Kliebard, *The Struggle for the American Curriculum*, (New York and London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987), p.265.

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the study of science.¹⁷ Science, in its many forms, was not everyone's first choice of major, nor did it have a good PR campaign behind it.

George F. Zook, educator and Chair of Truman's Presidential Commission on Higher Education, announced in the Commission's report *Higher Education for American Democracy* (1947) that 'we now do not have enough trained personnel to staff the research and development laboratories of industry, government and the universities,' noting specifically that this was in part due to the fact that 'the United States did not safeguard its scientific manpower during the recent war as other nations did.'¹⁸ Alarmingly, Zook went on to suggest that this drastic post-war shortage of scientific manpower, and womanpower, could prove to be the foundation for the USA's downfall in the oncoming Cold War. By 1950, George F. Kennan, more famous as the author of the infamous 'X' article, remarked on behalf of the State Department that 'this need for a substantial and rapid increase in the number of people who go to colleges and universities is a national problem requiring national action.'¹⁹ The Soviet Union's successful test of an atomic weapon in 1949, swiftly followed by the outbreak of the Korean War, had further intensified the national need for scientific graduates. A coherent message was being heard all around the Washington Beltway; America needed science, and science needed scientists.

Student Deferment in Selective Service

Throughout this period, one voice had been unwavering in his belief that if the USA was serious about the defence of the nation, science must be seen as a key contributor. M. H. Trytten was the Director of the Office of Scientific Personnel of the National Research Council and the Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Scientific Personnel. Trytten had attempted to encourage the government to include scientists in its definition of essential personnel during the Second World War, but had encountered roadblocks such as defining a 'professional scientist' as separate from a graduate student was an anathema to the discipline.²⁰ Student deferment had also been

¹⁷For an in-depth discussion of 'life-adjustment education' see Kliebard, *The Struggle for the American Curriculum*.

¹⁸Zook, *Higher Education for American Democracy*, p.92.

¹⁹George F. Kennan, 'Full Strength for the Long Pull', (1 December 1950), Washington DC, Federal Security Agency, Office of Education, File 7-C – United States Office of Education, Box 81, Official Files (OF), Truman Papers, Truman Library.

²⁰Trytten commented in 1946 that 'Early in the War some attempt was made to defer persons in training in the colleges and universities in especially critical fields, and to defer highly-trained personnel. One serious obstacle leading to the breakdown of such a principle was the lack of a clear-cut differentiation between professionally-trained scientists and the graduate partially trained in science. As a result, procedures depending in part on qualifications were abandoned, and any attempt thereafter to

considered prior to the outbreak of the Second World War, but Roosevelt had opposed it, fearing it would become a way for young men to avoid the draft without good reason.²¹ In the immediate aftermath of the war, Trytten continued to push for a greater focus on the development and protection of American scientific expertise. When President Truman called on Congress to pass a peacetime military draft called the Selective Service Act in 1948, Trytten implored lawmakers to include deferrals for scientists – and more radically, science students – from military service. As he later recounted, ‘it takes about twelve years, from beginning high school to emerging from graduate or professional school, to train a scientist, a medical doctor, an economist, and many other types of specialists.’²² To interrupt or sever this process with conscription was unsustainable if the nation was to remain competitive, and well-defended. Deferment of useful personnel from conscription was of course not a new phenomenon in the USA. The deferment of men in professions such as farming, iron-working or medicine had been commonplace during earlier conflicts. The ability to avoid military service via financial means had also long been a feature of warfare.²³ Yet this was the first time that such an unorthodox demographic was recommended for deferment on such a scale, and with so few qualifying factors.²⁴

Six committees were established under the general auspices of Trytten, to make recommendations on the issue of student deferment.²⁵ What resulted was *Student Deferment in Selective Service: A Vital Factor in National Security* – better known as the Trytten Report – and a radical new take on US defence policy. Trytten advised that indiscriminately drafting youths into the army falsely established the armed forces as the ‘absolute priority in the defence of the nation’ and presupposed that ‘every man can serve his country more effectively in uniform than in any other way.’²⁶ The rhetoric of the Trytten Report reflected the understanding that scientifically trained youth could, and should, be seen as equally as important to the security of the nation as

speak in terms of a supply of scientists failed.’ Trytten, ‘Accrediting as a Means of Improving Undergraduate Training in Science’, p.557.

²¹George Q. Flynn, ‘The Draft and College Deferrals During the Korean War’, *The Historian* Vol. 50, No. 3 (1988), pp.369–85, p.370.

²²M. H. Trytten, ‘Meeting Manpower Needs’, *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 301, No. 1 (1955), pp. 17–21, p.18.

²³Timothy J. Perri, ‘The Evolution of Military Conscription in the United States,’ *The Independent Review*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (2013), pp.429–39, p.31.

²⁴George Q. Flynn, *Conscription and Democracy: France, Great Britain and the United States*, (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2002), p.131.

²⁵For more information about the 1948 Selective Service Act, see James M. Gerhardt, *The Draft and Public Policy: Issues in Military Manpower Procurement, 1945–1970*, (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1971).

²⁶Trytten, ‘*Student Deferment in Selective Service*,’ p.27.

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enlisted soldiers. Trytten asserted that 'the maximum strength of the nation can be achieved only if the individual serves where he can contribute most. Universality of service in uniform, on the other hand, necessarily results in reduced national strength.'²⁷ Trytten forcefully asserted that college students with the potential to perform nationally useful work on the home front should be permitted to remain in their classrooms. He recommended that President Truman approve the deferment of college students' military service, thus ensuring that the stockpile of scientifically trained Americans could continue to rise without interruption.²⁸

Trytten's report was not the only recommendation made to the federal government on the subject of deferment. The two positions which garnered the most publicity and support were the Trytten Plan, and a recommendation made by Harvard president James Bryant Conant that suggested, in essence, the exact opposite solution.²⁹ Conant opposed Trytten's plan at its heart, noting that deferment for college students was elitist.³⁰ He suggested instead that *college* could be deferred for two years while youths first served their country in the military. Initially, the Senate Armed Services

²⁷Ibid., p.18. Trytten's plan was also well supported: Charles A. Thomas, whose work for the Scientific Manpower Advisory Committee had identified a similar path, noted that 'At present there are about 65,000 scientists and engineers of age 25 or less. They represent less than ONE PERCENT of the civilian male population in this draft age group. A large fraction of these young men are already employed in work of vital importance to the nation and more are needed. When the special skills which they possess are more urgently required by the armed forces, a more adequate number of them should be inducted and assigned to the military speciality which will make the best use of their capabilities. But it is most vital that these trained scientists and engineers are not removed from the defense activities for service in non-specialized military assignments.' [emphasis in original]. Charles A. Thomas 'Plans for the Development and Use of Scientific Manpower Recommended by the Scientific Manpower Advisory Committee of the National Security Resources Board', (12 January 1951) p. 10, File 1295 F – Scientific Advisory Committee, Box 1658, OF, Truman Papers, Truman Library.

²⁸Gerhardt, *The Draft and Public Policy*, p.154.

²⁹Henry A. Barton, Alexander C. Monteith, E. Lowell Kelly, and Charles E. Odegaard, 'Plan for Brainpower', *The Science News-Letter*, Vol. 58, No. 27 (1950), pp.421-26, p.421.

³⁰Contemporary commentator Donald D. Stewart also noted that 'Although the logic of [the Trytten Plan] is, as has been noted, difficult to dispute, the reviewer must confess to a vague feeling of uneasiness concerning this whole matter... it does appear to the reviewer that the older idea had certain elements of fairness which are lacking in the new.' Donald D. Stewart, 'Of General and Specialized Interest', *The Journal of Higher Education* Volume, Vol. 24, No. 6, (1953), pp.330-31, (p. 331).

subcommittee planned to initiate a compromise between the two recommendations that drafted young men and sent them to college in uniform. This compromise never materialised, however, and soon after, the Trytten Plan was accepted almost without alteration. The need for trained scientific personnel superseded the need for an egalitarian draft process, and the Trytten plan was the only system that could swiftly deliver what the government perceived the nation to need.³¹ After a review by Congressional Committee, the plan to amend the Selective Service Act of 1948 was effected by Executive Order of the President in March 1951, through the Universal Military Training and Selective Service Act.³²

Through the adoption of the Trytten Plan, what were termed 'II-S deferments' were made available to any enrolled, full-time college, professional or graduate student on the basis of either 'qualifying test scores, or scholastic standing, or both.'³³ In order to qualify for such a deferment, students were expected to meet one or more criteria as defined by the 1951 Act. Deferment could be granted if a student scored above 70 on the newly established Selective Service College Qualification Test (SSCQT). The test was based upon the Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT), enabling both a speedy roll-out of the programme and strengthening the credibility of the deferment itself. This connection served to promote the appearance of a similarity between II-S deferments and military service. Students were also deemed eligible for deferment if their SSCQT score - no matter how high or low - placed them in the top half of their class (freshman), the top two thirds (sophomore) or the top three quarters (juniors). These two alternative methods of qualification were intended to ensure that elite, selective institutions with a high number of intelligent students would not be discriminated against by being forced to lose the bottom fifty percent of their student body even if the individual students scored highly. In turn, it also ensured that small, liberal arts schools with a low number of enrolled students would not face losing the majority of their student body as a minimum of fifty percent of the class would be deferred regardless of their score.³⁴

The programme faced charges of being inequitable from the start, which its makers vehemently denied. The numbers, however, revealed a deeper truth: passing the SSCQT offered a pathway to safety that only those who could afford college could

³¹Anon., 'Compromise Draft Plan', *The Science News-Letter*, Vol. 59, No. 2, (1951), p. 20.

³²Henry Chauncey, 'The Use of the Selective Service College Qualification Test in the Deferment of College Students', *Science*, Vol. 116, No. 3004, (July 25 1952), pp.73-79, p.73.

³³Trytten, *Student Deferment in Selective Service*, p.65.

³⁴Stewart, 'The Dilemma of Deferment,' p.11.

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access.³⁵ In the spring of 1951, the first test was administered; it was not mandatory for matriculating students, but roughly 75% of those eligible to take it did so. Of those who sat the test, 80% were deferred; 213,000 achieved deferments through their test scores, more still through their class rank.³⁶ Of the first freshman class that were eligible for deferment in 1951, 68% were deferred. 35% achieved deferment on the grounds of both their test score and class standing, with 18% deferred due to their test score, and 15% more on their class standing.³⁷ The deferment policy achieved its central purpose and very few college students were removed into active service, a stark difference to the previous conflict just a few years earlier. As such, this resounding success did nothing to calm the criticisms that the policy was elitist, instead showing definitively that it was.

This was inevitable and, of course, was also the reason why such a programme had been avoided in previous conflicts. Trytten acknowledged these problems and even highlighted this potential issue to Truman, noting that,

the college student population does include a disproportionately large representation from the middle- and upper-income groups. Furthermore, members of some racial and ethnic groups and residents of some sections of the country, including rural residents, generally are disadvantaged in access to the opportunity for college education.³⁸

Trytten also recommended that the President should make hardship loans available to poorer and marginalised students to promote greater equality of access, and thus a fairer deferments policy. No programme was ever established alongside this policy for student deferment, however, and Trytten sought to absolve the programme of responsibility by invoking the unimpeachable and intangible monolith of 'national security'.³⁹ He stated that 'we cannot afford, in order just to make a gesture toward

³⁵Most of the college population were not actually eligible for deferment, being too old, too young, already reserves or veterans, held IV-F deferments (not fit for service), and of course a percentage were women. This left around 450,000 students eligible to sit the SSCQT. Trytten, *Student Deferment in Selective Service*, p.68.

³⁶Anon., 'Draft Boards Cooperate', *The Science News-Letter* Vol. 60, No. 16 (1951), p. 244.

³⁷Educational Testing Service Report SR-52-1, *A Summary Statistics on Selective Service College Qualification Test of May 26, 1951, June 16, 1951, June 30, 1951, July 12, 1951* (Princeton, N. J., Educational Testing Service, 1952) in Gerhardt, *The Draft and Public Policy*, p.186.

³⁸Stewart, 'The Dilemma of Deferment,' p.188.

³⁹*Ibid.*; Anon., 'Draft Deferred Students Should Have Way Paid', *The Science News-Letter*, Vol. 59, No. 15, (1951), p.235.

surface equality, to sacrifice the future development of our society by an action which in the event of full scale war would be futile – or, worse, dangerously wasteful of much needed skills.’⁴⁰

The criteria for deferments heavily favoured wealthy, White men from northern states, reflecting as it must the exclusive nature of higher education in the USA at that time. While the GI Bill and the subsequent post war explosion in higher education had opened more university places than ever and made a college education a possibility for working class Americans, the simultaneous economic growth during the American Century ensured that these places were still overwhelmingly awarded to middle-class teenagers. That the test exacerbated inherent socio-economic inequalities is particularly clear to see when considering the geographical data from the SSCQT results. After the first SSCQT scores were collated, the National Manpower Council found that a far greater proportion of freshmen from colleges based in richer, Whiter northern states were deferred due to their test scores. Colleges who drew their populations from historically poorer and more racially diverse areas in the southern states saw fewer registered students deferred on the basis of ‘merit.’⁴¹

The discrimination faced by White working-class boys paled in comparison to that experienced by Black communities. While, once again, Black teenagers were attending college in higher numbers than ever before in the years after the Second World War, discrimination in access and experience remained insidious. Both the comparable sizes of historically Black colleges and universities, and the presence of quota systems at integrated colleges ensured that there were proportionately far fewer college places available for Black teenagers. This coupled with the impacts of segregation in education, leaving Black institutions far less well-funded than many of their White counterparts and less able to prepare their students for the SSCQT. This status quo ensured that young men of colour faced a double barrier in accessing draft deferment even if they found themselves eligible.⁴²

⁴⁰Trytten, *Student Deferment in Selective Service*, p.43.

⁴¹National Manpower Council, *Student Deferment and Manpower Policy* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1951), p. 62–63, quoted in Joel Spring, *The Sorting Machine Revisited: National Education Policy since 1945* (New York and London: Longman, 1989), p.55.

⁴²The Selective Service Board had a policy not to keep statistics by race, thus there is no data available on the number of Black deferees. As Paul T. Murray has noted, however, ‘The burden of the draft has fallen disproportionately on blacks, as it has on lower-class youth in general.’ Paul T. Murray, ‘Blacks and the Draft: A History of Institutional Racism’, *Journal of Black Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 1, (1971), pp.57-76, p.68-71.

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Not only did these Americans find themselves left behind as the nation shifted its values and focus to the creation of a college-educated populace, they were also now *more* likely than before to be drafted into military service due to the shrinking pool of available servicemen. The acceleration of the desegregation of the military at the start of the Korean War further contributed to an inequitable disparity in service for Black soldiers, leading eventually to an overrepresentation in the enlisted ranks.⁴³ As James M. Gerhardt has explained, while equity, especially interracial equity and considerations across socioeconomic classes, were considered prior to the passage of the 1951 Act, national security concerns and manpower needs superseded any serious engagement with this concept.⁴⁴ The programme of student deferment created federally mandated protection for wealthy White youths at the expense of Black and poor youths and draft deferments magnified the disparities already present within the system. Dissent soon dissipated as the programme became entrenched.

Science as Saviour

The postwar establishment of science as a vital pursuit, perceived to be nationally useful and thus federally protected, had an impact on US society broader than the growing stockpile of scientific manpower. The postwar/Cold War era engendered a nationwide shift in opinion on the place and purpose of higher education; no longer was attendance at university reserved for the growth and improvement of wealthy not-quite-adults, but rather a tool for meeting the needs of the nation. This, in turn, began to alter the relative reputations of the academic disciplines in the years after the war. The political endorsements endowed upon the sciences throughout the Truman administrations via the wider boons of funding, access and employment repeatedly signalled that the study of science was worthier, manlier and more lucrative than the study of more traditional university pursuits such as literature, history or classics. Crucially, with the addition of II-S deferments, opting to study for a degree in science and its related fields was also, now, the *safer* choice.⁴⁵ For some students, the choice to major in a scientific field rather than the humanities or social sciences was now, quite literally, a life or death decision.

⁴³Ibid., p.68.

⁴⁴Gerhardt, p.360. For more information on the complicated relationship between civil rights with the early Cold War period, see Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

⁴⁵A preliminary evaluation, carried out by the Committee on Specialized Personnel of the Office of Defense Mobilization noted that 'in almost all the fields covered, it is definitely known that we do not have enough for the defense and progress of the nation' and thus 'the 26,000 [scientists] who will graduate in 1952 are already being offered relatively fabulous salaries for their services ... the figures in the preliminary survey show that, once they are out of college, they will be in great demand.' Anon., 'U. S. Short 130,000 Experts', *The Science News-Letter*, Vol. 60, No. 21, (1951), p.326.

This message was not overt. Nowhere in the Trytten Report does it state that II-S deferments should be made available exclusively to students of science over other degrees; students majoring in any and all disciplines were eligible to sit the SSCQT. The Selective Service Committee stated that it had chosen to defer all qualifying college students, regardless of major, specifically to ensure that the programme would not promote one discipline over another. To prioritize some subjects over others, the Report noted, would 'undoubtedly increase the flow of youth into some of these various fields of training and would decrease the flow into others.'⁴⁶ If deferment was subject specific, then the federal government's interference into affairs of higher education could skew the traditionally varied make-up of the student body. This in turn this could cause a major shift in the output of universities and have long lasting consequences for the nation as a whole. Trytten noted that even as scientists were the main safeguard of the national defence, many types of expertise and personnel were necessary to the smooth operation of any endeavour.⁴⁷ When read in isolation, the Report repeatedly reinforces the view that a pipeline for science alone could not ensure the safety and prosperity of postwar America.

Despite these fierce pronouncements, however, at all stages from the test to graduation, the scientific fields were favoured by the programme of student deferment. This is unsurprising, as the original motivation behind student deferment was, of course, to protect and grow the nation's stock of scientific manpower.⁴⁸ Amy J. Rutenberg characterises this effort as 'manpower channelling' and notes that, more broadly, 'deferments were used to support a permanently militarised peace instead of a temporary war effort,' continuing that 'within this context, meeting long-range defence goals and protecting national values were of greater consequence than during earlier wars.'⁴⁹ Rutenberg's wider message is underpinned by this study of the SSCQT: students from other disciplines were welcome to take the test, but science students were the prized target. The test was designed and deployed with the intention of safeguarding the future of American science, and it was science students who benefitted most. Indeed, in defending the programme against its critics, it is science students whom Trytten highlighted, lauded and heroised, betraying the true purpose of the programme:

⁴⁶Trytten, *Student Deferment in Selective Service*, p.33.

⁴⁷*Ibid*, p.33.

⁴⁸Hershey himself later extended the definitions of selective service to move beyond the confines of military personnel, defining nationally useful roles even for private citizens. By the end of the decade, as Rutenberg notes, 'the Selective Service had entered the role of social engineering.' Amy J. Rutenberg, 'Drafting for Domesticity: American Deferment Policy during the Cold War, 1948–1965', *Cold War History*, Vol. 13, No. 1, (2013), pp.1-20, p.15.

⁴⁹Rutenberg, 'Drafting for Domesticity,' p.2.

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To defeat Russia, if that becomes necessary in a general war...we must place superior weapons in the hands of our soldiers. We cannot do this unless we have the scientists, technicians and engineers to think them up, design them and then get them produced. We will not have those scientists, technicians and engineers unless we send to college those most qualified to go.⁵⁰

The Trytten Report acknowledged that,

it was unanimous and considered the opinion of these committees that the nation's immediate and long-range security urgently required an uninterrupted flow of sufficient numbers of scientific and specialized personnel into advanced training for subsequent utilization in either civilian or military occupations.⁵¹

Humanities and social science students were not excluded, but nor were they the focus or the priority. Their programmes now existed in the shadow of the valorised sciences.

Commissioner of Education Earl J. McGrath recognised that this shift was underway by 1953, noting,

... a growing concern among the nation's educators and statesmen over the possibility that government action in one narrowly defined area may lead to an undue emphasis on the natural sciences and result in an imbalance in education and in the national culture.⁵²

Evidence of this imbalance is tangible. The first and strongest indication that the policy impacted disciplinary study on campus both directly and indirectly can be seen through the administration of the SSCQT. The main determining factor utilized by the draft boards when administering deferment was students' SSCQT score, and it is clear from the available data that the SSCQT favoured scientifically orientated students. The test was split into two parts, one verbal and one quantitative, with the expectation that this would allow students from both ends of the spectrum to shine. As Trytten later reported, however, 'in engineering, physical sciences and mathematics, the percentage of examinees passing the test was well above average throughout.'⁵³ Students from the

⁵⁰Trytten quoted in Anon., 'Elite' Charges Are Wrong', *The Science News-Letter* Vol. 59, No. 23, (1951), pp.366-67, p.366.

⁵¹Trytten, *Student Deferment in Selective Service*, p.61.

⁵²Earl J. McGrath quoted in Charles R. Howell, 'A National Arts Program', *Educational Theatre Journal*, Vol. 5, No. 3, (1953), pp.259-65, p.265.

⁵³ Trytten, *Student Deferment in Selective Service*, p. 73.

sciences dutifully outperformed humanists on the quantitative test, yet the scientists' results virtually equalled those of the humanists on the verbal portion of the test.⁵⁴ In the first round of testing, 68% of engineering freshman passed compared to 48% of 'general arts' students. This was even lower among Education students, who achieved only a 27% pass rate.⁵⁵

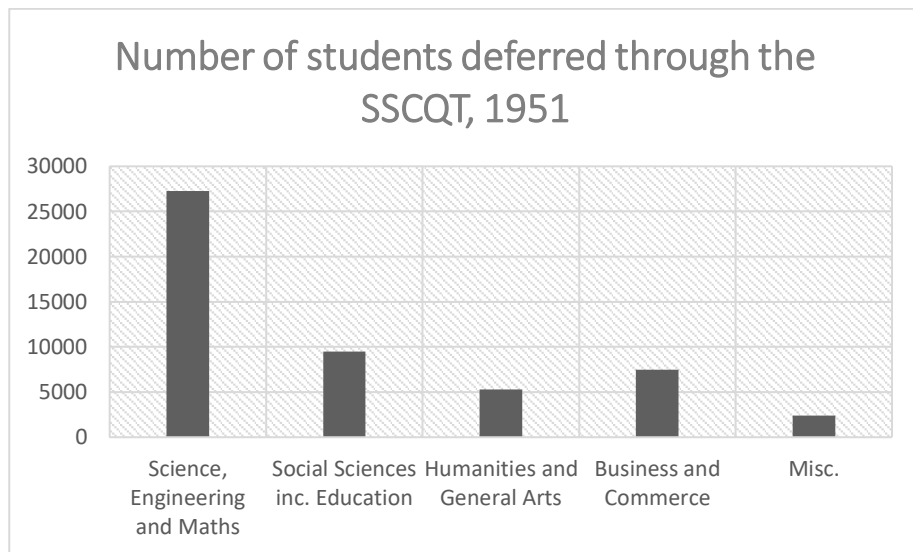


Figure 1: Student deferment data by subject area (1951).⁵⁶

Figure 1 above illustrates the disparity between deferments granted to students, with far more science students able to achieve the required mark than students from all other disciplines put together. As a result of the SSCQT, a greater number of students majoring in science were awarded deferments, making science appear to be a more attractive offer to future freshmen.⁵⁷

⁵⁴Trytten identified that 'Among students taking the SSCQT, those in physical sciences, mathematics and engineering virtually equalled the humanities and social science students on the verbal material, yet excelled them considerably on the quantitative material. Hence the science students would excel the others on any combination of both types of material,' *Ibid.*, p.74.

⁵⁵Chauncey, 'The Use of the Selective Service College Qualification Test,' p.75.

⁵⁶These statistics are based on a 10% sample of college freshmen who sat the SSCQT but the percentages remained 'remarkably similar' across all years of study. *Ibid.*

⁵⁷Stewart, 'The Dilemma of Deferment,' p.187.

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Graduate school deferrals presented a higher bar than undergraduate. Students could access deferrals for graduate school only if they had scored highly on the SSCQT and graduated in the top 50% of their undergraduate class; no protection for smaller schools was built in at the graduate level. Graduate students were also expected to 'maintain satisfactory progress' to ensure their deferments remained active.⁵⁸ A further barrier to access beyond the test, however, was the ability to pay for graduate school, and far more funding for graduate work in science fields was available thanks to the postwar relationship between science and security. As historian David Kaiser recognised, in the postwar period 'the growth in graduate student enrolments took on an explicitly political formulation.' He asserts that 'for more than two decades after World War II, most physicists, government officials, and nationally syndicated journalists equated the nation's security with the production of young physicists.'⁵⁹

The same is true of funding bodies. Bush had recommended the establishment of a National Science Foundation in 1945 – an organisation through which federal money could be allocated to scientific research as it had been during the Second World War – and the NSF was created quickly afterwards.⁶⁰ By the end of the 1950s 70% of university research funding came through the government. As Jonathan Engel has uncovered, the majority of this funding was dedicated to 'nationally useful' research.⁶¹ With government research funding doubling almost every five years until 1960, this meant more spaces for graduate students and more scholarships to fund their studies.⁶² Continuing a II-S deferment was more likely for students willing and able to study science due to this greater availability of both places and funding, making it a more attractive pathway than other degrees. Once again, student deferments for selective service allowed and encouraged an imbalance between the academic fields in the name of national security.

Finally, the deferment prioritised science students even after they left university. The policy of student deferment allowed students to defer military service only for the duration of their studies. The upper age limit for service in the armed forces was even raised from 26 to 35 to prevent graduates from aging out too quickly. Upon completion of a degree, however, students could remain deferred if 'it is subsequently decided by his local board that exceptional qualifications make him more valuable to

⁵⁸Gerhardt, *The Draft and Public Policy*, p.158.

⁵⁹David Kaiser, 'Cold War Requisitions, Scientific Manpower, and the Production of American Physicists after World War II', *Historical Studies in the Physical and Biological Sciences*, Vol. 33, No. 1, (2002), pp.131-59, p.133.

⁶⁰For more information on the importance of the National Science Foundation to the postwar university, see Engel, *Transforming American Science*.

⁶¹Engel, *Transforming American Science*, p.95.

⁶²*Ibid.* p.2.

the nation through service in some other role.⁶³ Yet what was considered 'valuable' was more stringently defined in secondary deferments. Contemporary commentator Donald D. Stewart emphasised that humanities students were especially disadvantaged as 'the positions of most are not so likely to be considered "essential" by the local board as those available, for example, to graduates in engineering or the natural sciences,' regardless of Trytten's earlier protestations to the alternative.⁶⁴ Simply put, students who studied a 'nationally useful' undergraduate degree were more likely to be defined as a 'nationally useful' graduate. In the face of a perpetual war, the sciences were the safer choice of major as students were significantly more likely to be able to pyramid their deferments after graduation.

The valorisation ascribed to the study of the sciences during this period – with consideration of the field always circling ideas of 'service', 'need', and heroics – also served in itself to channel young people into the study of the sciences. Trytten notes within its pages of *Student Deferment* that,

any policy, no matter what it is, will work some change in the pattern of higher education and in the pattern of training that is formed by the selections of fields of study by the youth of today, who seek to adjust themselves to a new and different world... it will be of great significance in the future, not only to the colleges and universities, but to the civilization that is shaped by their graduates.⁶⁵

The impression is best summed up by a question that was raised by a student in the *Phi Beta Kappan* in 1955: 'how can I feel a study of literature or philosophy or art is worth my time and energy when I realize that the society to which I belong doesn't value these things?'⁶⁶ The deferment policy guided students into choosing the study of science over the humanities and social sciences, decisions that were not, necessarily, either in their best interests or reflective of their own desires and interests. Yet this was the point; as Henry Chauncey, the President of the Educational Testing Service, identified in 1952: 'Students selected for deferment under the college qualification program are permitted to continue their training, not for their own benefit, and not for the benefit of the institutions they attend, but for the benefit of the country as a whole.'⁶⁷ The nation needed American youths to study science, and the deferment programme was designed explicitly to ensure that they did.

⁶³Trytten, *Student Deferment in Selective Service*, p.42.

⁶⁴Stewart, 'The Dilemma of Deferment,' p.190.

⁶⁵Trytten, *Student Deferment in Selective Service*, p.24.

⁶⁶Cornelius B. Weber, 'Humanities in the Junior College', *The Phi Delta Kappan*, Vol. 36, No. 8, (1955), pp.313-314, p.313.

⁶⁷Chauncey, 'The Use of the Selective Service College Qualification Test,' p.79.

STUDENT DRAFT DEFERMENT AND US HIGHER EDUCATION

The decisions these youths made would shape the rest of their professional lives. Historian Joel Spring has written about his own educational choices in *The Sorting Machine Revisited*, reflecting that his decision to suppress a love of history in favour of the pursuit of a mathematics degree in the 1950s was motivated specifically by the federal government's shaping of the American education system. Spring was influenced firstly by the pressure he felt to contribute to the national interest, noting that 'Cold War policies and my personal interests clashed.' When expressing a passion for history, he was assured that 'it would be in my interest and the national interest to instead take the new honors college courses in mathematics and science,' also giving partial credit for his decision to the disparity in scholarship money.⁶⁸ Spring recognised that his 'life choices were being defined by government policies.'⁶⁹ When faced with a future that had been reduced to two options upon graduation – higher education or military service – his desire to avoid the latter led him to 'choose' a major in what he saw as a nationally useful discipline. Students understood that with science came safety and money, and that station brought valour from the shelter of the lab.

Conclusion

When the Sputnik satellite was launched in 1957, just six short years after student deferments began, scientists were outraged to learn that the public's reaction was to assume that American science had fallen behind the Soviet Union. 'As for the supposed shortage,' historian Barbara Barksdale Clowse notes, 'they announced that the country already had enough students.'⁷⁰ The lessons of the Second World War – at least as pertained to university science – had been learned; the policy of student deferment in selective service ensured that young men were continually channelled into nationally useful study for the benefit of the nation rather than being indiscriminately lost on the battlefield, or to the pursuit of less useful knowledge. The following year the National Defense Education Act was passed, and the bulk of the money allocated for education was funnelled into science.⁷¹ By placing science on a pedestal, and underpinning this valorisation with practical benefits such as money, access and a long-term alternative to military service, the US's scientific future was safeguarded and the national stockpile of scientific manpower grew exponentially. Enrolments were up, productivity was healthy and the USA was increasingly competitive on a global stage.

Military service during the Korean War was not perceived positively by American youths; a 1953 study demonstrated 'rather definitively that the college students

⁶⁸Joel Spring, *The Sorting Machine Revisited: National Education Policy since 1945*, (New York and London: Longman, 1989), pp.viii-ix.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, p. ix.

⁷⁰Barbara Barksdale Clowse, *Brainpower for the Cold War: The Sputnik Crisis and the National Defense Education Act of 1958*, (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1981), p.85.

⁷¹Wolfe, *Freedom's Laboratory*, p.138.

studied express generally negative attitudes toward being called into the military forces.⁷² Reflecting the broader national ambivalence to the Korean War, young men did not need much encouragement to avoid the horrors of the battlefield. During the First World War single men left better paid work to take up farming as it offered a stronger chance of acceptable occupational deferment.⁷³ Rutenberg identifies men who were willing even to have a baby just to access a III-A 'dependents' deferment.⁷⁴ If avoiding the draft was the goal, then the programme of student deferment for selective service made it clear that majoring in a scientific discipline was more likely to enable students to receive a II-S deferment, secure a graduate position that perpetuated their deferment status and later be able to pyramid their student deferments into occupational ones. More than this, these young men were likely to be lauded for doing so – so often an elusive element of deferment from military service. It is not surprising that young men were willing to change their major to avoid being drafted to fight in an unpopular, hot war, especially when their government was telling them to do so.

This trend was not without consequences, however, and the policy engendered an irrevocable impact upon American education. Student deferment for selective service served to unbalance the comparative perceived value of the disciplines, allowing for the engenderment of a long-term shift in the status of science in the USA. The programme created a dual draw of status and safety in science that could not be matched by the other disciplines, no matter how vehemently its creators insisted upon the programme's neutrality. More insidious were the inequalities baked into the programme from the outset. The privileging of certain communities both reflected and worsened the racial, geographical and economic disparities inherent in the American higher education system. The decision to defer college students from the draft underpinned an historic shift in the relative place and status of science degrees within the academy that would outlast the Cold War itself.

⁷²Edward A. Suchman, Robin M. Williams, and Rose K. Goldsen, 'Student Reaction to Impending Military Service', *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 18, No. 3, (1953), pp.293-304, p.302.

⁷³George Q. Flynn, *The Draft, 1940–1973*, (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1993), p.68.

⁷⁴Rutenberg, 'Drafting for Domesticity,' p.13.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES (July 2021)

General

The British Journal of Military History (the BJMH or Journal) welcomes the submission of articles and research notes on military history in the broadest sense, and without restriction as to period or region. The BJMH particularly welcomes papers on subjects that might not ordinarily receive much attention but which clearly show the topic has been properly researched.

The editors are keen to encourage submissions from a variety of scholars and authors, regardless of their academic background. For those papers that demonstrate great promise and significant research but are offered by authors who have yet to publish, or who need further editorial support, the editors may be able to offer mentoring to ensure an article is successfully published within the Journal.

Papers submitted to the BJMH must not have been published elsewhere. The editors are happy to consider papers that are under consideration elsewhere on the condition that the author indicates to which other journals the article has been submitted.

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Following peer review and any necessary revision by the author, papers will be edited for publication in the Journal. The editors may propose further changes in the interest of clarity and economy of expression, although such changes will not be made without

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The journal welcomes the submission of scholarly articles related to military history in the broadest sense. Articles should be a minimum of 6000 words and no more than 8000 words in length (including footnotes) and be set out according to the BJMH Style Guide.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Research Notes

The BJMH also welcomes the submission of shorter 'Research Notes'. These are pieces of research-based writing of between 1,000 and 3,000 words. These could be, for example: analysis of the significance a newly accessible document or documents; a reinterpretation of a document; or a discussion of an historical controversy drawing on new research. Note that all such pieces of work should follow the style guidelines for articles and will be peer reviewed. Note also that such pieces should not be letters, nor should they be opinion pieces which are not based on new research.

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The Journal's Editorial Team is responsible for commissioning book reviews and for approaching reviewers. From time to time a list of available books for review may be issued, together with an open call for potential reviewers to contact the Journal Editors. The policy of the BJMH is for reviews always to be solicited by the editors rather than for book authors to propose reviewers themselves. In all cases, once a reviewer has been matched with a book, the Editorial Team will arrange for them to be sent a review copy.

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A review should summarise the main aims and arguments of the work, should evaluate its contribution and value to military history as broadly defined, and should identify to which readership(s) the work is most likely to appeal. The Journal does not encourage personal comment or attacks in the reviews it publishes, and the Editorial Team reserves the right to ask reviewers for revisions to their reviews. The final decision whether or not to publish a review remains with the Editorial Team.

The Editorial Team may seek the views of an author of a book that has been reviewed in the Journal. Any comment from the author may be published.

All submitted reviews should begin with the bibliographic information of the work under review, including the author(s) or editor(s), the title, the place and year of publication, the publisher, the number of pages, the ISBN for the format of the work that has been reviewed, and the price for this format if available. Prices should be given in the original currency, but if the book has been published in several territories including the UK then the price in pounds sterling should be supplied. The number of illustrations and maps should also be noted if present. An example of the heading of a review is as follows:

Ian F W Beckett, *A British Profession of Arms: The Politics of Command in the Late Victorian Army*. Norman, OK: Oklahoma University Press, 2018. Xviii + 350pp. 3 maps. ISBN 978-0806161716 (hardback). Price £32.95.

The reviewer's name, and an institutional affiliation if relevant, should be appended at the bottom of the review, name in Capitals and Institution in lower case with both to be right aligned.

Reviews of a single work should not contain any footnotes, but if the text refers to any other works then their author, title and year should be apparent in order for readers to be able to identify them. The Editorial Team and Editorial Board may on occasion seek to commission longer Review Articles of a group of works, and these may contain footnotes with the same formatting and standards used for articles in the Journal.

BJMH STYLE GUIDE (March 2026)

The BJMH Style Guide has been designed to encourage you to submit your work. It is based on, but is not identical to, the Chicago Manual of Style and more about this style can be found at:

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Specific Points to Note

- Use Gill Sans MT 10 Point for all article and book review submissions, including footnotes.
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- Paragraphs do not require indenting.
- Line spacing should be single and a single carriage return applied between paragraphs.

BJMH Specific Conventions

- Spelling follows British English conventions i.e. –ise endings where appropriate, colour etc., ‘got’ not ‘gotten’, etc. The Oxford ‘Mini Dictionary of Spelling’ and ‘The Oxford Dictionary for Writers and Editors’ are invaluable guides.
- Verb past participles: -ed endings rather than –t endings are preferred for past participles of verbs i.e. learned, spoiled, burned. While is preferred to whilst.
- Contractions should be removed wherever found and replaced by the full phrase i.e. ‘didn’t’ would become ‘did not’.
- Foreign words like *weltanschauung* or *levée en masse* must be italicised.
- Sentences should NOT have a double space between them. This is an antiquated practice from the early days of typewriters and monospace type and should have died out fifty years ago. Feel free to point proponents at this explanation: http://www.slate.com/articles/technology/technology/2011/01/space_invaders.html (Accessed 19 July 2022)
- The Oxford comma is to be avoided unless there is a clear and tangible reason for its inclusion (i.e. to avoid confusion when two list items are given that could be considered separate or linked in different circumstances).
- All acronyms should be spelled out in full upon first reference with the acronym to follow within brackets e.g. British Expeditionary Force (BEF).
- Upon first reference the full name and title of an individual should be used as it was at the time of reference i.e. ‘On 31 July 1917 Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig,

Commander-in-Chief of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF), launched the Third Battle of Ypres.'

- When referring to an historical figure, e.g. King Charles, use that form, when referring to the king later in the text, use king in lower case, e.g. 'the king failed...'.
• Generally, designations of twentieth century and later military formations below the level of Army (e.g. Third Army etc.) are given without ordinals, so XXX Corps, 50 Division, 23 Brigade, 11 Battalion, do not use 50th Division, 23rd Brigade, etc. Pre-1900 formations will use ordinals e.g. the 42nd Foot, 8th Dragoons, etc. NB. The definite article should not be used before unit identifiers without ordinals, e.g. '50 Division launched their offensive...' NOT ... 'The 50 Division launched their offensive....'
- Dates are given without ordinals, e.g. 19 July 2022.
- Centuries are spelled out and use lower case, so 'eighteenth-century armies' or 'the thirteenth century', unless in a title. Note the hyphenation for adjectival use.

Illustrations, Figures and Tables:

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- Included within the body of the text.
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Quotations:

- Short (less than three lines of continuous quotation): placed in single quotation marks unless referring to direct speech.
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- Punctuation leading into quotations is only necessary if the punctuation itself would have been required were the quotation not there. i.e. : ; and , should only be present if they were required to begin with.
- Full stops are acceptable inside or outside of quotation marks depending upon whether the quoted sentence ended in a full stop in the original work i.e. Mitchell deconstructed the chauvinist, realist paradigm when he argued 'yummy, yummy, yummy I've got love in my tummy'. He further elucidated the neo-liberalist

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weltanschauung when he argued: ‘and I feel like loving you.’ Note end of sentence so punctuation inside the brackets.

- When quoting a text maintain the form of words used in that text. This may include non-UK English spellings, non-standard punctuation or variations from the usual BJMH style e.g. ordinals in unit numbers or dates.

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- *Op cit.* should be shunned in favour of shortened citations.
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- For edited volumes: Chapter Author, ‘Chapter title’ in Volume Author/s (ed. or eds), *Volume title in italics*, (place of publication: publisher, year), p. # or pp. #-#.
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Examples of Citations:

¹Frank McLynn, *The Burma Campaign: Disaster into Triumph 1942-45*, (London: Vintage Books, 2010), p. 81.

²McLynn, *Burma Campaign*, p. 82.

³Michael Collins, 'A fear of flying: diagnosing traumatic neurosis among British aviators of the Great War', *First World War Studies*, 6, 2 (2015), pp. 187-202.

⁴Michael Howard, 'Men against Fire: The Doctrine of the Offensive in 1914', in Peter Paret (ed.), *Makers of Modern Strategy*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), pp. 510-526.

⁵The UK National Archives (hereinafter TNA) CAB 19/33, Lieutenant-General Sir Henry Sclater, evidence to Dardanelles Commission, 1917.

⁵TNA CAB 19/33, Lieutenant-General Sir Henry Sclater, evidence to Dardanelles Commission, 1917.

⁶Shilpa Ganatra, 'How Derry Girls Became an Instant Sitcom Classic', *The Guardian*, 13 February 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2018/feb/13/derry-girls-instant-sitcom-classic-schoolgirls-northern-ireland>. Accessed 20 April 2019.

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