THE UNDERGRADUATE JOURNAL OF AMERICAN STUDIES

UNVEILING

Volume 13
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MESSAGE FROM THE CO-EDITORS-IN-CHIEF

Adam Harris-Koblin
Olivia Hilborn
Co-Editors-in-Chief

The Centre for the Study of the United States (CSUS) at the University of Toronto Munk School of Global Affairs proudly presents the 2017–2018 *Undergraduate Journal of American Studies*. In this moment of political disorder, the flurry of scandals surrounding the Trump administration have inspired fear amongst the American people, encouraging the investigation of injustices that have occurred across decades. The moral discord of the Trump administration has encouraged a new age of civic engagement, and a new generation of leaders has answered the call to action. A myriad of movements dedicate themselves to the unveiling of longstanding and ignored societal and political issues sewn into the American fabric. Times Up and #MeToo have called attention to the pervasiveness of sexual misconduct and misogyny that spreads from the workplace to the White House. March for Our Lives calls for the end of gun violence, and Black Lives Matter exposes the police brutality against and the systematic mass incarceration of African Americans. As the moral turbulence of the Trump White House provokes a re-examination of civic life, American injustice now faces an unprecedented interrogation by a newly engaged populace. The theme of "Unveiling" of the 2017–2018 *Undergraduate Journal of American Studies* features essays covering a wide array of issues from students of varying backgrounds and academic disciplines. Works within this edition cover topics including homelessness, gun violence, racial economic injustice, unpoliced foreign conflicts, whitewashing, and Islamophobia—a critical examination spanning over fourteen presidencies. We are grateful to the writers of these pieces for their generosity and cooperation and congratulate them on their achievement. Our Associate Editors, Aisha Assan-Lebbe, Sabryna Ruggles Ekstein, Maxwell Koyama, Sanjana Nigam, and Samantha Tristen were invaluable in the success of the journal and we thank them for their efforts. We would also like to extend gratitude to Professor Nicholas Sammond, CSUS Director, and Professor Alexandra Rahr, Bissell-Heyd Lecturer, for their aid throughout this journey. Additionally, our graphic designer, Ian Sullivan Cant, deserves immense praise for his wonderful work. The subject matter of this edition of the journal serves to reveal light within our ostensibly dark present, that the long overdue unveiling of these issues can hopefully lead to progress decades in the making.

Adam Harris-Koblin
Olivia Hilborn
Co-Editors-in-Chief

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Professor Nicholas Sammond
Director, Centre for the Study of the United States and American Studies Program

It is my great pleasure to welcome you, readers, to the thirteenth volume of the *Undergraduate Journal of American Studies* at the University of Toronto. As always, the articles in this volume cover a wide variety of topics and articulate a range of perspectives. What unites them, however, is the overarching theme of "Unveiling"—the exploration and revelation of acts, practices, and ideas that for reasons political, social, and cultural were or are not immediately evident. In the historical moment of #MeToo, Idle No More, and Black Lives Matter, this is a timely and vital theme that reaches across disciplinary boundaries. These articles speak volumes about how we choose to do American Studies at the University of Toronto.

I offer my sincere thanks and congratulations to the individual contributors and to the editorial team who has assembled their contributions into a coherent whole. To speak about things vital to our own interests and those of our peers, and to do so with craft and with care, is a pleasure in and of itself, but it is also an important contribution to public discourse. And, in an age when honest reporting is labeled "fake news" and the press is called the Enemy of the People, it is an essential contribution to our social wellbeing. To paraphrase Hannah Arendt, a people who loses the ability to tell truth from lies loses its ability to act and to judge, and with that is lost democracy. So it is vital that we write what we know to be true, as these undergraduate authors have done here. As Barack Obama said recently, "in the end, lies and misinformation are no match for the truth." Such is the power of well-stated ideas. And that is the promise delivered of an academic journal that serves as a vehicle for such smart, talented, committed undergraduates as you will find writing here.

The Centre for the Study of the United States (CSUS) at the Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy, University of Toronto, is our country's preeminent place for making sense of our place in the Americas and in the world. It is a meeting place for scholars in fields as diverse as political science, economics, cinema studies, women and gender studies, history, English, geography, and art history, brought together by a shared intellectual interest in the United States, and in the Americas. We host a plethora of public lectures and intellectually stimulating events each year. We offer a thorough and far-reaching undergraduate program in American Studies. And we act as a clearinghouse for graduate students whose focus is the Americas. And, as you will see, we help in our small way to support an undergraduate student journal in American Studies, which advertises the breadth and depth of our students' interests.

My sincere congratulations and gratitude to all of you who made this journal happen.

Nicholas Sammond
Director
Centre for the Study of the United States and the American Studies Program

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ROLLING SHELTER:

Analyzing Mobile Refuge in Annie Correal's "In Deepest Cold, a Subway Car Becomes the Shelter of Last Resort"

Sabryna Ruggles Ekstein

In Annie Correal's article "In Deepest Cold, a Subway Car Becomes the Shelter of Last Resort," Correal depicts the experiences of homeless individuals in New York City that opt to sleep in subway cars rather than expose themselves to insecure and dangerous government-run shelters. While New York subways are a widely used public utility, the homeless are often ignored; Correal strives to include the homeless in the cityscape. Alongside descriptions of the people who can be found on the trains, the article provides photographs taken by Benjamin Norman that focus solely on the subject. This dualistic documentation serves to restore the identity and history of people cast aside by society, emphasizing the humanity and individuality of each homeless person portrayed. Shortly after the publication of "In Deepest Cold, a Subway Car becomes the Shelter of Last Resort," Correal released an additional piece in the *New York Times* titled, "How I Approached a Story About the Homeless," in which she details her motivation for the initial article. As Correal notes, her editor emphasizes the importance of establishing the humanity of her subjects, stating that, "The important thing to do… was to get their names. We needed to talk to the homeless and identify them by name the same way we do with other sources. Not just count them."[1] Further, Correal remarks on the revealing nature of this journalistic endeavour, noting that she was "not sure there are rules for reporting on the homeless that don't apply to living in general. Be careful. Be kind."[2] Here Correal depicts a vital task in abolishing the facelessness

so often ascribed to the disenfranchised. To combat the perceived monolithic nature of the homeless, Correal urges readers to empathize with her subjects, employing narrative as a tool to compel identification with a seemingly alien group.

By stressing empathy and individuality, Correal portrays the seeking of refuge as the culmination of prolonged struggle, calling readers to engage with a more nuanced image of the homeless. It is critical to note that this article was written and published during "the longest spell of freezing days in New York since 1961."[3] Correal emphasizes the government's apathy toward the homeless as they are aware of approaching periods of extreme cold yet offer little help to those who are at the greatest risk of harm. This essay will examine Correal's article "In Deepest Cold," specifically analyzing how refuge is presented on the E train, investigating how homeless individuals perceive shelters not as places of sanctuary, but as a hazardous space to be avoided. Moreover, this paper will engage with additional texts that discuss New York City's plan to combat homelessness.

Central to Correal's work is the documentation of tension on the subways, a daily encounter with a threatening body, experienced by both commuters and the homeless. Throughout her work, Correal emphasizes the dichotomy of experience between those who find refuge riding the subway, and the largely indifferent class of commuters, noting how one commuter, "Jaswinder Walia, said he was disgusted at the state of the E train… He complained of unsanitary conditions, saying 'This is a nursing home, these people are sick. This is not bad for them, it's bad for us.'"[4] Walia's claim demonstrates the broad stigma surrounding the homeless, stressing a perceived oppositional dynamic borne out of extreme inequality. Further, rather than consider the systemic issues that helped create this crisis, Walia perceives the homeless as a threat, vagabonds in a public zone. In his article "Being Homeless in Winter Can Be a Death Sentence—but New York City Has an Innovative Solution to the Crisis," Harrison Jacobs notes that "Since 1994, homelessness has exploded by over 100% in New York, while rents have gone up around 19% in real dollars, household income has actually gone down 6.3%, and the city has lost hundreds of thousands of rent-stabilized apartments," observing that there are more homeless people than ever before and that there is a direct relationship between the declining incomes, increasing rents, and the number of homeless individuals.[5]

Though this crisis persists, the municipal government has taken some action to combat homelessness through its Turning the Tide on Homelessness Program. Recognizing that the increasing cost of living has vastly outpaced wage growth, New York City plans to tailor solutions to homelessness based upon individual neighborhoods' specific economic data, recognizing the variance in income and living costs throughout the city.[6] While this effort represents a laudable attempt to respond to this pressing issue, the program fails to address the mobile homeless on the city's subway trains. As Correal notes, "... during extremely cold weather, more

[people] than usual descent into the subway, open and heated 24 hours a day, and transforms trains into rolling shelters."[7] The efficacy of the program will be tempered by its localized focus, its disengagement with this ambulant disaster.

"In Deepest Cold," sets up a division of man versus nature. For example, Correal writes about Shanaira Hobgood who began sleeping on the E train "after she noticed her hands starting to turn purple from the cold," and Deborah Dorsey who "slept underground for about seven years, only emerging in the summer."[8] For these people sleeping on the E train is not a method of negating the unpleasant chill of New York City winter, it is a tool to avoid death. The article is written with as much detail as possible while giving few personal opinions on the scene. In doing so, the reader is able to imagine what the E train would look like on a cold night, and increases the empathy readers may have towards the article's subjects. Nature and its elements affect everyone, and Correal's objective within "In Deepest Cold," is to display how those who do not have shelter have to protect themselves during extreme weather.

Correal's article fails to expand on the effects weather conditions can have on the homeless; dangers include frostbite, illness induced by the cold, hypothermia, depression, and loneliness.[9] Therefore, moving underground protects one from the elements while building a community around them, an action helps create bonds and compassion. Unsheltered homeless compose about five percent of New York City's homeless population at about 3,900 people.[10] In Nikita Stewart's article "Why New York Hires 200 People to Pretend They're Homeless," they describe how "there was a 40 percent jump in street homelessness over the previous year, which city officials attributed to unseasonably warm weather."[11] As the temperature drops, it means an increase in the number of individuals looking for shelter–either in a government-provided space, with friends or family, or in public spaces. City official Jaclyn Rothenberg, when interviewed by Correal, described how New York City was trying to provide for those who were taking refuge on the subways including "making shelters safer to adding more temporary shelters known as Safe Havens."[12] While these are positive initiatives, city officials cannot force someone who is homeless into a shelter, it is a decision that can only be made by the homeless individual. By discussing how New York is trying to make shelters more welcoming, it identifies that New York City is aware of the dislike of shelters among some homeless people. However, the act of the homeless finding refuge in subway cars makes the subway ride uneasy for those who feel that the homeless make the subways unsafe. In "The Deepest Cold," Correal does not mention individuals who negatively view those taking shelter in the subway. Instead, she focuses on homeless individuals and presents their stories. When she does reference others, she selects people who wish to help the community, such as Muzzy Rosenblatt, who is "the president and chief executive of Bowery Residents' Committee, a non-profit organization contracted by the Metropolitan

Transportation Authority and the city to send outreach workers through the subway system," and Isaac McGinn who is "a spokesman for the city's Department of Homeless Services."[13] The choice to include only positive outside sources creates an illusion that many want to help those who are seeking warmth on the subway. However, by eliminating the dialogue of those who are not homeless and who take the train to commute, the reader is left not knowing what the full picture is. The benefit of including only sources who want to help the homeless is that it emphasises that there are people who are trying to change the current state of subway refuge. For example, Rosenblatt focuses on the proper etiquette for interacting with the homeless such as "not approach[ing] people while the train doors are closed…because they feel trapped," while McGinn focuses on how trust through repeated contact is integral to helping move people to shelters, and stresses how the job "becomes all the more critical during extreme weather."[14] The text fully eliminates the tension between those who take shelter on the subway and those who ride the trains as commuters. In doing this, Correal successfully focuses her article on the unsheltered homeless, yet risks presenting a more positive representation on how people taking shelter on the E train are received.

Mayor Bill de Blasio labelled the cold weather that affected New York City in early January "a very serious storm" during a press conference in which he also declared the storm a "Winter Weather Emergency," in order to "give… City agencies the ability to take additional actions."[15] He urged people to call 3-1-1 if they saw anyone who was homeless, or 9-1-1 if they were in serious trouble and said that "the most important thing is stay indoors, take precautions, look out for your fellow New Yorkers."[16] When a reporter asked how many homeless individuals had been brought in from the cold, Steve Banks, a staffer from the Department of Social Services, answered, "about 14…including several involuntary because we made the determination that they were a danger to themselves and under the Mental Hygiene Law we brought them in."[17] Mayor de Blasio focuses on the importance of helping each other in the community during the extreme cold. Correal's article, however, highlights that those who ride the subway to stay warm create a refuge purposefully away from the rest of the city citing that, "Each line has a culture," referring to the various social groupings of people that stay on each train route.[18] The article presents a series of individuals who have not been helped by their community and have therefore created one on the E train.

While there is a community created among those who seek shelter from the cold on subway trains, it is crucial to remember that these individuals could be better supported through public programs and spaces. Photographs included in the article that show the dimly-lit subway terminals, the cramped spaces, and general subway litter provide visual context for living conditions on the subway. The objective of the article and its accompanying photographs is not to sugar coat life living underground. Instead of victimizing those who find shelter on the E

train, Correal humanizes them by including their backstories. By focusing on the explicit fact that these people are trying to stay safe from extreme elements she manages to draw a connection between the homeless and the reader, because everyone shares the primal need for warmth. Humanizing those without shelter attempts to explain that for those who do not have a place to call home they have to take refuge where it can be found. The title "In Deepest Cold, a Subway Car Becomes the Shelter of Last Resort," emphasises this idea by suggesting that sleeping on the E train is not their want, but instead it is a necessity.

While Correal's article discusses how many individuals have their belongings with them on the E train, she does not discuss how for some homeless individuals shelters are seen as last resorts. Shelters for some are not considered the sanctuary that they are intended to be. For example, Javon Egyptt and Darryn Lubonski were previously homeless and reflect that they found shelters to have lax security "and squalid condition," later discussing the robbery of their boots, the presence of mold in the showers, and Lubonski becoming the victim of a stabbing.[19] The conditions they describe are not ones of a sanctuary, but rather those of a nightmare. In her reflection piece about writing "In Deepest Cold," Correal quotes Monique Rink, a woman whose five children had been separated from her and placed in different foster homes. She asks Correal to tell her children that she "look[s] forward to a time when we can be together again in this beautiful country that is America… I feel like my rights have been taken away from me through no negligence of my own—just because I didn't have a home."[20] The information in the quotation is all the reader is told about Rink but it demonstrates that all Americans go through difficult times, once again Correal uses the tactic of humanization instead of victimization. The statement "I look forward to a time when we can be together again in this beautiful country that is America," reflects an idea hopeful for the future, one that government services are trying to provide to more homeless people in New York City.[21] Rink's reference to a *beautiful* America suggests that her homelessness has not disillusioned her, that she still has hope. Through the work of outreach workers who are presented as respecting the rights of those staying warm on the train in "In Deepest Cold," Correal demonstrates that efforts to help those in need have not diminished, rather they are ongoing.

As New York City continues to promote safer shelters including, "building 90 new facilities as part of its Turning The Tide Program," the city demonstrates its commitment to creating spaces of refuge for those who are homeless.[22] An ongoing development program suggests that New York City is committed to creating a "beautiful country that is America," and recognizes that the large number of homeless individuals cannot decrease until resources, time, and effort are provided to help those who need safe as well as reliable shelters.[23] In her article "In Deepest Cold," Correal presents refuge as a space that can protect an individual from extreme elements, and a space that is constant. Subways here represent

spaces that can be a permanent place of warmth and stability for unsheltered homeless people. Within her article, the E train transforms into a place of rescue and demonstrates how shelters (which are thought to be refuges by some) can actually be spaces of danger. While New York City's homeless population is large, Correal's attention to volunteers who want to help the homeless instead of hide or remove shows how compassion can act as a tool to begin a process of new beginnings, while the photographs that accompany the article seek to demonstrate the individuals who make up a large population.

ENDNOTES

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THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE UGLY:

The Portraits of Three Key Figures Constructed by the Media and Public Following the Attempted Assassination of Ronald Reagan

Samantha Tristen

SETTING THE SCENE

Two months and ten days after he had been inaugurated as the fortieth president of the United States of America, Ronald Wilson Reagan arrived at the Washington Hilton Hotel to deliver a speech to the AFL-CIO, a labour union from which the president was seeking to garner support. Shortly before two in the afternoon, Reagan exited the hotel where the presidential motorcade awaited him.[1]

In the span of two seconds, Reagan's presidency changed forever. When the group forming a human shield around the president disbanded as Reagan was prepared to enter the motorcade, a gunshot pierced the air, the bullet hitting a window of a building across the street from the hotel. Five shots immediately followed. The next hit the window of the presidential motorcade. The following shot struck Press Secretary James Brady's temple and exited the other side of his head, permanently disabling him. Another shot hit police officer Thomas Delahanty in the neck. Secret Service agent Timothy McCarthy, realizing what was occurring, shielded the president, and was himself shot in the stomach. Despite his efforts to protect him, Reagan was struck in the chest when the sixth and final bullet fired ricocheted off the motorcade and hit Reagan while he was entering the vehicle.[2]

REAGAN'S OPPOSITION TO GUN CONTROL DURING HIS PRESIDENCY

Following this attempt on his life, Reagan counterintuitively continued to promote an expansive understanding of the Second Amendment.[3] On 6 May 1983, he delivered a speech to the Annual Members Banquet of the National Rifle Association (NRA). In his address, Reagan told the audience that Hinckley's shooting of him two years prior proved that gun control would not deter criminals from acquiring weapons and using them to harm others:

> It's a nasty truth, but those who seek to inflict harm are not razed by gun control laws. I happen to know this from personal experience… No group does more to promote gun safety and respect for the laws of this land than the NRA, and I thank you. Still, we've both heard the charge that supporting gunowners [sic] rights encourages a violent, shoot-em-up society. But just a minute. Don't they understand that most violent crimes are not committed by decent, law-abiding citizens? They're committed by career criminals. Guns don't make criminals. Hard-core criminals use guns. And locking them up, the hard-core criminals up, and throwing away the key is the best gun-control law we could ever have.[4]

Equally noteworthy is the fact that supporters of Second Amendment Rights have heralded Reagan as a champion of their cause. In his study *God, Guts, and Guns*, author Philip Finch spoke to Joseph Kerska, one of the founders of Sons of Liberty in 1977, a group dedicated to protecting constitutional rights.[5] In the eyes of the group, the Second Amendment proved the most controversial—and the most endangered—and thus demanded great focus.[6] Kerska said of Reagan:

> It's an achievement that this country has elected such a man. Politicians promise all kinds of things, but here's a man who is doing all the things he promised to do, or at least he's trying. I've written to our representatives and urged them to give him wholehearted support. He appears to be the best president since Lincoln.[7]

In 1991, two years after leaving office, Reagan supported the passage of The Brady Bill, named for James Brady, who had been permanently disabled in the attack. He stated that it was "plain common sense that there be a waiting period to allow law enforcement officials to conduct background checks on those who wish to buy a handgun."[8] When asked why he did not enact any such policies during his

presidency, Reagan responded that he "was against a lot of the ridiculous things that were proposed with regard to gun control."[9]

From these interconnected developments emerges a critical question: how did one of America's most prominent victims of gun violence become both a self-styled and ubiquitous symbol of gun control opposition? This essay investigates how the media constructed incomplete, incorrect, and ill-conceived portraits of three key actors in the shooting and its immediate aftermath. First, an examination of how Reagan was portrayed to be in better physical condition following the shooting than he truly was demonstrates how a heroic—rather than pitiful—image of him arose. Next, an inquiry into the vilification of Secretary of State Alexander Haig establishes how the public's castigation of him garnered support for Reagan. Finally, it discusses how the American people antagonized Hinckley, characterizing him as one of the relentless criminals Reagan would later describe in his address to the NRA, even though Hinckley confessed that gun control likely would have prevented him from committing the crime.

REAGAN: TRANSFORMED INTO A HERO

Hinckley's assassination attempt enhanced Reagan's public support. Prior to this event, his public approval rating was 59%, the lowest of any elected president in recent history in the second month of the presidency, and support for his Democratic opponents appeared to be increasing.[10] Following the shooting, Reagan's public approval rating skyrocketed to 73%.[11] Shock, grief, and panic overcame the nation, "The news was awful, sick, and frightening," reported a man by the name of Richard C. Schramm.[12] Stan Otis reflected that he "felt personally injured."[13] Another source concluded that "[t]he human race needs a lot of work."[14]

As previously mentioned, the attack did not cause Reagan to adopt a pro-gun control stance; instead, he continued to be a popular symbol of the NRA's argument that the Second Amendment protected—rather than endangered—law-abiding citizens. As the public was severely troubled by the event, it seems counterintuitive that Reagan was valorized without widespread criticism of his support for relaxing gun restrictions.

The explanation of this conflict lies in how news of the event diffused following the attack. While news of the shooting spread rapidly among the public, the release of information from White House staff was slow and often inaccurate.[15] As a result, the American people believed that their president was in better condition than he truly was.

Because Reagan was struck by a bullet that ricocheted off the presidential motorcade as he was getting into it, most spectators did not see the bullet's impact.[16] Moreover, Reagan recalled that he thought he had merely cracked a rib.[17] It was only once the car had left the Hilton Hotel that the president began

coughing up blood, and Parr, his driver, drove to the hospital upon seeing this, arriving eight minutes after the shooting.[18] The hospital staff was notified that there were gunshot victims en route, but they were not informed that one of these patients was the president. This perhaps explains the absence of a stretcher awaiting Reagan upon his arrival, thus requiring him to walk 45 feet to the hospital entrance.[19] Reagan's left lung had collapsed, he had lost half his blood supply by the time he received surgery. The chief physician, Dr. Joseph Giordano, credited Parr with saving Reagan's life.[20]

Moreover, news about the attack spread rapidly among the public,[21] but its transfer from the White House staff to the press was slow and largely incorrect. The attempted phone calls from the hospital were continually cut off. When asked about the condition of the president, deputy press secretary Larry Speaks told the press that he did not have any new information.[22] This meant that the public relied on televised coverage of witness accounts, which were limited to recounting what *appeared* to have happened, not what actually occurred. This led to the sweeping misunderstanding that Reagan was in more stable condition than in actuality, because witnesses did not see the president sustain an injury, nor the gruesome details that followed once he was in the motorcade. The slow release of news from the hospital—such as that the bullet was found one inch from Reagan's heart—meant that another, more flattering narrative had already been disseminated.[23]

The public's partial understanding of the shooting and the president's critical condition allowed Reagan to become a hero without being pitied.[24] He was praised and deified for having survived an attack on his life, without a public memory of his near death. Reagan's deliberate press appearances shortly after he was released from the hospital, coupled with his natural charisma, demonstrated to the public that he was capable of working in his usual jovial spirit.[25]

HAIG: TRANSFORMED INTO AN ANTAGONIST

As per the Twenty-Fifth Amendment, when a president is unable to fulfill the duties of his office—due to death or incapacitation—the vice president assumes the office. When knowledge that the president had been the victim of an assassination attempt and that he was being hospitalized for a bullet wound was released to the public, the press demanded to know who was governing the country.[26] During Reagan's immediate hospitalization, Vice President George H.W. Bush was away in Texas, and therefore unable to reassure the public.

In Bush's stead, Secretary of State Alexander Haig claimed that he was "in control" while the president was temporarily disabled.[27] According to the Constitution, the Secretary of State assumes presidential power if both the president and vice president are unable to occupy this office, but only during wartime; if the United States is not at war—as was the case in March 1981—the Secretary

of State is actually fourth in the line of succession, following the president, vice president, and speaker of the House of Representatives, and president pro tempore of the United States Senate.[28]

Moreover, Haig's public declaration was "constitutionally dubious"[29] because it is incumbent upon the Cabinet, not the White House staff, to decide to implement the Twenty-Fifth Amendment.[30] Whether it was a lust for power, genuine devotion to his nation, or simply a misunderstanding of the Constitution that compelled Haig to declare that he was "in control" remains unknown.[31] Whatever his justification for asserting his authority, it is documented that he did in fact attempt to contact Bush to inform him that Reagan was injured.[32] Nonetheless, his error caused him to lose public support, as many interpreted his unconstitutional claim as indicative of him being "power intoxicated."[33]

Their concerns were validated when some witnesses echoed these thoughts. For instance, Martin Anderson, an economic analyst in the Reagan administration, reflected that the Haig's declaration "sounded ominously like a veiled grasp for power,"[34] further fueling the media's criticisms of him.

This backlash ultimately led to Haig's resignation in June of 1982.[35] His actions on 30 March 1981 impeded his professional ambitions, and they continue to define him in popular memory.[36] Haig's error in judgement catalyzed the valorization of Reagan, however. As the media transformed Haig into what Reagan advisor Pat Buchanan characterized as "a cross between General Jack D. Ripper in *Dr. Strangelove* and Burt Lancaster in *Seven Days in May*,"[37] public support for Reagan heightened due to his appearance as the victim of Haig's perceived mendacity, fulfilling the role of the "good guy" in contrast to Haig's traitorous image.

Several relevant effects arose out of the situation and public response. Foremost, as already mentioned, it increased Reagan's growing popularity. The heroic image of the president, in conjunction with the intense emotional reactions of the public, helped Reagan become a powerful legislative leader.[38] This included his opposition to gun control. Secondly, the media's transformation of Haig's statement into a major scandal distracted the public and politicians alike from the question of gun control as a viable means of deterring further tragedies.

HINCKLEY: TRANSFORMED INTO A RELENTLESS MADMAN

The perpetrator of this attack was a 25-year-old man named John Hinckley, Jr. Although Hinckley and his two older siblings were all born into wealth, Hinckley was not as driven as his siblings, resigning into apathy and passing his time by watching television. He dropped out of school to move to Los Angeles

in order to "crash Hollywood."[39] During this time, the Martin Scorsese film *Taxi Driver* (1976) premiered, which Hinckley reportedly saw at least fifteen times.[40] He became obsessed with actress Jodie Foster, who portrayed a child prostitute in the film, and began modeling his behavior off of Robert De Niro's character, Travis Bickle, such as drinking the same alcoholic beverages that the character did onscreen.[41] His obsession with Foster continued, leading him to follow her to New Haven when she enrolled at Yale University. He then travelled to Washington D.C. with the intent of assassinating the president, just like Bickle attempted to assassinate a presidential candidate in *Taxi Driver*. Hinckley wrote to Foster the day of the assassination, stating he was unable to "wait any longer to impress [her]."[42]

This personal history contributed to the public's characterization of him as one of the "hard core criminals"[43] that would acquire guns regardless of any firearm restriction law. The potential passage of such legislation would be the topic of Reagan's address to the NRA two years later. While Hinckley's ambition to assassinate the most powerful person in the country certainly made him a criminal, the idea that any regulations would not have deterred him was countered by Hinckley himself. When his father, Jack Hinckley, asked him what would have prevented him from committing the crime, Hinckley replied, "Maybe if I'd had to wait to buy a gun [or] had to fill out forms, or get a permit first, or sign in with the police, or anything complicated. I probably wouldn't have done it."[44]

At the trial, however, the lack of legal obstacles in obtaining a firearm was not the central area of inquiry. Instead, the trial largely focused on Hinckley's mental health, with the prosecutors attempting to demonstrate his sanity when planning and executing the shooting, and the defense arguing the opposite.[45] The defense was victorious, and Hinckley, judged not guilty by reason of insanity, was instead committed to St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Washington D.C.[46]

However, the public's rage toward Hinckley and dissatisfaction with his sentence led to major reforms of the insanity defense—the legal measure wherein one can argue their innocence on the basis of compromised mental wellness—codified at the national level in the 1984 Insanity Defense Reform Act. This legislation increased the evidentiary threshold for arguing innocence by reason of insanity. Many state-level courts followed suit, and several abolished the insanity defense altogether.[47] Simultaneously, Hinckley's obsession with Foster became a tabloid sensation, and attracted the curiosity of many.[48] These reactions ossified the public image of Hinckley as the embodiment of two different types of criminals: first, a relentless madman; second, a meticulous murderer, one of the "career criminals"[49] Reagan would speak of in his address to the NRA. Neither of these separate characterizations addressed the question of gun regulation; instead, the anti-gun control perspective espoused by Reagan and others remained at the forefront of his policymaking.

CONCLUSION

The reactions of the public to the news of the assassination attempt demonstrated how just two seconds profoundly shaped public perceptions of three figures whose profiles became an object of mass interest in the immediate wake of the event.

The examination of the origins of these common—albeit oversimplified—portraits, an analysis of how the events were reported provides valuable insights. The uncertainty of details coupled with the widespread demand for information and intense emotionality resulted in a narrative that was quickly diffused among the public, but lacking in nuance and, most critically, accuracy.

There has yet to be a correction of this misinformation in popular memory; so far, the efforts to provide more detailed, accurate accounts remain largely within the confines of academia. The portraits constructed by the media immediately following the assassination attempt solidified a narrative of the event that endured thereafter: Haig inadvertently aided in the creation of this public image with his resignation. Similarly, Reagan and others espoused of the notion that Hinckley was the now-archetypal "bad guy with a gun."

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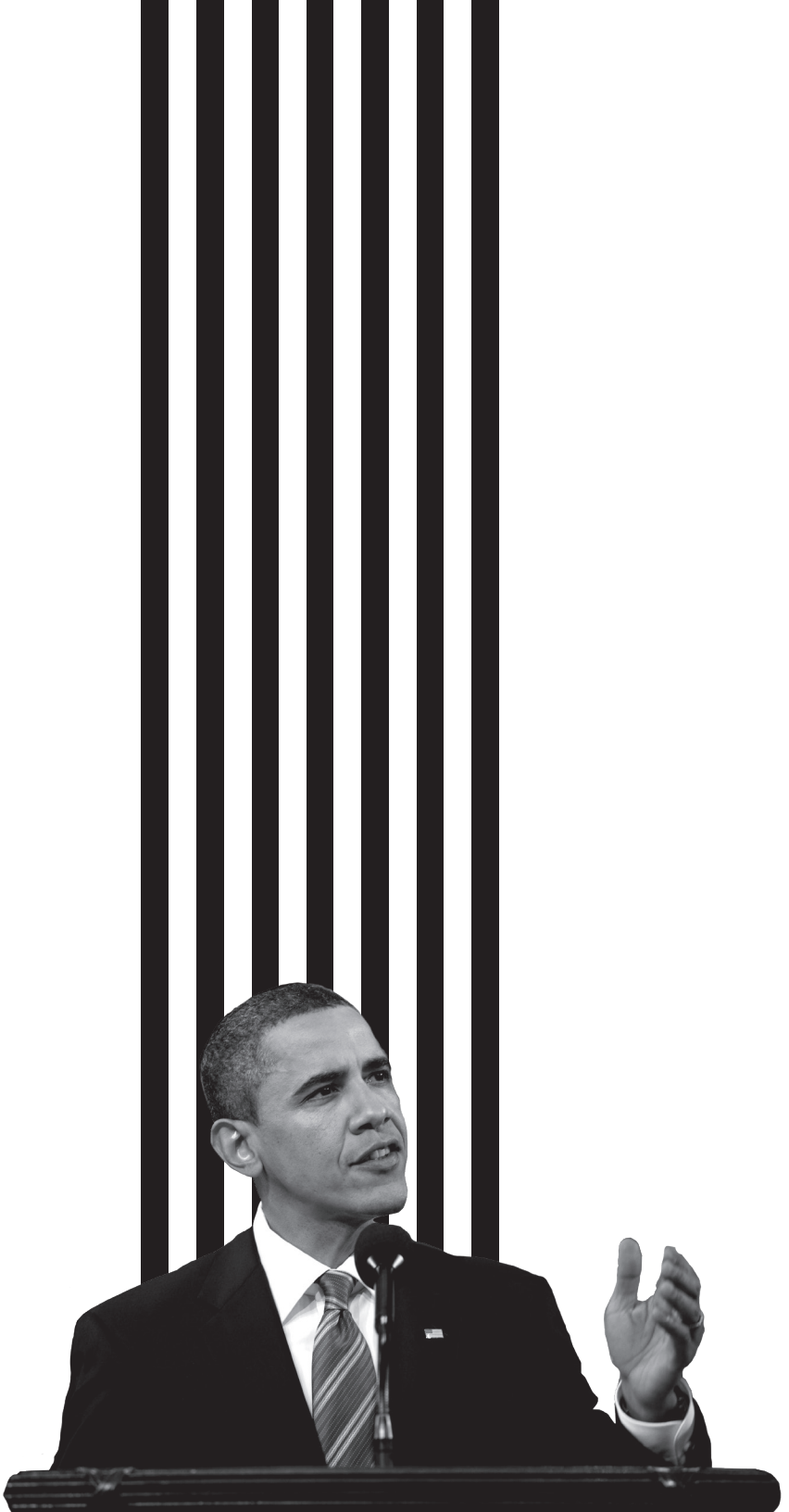

THE FIRST HALF-WHITE PRESIDENT

Adam Harris-Koblin

Barack Obama's election to the presidency in 2008 is widely viewed as an indicator of progress towards racial equality in the United States. Following his election, commentators suggested that America had reached a post-racial phase in its development in which the national wounds of slavery and Jim Crow had begun to heal. While Obama's elevation to the presidency signifies a social milestone in American history, the political strategies that Obama employed in order to secure his victory undercut assertions of the establishment of a post-racial society. This paper will examine Obama's acceptance speech at the 2008 Democratic National Convention, analyzing how he carefully moderated the extent of his discussion of political issues through the lens of race, and deliberately applied de-racialized rhetoric to project an image palatable to both minority and white voters. The ambiguity of the language in the speech, invocations of shared cultural experiences among various racial groups, adoption of conservative rhetoric surrounding self-reliance and personal responsibility, and refusal to discuss institutional barriers indicate how in order for Obama to win the presidency, it was imperative that he employ language sufficiently indistinct to allow voters of all backgrounds to identify with his candidacy. To understand the rhetorical strategies that Obama employed in his convention remarks, it is critical to provide an overview of the role of race in previous nominating contests. While African Americans are a disproportionately large racial voting block in

the Democratic primary, when contrasted with their influence in the general election, whites remain the most numerous racial group in the primary and general electorate.[1] Prior to Obama's campaign, only three African American candidates—Jesse Jackson, Al Sharpton and Carol Moseley-Braun—had waged competitive campaigns for the Democratic nomination, all of whom struggled to win the support of groups other than black voters. Obama sought to build upon their efforts, central to his campaign strategy in the primary and general election was inspiring unprecedented African American turnout while also winning enough white support to secure victory. To do so, it was necessary that Obama appeal to both groups without alienating either, forcing him into the challenging position of harnessing the historic power of his candidacy without bleeding white votes in the process. Straddling this racial line necessitated the utilization of meticulously-crafted rhetoric, a negation of blackness that allowed Obama to transcend the limitations of previous black politicians and reach white voters.

Throughout the speech, when referencing issues that most deeply impacted people of colour, Obama deliberately avoided stressing those problems through a racial lens, rather, he offered vague, non-racialized commentary. When alluding to the widely criticized response of the George W. Bush administration to the destruction caused by Hurricane Katrina,[2] Obama castigated them as "sitting on their hands while a major American City drowns before our eyes."[3] Obama's refusal to explicitly name New Orleans—the site where most African Americans were impacted—reflects this attempt to avoid positioning himself as a racialized figure. Through identifying the nameless major city solely as "American,"[4] Obama removed the racial undertones found in the lackluster response of the Bush administration. Obama engaged with New Orleans as emblematic of the Bush administration's governing failures, rather than as a racially-driven abdication of civic responsibility.

However, in proclaiming New Orleans "American,"[5] he expanded a once racially-constricted definition of Americanness to include the majority-black city, appeasing white voters by ostensively ignoring blackness, and framing Bush's failures as driven by inaptitude, rather than racial animus. In addition, Obama's declaration that the American people are "more compassionate than a government that lets veterans sleep on our streets and families slide into poverty"[6] echoes key sentiments of President George W. Bush's 2000 presidential campaign, in which he declared his policy platform to be a new, "compassionate conservatism"[7] in effort to dispel the Newt Gingrich-associated identification of the Republicans as unfeeling and disengaged from the struggles of everyday Americans. Bush's attempt to deflate these criticisms was a response to Bill Clinton's unusually high popularity, achieved in part by portraying himself as an empathetic, sensitive figure capable of electorate-wide commiseration unknown to Republicans. By invoking Bush's 2000 campaign, Obama extended his appeal to voters who had

abandoned the Democratic Party following Clinton's presidency, the long-sought white working class alienated by perceived snobbery of recent major Democratic figures. Moreover, juxtaposing his mention of compassion with Republican tropes—struggling veterans and families—Obama again underscored his commitment to reaching out to ancestral Democrats, estranged by the post-Clinton Democratic Party, thus placing the struggles of Bush supporters on equal footing with his base.

In addition, shortly after calling attention to Hurricane Katrina, Obama referred to his general election opponent (the Republican Nominee, longtime Arizona Senator John McCain) as being unable to "deliver the change that we need."[8] Through offering commentary on the events in New Orleans through an ostensibly deracialized lens, Obama depicted the disaster as a source for worry among all groups—either as an indication of a racial prejudice prevalent among public officials, or of the incompetence of the Bush administration—tying McCain to Republicans' logistical failures in responding to Katrina. Obama encouraged voters to view McCain through the lens of whichever side of the issue most deeply resonates with them, capitalizing on the perception of Bush's inefficacy in responding to the hurricane by tying it to race and thus reaching out to minority voters, and tapping into the non-racial understanding of Bush as simply incompetent, likely more prevalent among white voters.

Near the conclusion of his remarks, Obama quotes Martin Luther King, invoking his famed "I Have a Dream" speech, delivered on the steps of the Washington Mall exactly 45 years prior to the night of his nomination. Obama notably omits King's name from his quote, referring to him only as "the Preacher,"[9] who "brought Americans from every corner of this land to stand together."[10] In leaving King unnamed, Obama works to maintain his appeal to the broad electorate. As America is a majority-Christian nation, referring to a preacher, a mainstay in the Christian faith, offers an allusion familiar to many. In leaving King nameless, Obama sidesteps the possibility of alienating Southern voters in states with a history of racial prejudice. In 2008, Obama became the first Democrat to carry the Commonwealth of Virginia or the State of Indiana since President Lyndon B. Johnson in his 1964 landslide victory over McCain's senatorial predecessor, Barry Goldwater. Further, invoking King allowed Obama to maintain a connection to his black supporters, and likely registered the invocation of a Southern preacher by the first black major party presidential nominee as a reference to King. Obama's strategic ambiguity allowed him to connect with the broader electorate, a recognition of the underlying controversiality of King, and of blackness at large in American life. Obama's identification of the unnamed preacher's ability to unify Americans of all backgrounds signals his effort to transcend his status as the first black nominee and avoid excluding white voters. Highlighting how the preacher was able to coalesce Americans across the nation of "every creed

and color, from every walk of life" further reinforces Obama's efforts to reach beyond the black electorate, positioning himself as a representative figure of all Americans, not solely the minority-dominated Democratic base.

Furthermore, when discussing the decline of domestic manufacturing, Obama again worked to generate the broadest appeal possible, stating, "When I listen to another worker tell me that his factory has shut down, I remember all those men and women on the Southside of Chicago who I stood by and fought for two decades ago after the local steel plant closed."[11] Following the election of Ronald Reagan in the presidential election of 1980—with the exceptions of Bill Clinton's victories in 1992 and 1996—blue collar white voters had abandoned the Democratic Party en masse. Both Al Gore and John Kerry, Democratic presidential nominees in 2000 and 2004 respectively, struggled to win the votes of the once-natural Democratic constituency.[12] In this passage, Obama calls out to these white voters, referring to domestic decline more generally in the beginning of his statement. His reference to the shutting down of a steel plant in the South Side of Chicago, a primarily black area, extends this appeal to black voters. The broad reference to domestic industry at the beginning of the statement and the explicit reference to its decline in a black neighbourhood serves to reach out to both constituent groups, re-engaging white blue collar workers while also maintaining a connection to urban black voters.

Moreover, Obama again sidestepped race in his comments on the efficacy of past government programs. Obama pointed to his white maternal grandfather, noting how following his military service in World War II, he received financial support through the G.I. bill and attended college. Though veterans received government assistance upon returning home, these programs disproportionately aided white Americans.[13] Black veterans were denied many of the benefits received by their white counterparts, with these racial barriers contributing to wealth inequality that survives to the present day.[14] Through not explicitly referring to his grandfather's whiteness, Obama implies that these benefits were within the reach of all Americans, allowing him to advocate for the benefits of New Deal-era programs without acknowledging their racist history.

Additionally, Obama attributed the economic expansion of the 1990s to Clinton, pointing to the "23 million new jobs that were created when Bill Clinton was president, when the average American family saw its income go up $7,500 instead of go down $2,000, like it has under George Bush."[15] While the economic expansion of the 1990s was significant, almost none of the wealth generated in that period went to African Americans.[16] Additionally, in cooperation with Republican members of Congress following a dismal Democratic performance in the 1994 midterm elections, Clinton limited access to welfare and instituted harsher mandatory minimum prison sentences, disproportionately increasing sentence length and incarceration rates of black Americans.[17] In this passage,

Obama capitalizes on Clinton's popularity with these voters while avoiding discussion of the damage done to the black community throughout his presidency. Further, he calls attention to the financial growth largely experienced by white middle and upper class Americans, many of whom had previously supported George W. Bush, consolidating support with both groups.

Obama employed rhetoric designed to appeal to a broad range of voters, working to maintain support from traditional Democratic constituencies while also drawing in the white, working class ancestral Democratic voters who had previously supported Republican candidates. He cast himself as an American mad-lib, a figure whose narrative was sufficiently vague to allow voters of all demographics to discover themselves in his candidacy. He discussed the efficacy of government programs without drawing attention to their discriminatory history, thus underscoring the potential of expansive social programs to enhance the well-being of all Americans. As the first black nominee, directly confronting racial issues was politically hazardous, however, making some allusions to race was necessary to maintain black support. Obama embodies a new form of politics, a strategic negation—instead of embrace—of a negatively-connotated racial identity. His rise was fueled by self-evident historicity, a Clintonian ambiguity that convinced each voter his candidacy belonged to them. And yet today this brand of non-identitarianism has faded, the purposive malleability of the Obama era has been replaced by powerful assertions of racial and ethnic identity. In 2008, a junior U.S. Senator from Illinois built a winning campaign by accepting that victory was contingent upon earning the support of white Americans who harboured racial prejudice. In 2016, a white New York City celebrity harnessed the fire that Obama was forced to play with; he promised a white presidency.

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THE DECIDERS:

Black Empowerment, White Saviourism, and Interstitial Refuge in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Dred: A Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp*

Aisha Assan-Lebbe

In *Dred: A Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp*, author Harriet Beecher Stowe depicts escaped American slaves who seek to evade capture by hiding in the eponymous swamp. The text is centred around Dred, an escaped slave who finds refuge in the swamp—now a designated historical site and wildlife refuge. Due to its reputation as a largely infertile land, the swamp allowed slaves to live undetected by their former masters. Through offering a detailed portrayal of the personal experiences of escaped slaves, Stowe combats the white saviour narrative perpetuated in popular tellings of the Underground Railroad Movement. Straying from the historical emphasis placed on sympathetic whites, Stowe stresses black autonomy and self-reliance, providing a narrative that repositions blacks as empowered enablers of their freedom. The examination of Stowe's effort to combat the reduction of black autonomy prompts the analysis of her employment of the liminality of the swamp trope, portraying it as a space that vacillates between dichotomies of freedom and persecution characterized by a clash of peril and possibility, rather than as land of unvarnished refuge.

Despite its titular status, the aforementioned Great Dismal Swamp appears only in the later sections of the text, a notable subversion of expectations given its ostensive importance in the narrative. In stressing the apparent significance of the swamp in the title, yet confining its presence in the narrative to the final third of the text, Stowe elevates black autonomy, emphasizing slaves individual acting, rather

than portraying the swamp as the key cause of their freedom. Further, Stowe portrays the swamp as a vehicle for republicanism, a tool to advance black citizenship. This is evidenced by Stowe's depiction of Dred, who arrives at the swamp and begins preaching to other escaped slaves, as well as Nina Gordon, the mistress of a slave plantation. Dred transforms the swamp from a destitute patch of earth into a moral center, a mechanism to initiate a new national consciousness.

The swamp functions as a space of improvised spirituality and becomes a church where the preachers can enact self-governance, awakening a new national consciousness. Dred tells the new slave escapee, Harry, that in the swamp he is not physically abused and his wife is not subjected to sexual violence.[1] In this sense, refuge is defined in the absence of corporeal harm. As well, Dread states that he can bear arms, and goes on to compare the "curtained bed" to swamp ground for repose. Thus, the swamp functions as domestic space despite being "foreign" to people living in plantations.

The swamp is simultaneously familiar and foreign. This black reiteration of individual choice is further echoed. In addition, he has the freedom to move and act autonomously "no man says to me, 'Why do ye so? Go! You are a slave!—I am free!' And, with one athletic bound, he sprang into the thicket, and was gone."[2] The thicket of the swamp is concealing, and this is what makes it useful for Dred. Recounting the story of how he became a maroon (escaped slave), Dred states that in bludgeoning his owner to death, he "escape[d] to the swamps, and was never afterwards heard of in civilized life."[3] It is precisely this lawlessness of nature that makes it a suitable refuge for Dred. His desire to bear arms and appreciation of the absence of law is almost a militant anarchism at the heart of this refuge.

As with many settings in the Gothic tradition, haunted houses, woods, etc., the swamp is "alive." Stowe describes the setting of the swamp in the language and imagery of sublime terror and horror.[4] The swamp houses multiple ideologies as it had the association of being haunted, mysterious, and mystical. The swamp is also liminal in both senses of the term. It is a necessary precursor for freedom. The horrors they experience are requisite ordeals. Furthermore, the swamp functions as a converting authority, an agent of healing and spiritual power, thus revealing the materiality of the swamp. The swamp also has agential power as it is a site of healing and restoration. Stowe describes the swamp as anomalous, with vegetation assuming monstrous form, significantly "different" from their "normal" environment. Stowe uses the term "growth" in full italicized inflection.[5] Despite being a space of growth, the swamp is all at once monstrous, strange, and fantastic.

Furthermore, while the swamp is a site Dred renders conducive to black revolution and resistance, Stowe also stresses the imprisoning qualities of the swamp. Another slave escapee who "on this day, had unfortunately ventured out of his concealment" is killed by armed hunters with dogs.[6] This exterior is representative of the imprisoning nature of the swamp—venturing out is an inherently perilous act. In addition, she notes that under the Revised Statutes of North Carolina, murdering

swamp maroons was not a criminal offense. The swamp endangers slaves as they are neither possession nor being. In fact, this statute is an incitement to death. Slaves also occupy a liminal category, oscillating between positions of being subhuman and equated with the natural environment. Ultimately, despite the swamp being an escape from the horrors of slavery, devoid of natural order, it is a space where slaves were still subjected to institutionalized violence. Herein lies a tension upon which Stowe capitalizes, the swamp is simultaneously lawless and institutional.

Furthering the trope of paradoxical wilderness, the swamp shelters and exposes, is hospitable but dangerous, domestic yet foreign. The swamp vacillates between conflicting ideologies. This is understandable given the precarious situation of escaped slaves, inhabiting the margins of the natural environment. Swamps being hinterland allows them to be fertile for subversion. In the swamp, the Healing Hand of God intervenes through the natural world. As the swamp community tends to the wounds of abolitionist lawyer and planter Clayton, the swamp heals his mind in a sort of divine intervention.[7] The ambivalence of the swamp, morally righteous areas, yet vice-ridden at the same time is noted when Stowe states, "amidst the wild and desolate swamp … such is the divine power in which God still reveals himself through the lovely and incorruptible forms of nature."[8]

In conclusion, Stowe works to emphasize black autonomy and agency throughout the text, thereby challenging the American literary tradition of portraying the white saviour in slave narratives. Stowe both advances and subverts the trope of the swamp refuge, contesting the perceived polarity of this space, and instead offering a composite depiction of the black quest for freedom. Oftentimes, the swamp as refuge metaphor is advanced not with its own distinct characteristics but rather in the absence of violence and the horrors of slavery. It is empowering precisely because it is concealing. Despite evolving the positive aspects of the swamp, Stowe disrupts this reading in portraying the swamp as imprisoning. As with much literature in the Southern gothic tradition, she does this by articulating the agential power of the swamp, a materiality that enables it to be a vexed space.

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WHITES ONLY WELFARE:

The Exacerbation of American Racial Divide and the Movement Toward Economic Justice

Raiya Al-Nsour

The public policies introduced during the New Deal era and World War II exasperated the economic and social disparities between black and white Americans. The exclusion of black Americans from these extraordinarily effective federal programs—though devastating and disparaging—demonstrated the American government's ability to elevate those in need. Accordingly, this would inform the strategies and ethos of the civil rights movement; exclusion from this network of benefits would shape a movement that believed in the redemption and salvageability of the processes, policies, and institutions of American life. Though the New Deal and the civil rights movement led to bold policy reforms, they ultimately failed to secure true economic justice for black Americans—this fight has continued on in the face of considerable obstacle, "[e]ven with the sharp upward trend toward better living standards, more urbanization, and greater economic growth, the racial gap widened."[1] The interests of white capital were actively guarded by "Solid South" Democrats, whose congressional power was deeply entrenched. They ensured the maintenance of the South's political economy by decentralizing once federal administrative authority to local officials, lobbying against the provision of an anti-discrimination clause and by excluding industries in which black Americans were overrepresented in from the promises of the New Deal.[2] Further, in order to avoid accusations of racism in light of evolving social values, they strategically employed non-racialized language; instead, the

legislation explicitly targeted groups based upon industry, not race. Those who worked as farm workers and maids—a majority of whom were black Americans—were "excluded from the legislation that created modern unions, from laws that set minimum wages and regulated the hours of work, and from Social Security until the 1950s."[3]

Consequently, white Americans were the sole beneficiaries of public policies that catapulted them to the middle class, giving them unprecedented opportunities to build generational wealth and solidify their position at the top of the social ladder. Social Security provided aid to the impoverished and the elderly. However, it was not alloted as generously to blacks as it was to whites, despite a clearly demonstrated need. As the amount of payments was directly tied on an individual's wage level, and black Americans were poorly paid compared to their white counterparts, their Social Security payments reflected this historic inequality. Furthermore, many black Americans were barred from receiving payments altogether, as black-dominated industries were disproportionately ruled ineligible for benefits: "65 percent of black Americans fell outside the reach of the new program; between 70 and 80 percent in different parts of the South."[4] A similarly racist distribution policy, "[a]n explicit legislative exclusion of agricultural and domestic workers from New Deal labor legislation" appeared in the National Labor Relations Act.[5] Though NLRA enshrined the rights of organised labor, these "... new arrangements were friendly to labor but unfriendly to the majority of black Americans who lived below the Mason-Dixon Line."[6] As the Second World War tightened labour markets and industrialisation of the South, black Americans began to enter industries protected by the NLRA. This would not only prompt Southern Democrats to craft policies attacking labour organisations, but also instigated their movement into the Republican Party over issues of employment. Most devastating to the fate of class-based organising was the Labor Management Relations Act (LMRA), otherwise known as the Taft-Hartley Act. Through this legislation, unions that were protected under the NLRA lost a great deal of their ability to "recruit large categories of black workers, especially in the South, after the passage of Taft-Hartley."[7] Again, the efforts of Southern Democrats to quash union organisation efforts signals a clear recognition of the racial issues at stake. As union efforts were severely undercut, they limited their scope of advocacy, essentially abandoning black Americans in the south. This failure to secure material benefits for black Americans through labour activism would ensure that the South's political economy remained largely intact.

This trend of racial exclusion is further evidenced by The Servicemen's Readjustment Act—popularly known as the GI Bill—which provided "the most wide-ranging set of social benefits ever offered by the federal government in a single, comprehensive initiative."[8] The legislation actively accommodated Jim

Crow, as its administration was largely conducted at the state and municipal level, which allowed local authorities to skirt federal norms of governmental conduct.[9] Black Americans were not beneficiaries of the policies and programs that lifted white veterans into the middle class as the "... combination of entrenched racism and willful exclusion either refused them entry or shunted them into second-class standing and conditions."[10] Like earlier New Deal programs, black veterans were excluded from "benefits [that] created an affirmative action for white soldiers," contributing "to a growing economic chasm between white and black veterans."[11] Evidently, black American exclusion from the promises of the GI Bill would not portend well for racial equality. Though this bill ensured access to education, encouraged homeownership, and provided jobs for white veterans, the racial gap that it created was considerable.[12] With respect to education, "[o]f veterans born between 1923 and 1928, 28 percent of whites but only 12 percent of blacks enrolled in college level [sic] programs."[13] Not only were black veterans barred from educational opportunities, they were denied access to loans to purchase homes, creating a generational wealth gap that has yet to be adequately addressed. In the North, "fewer than 100 of the 67,000 mortgages insured by the GI Bill supported home purchases by non-whites."[14] Homeownership enabled whites to accumulate wealth and ensure financial security for future generations, "[G]enerous educational grants, subsidized mortgages and business loans, job training, and assistance to find work thus summoned high expectations in black America."[15]

Despite its profoundly exclusionary administration, these programs demonstrate the effectiveness of government-sponsored aid. The 1960s witnessed a watershed moment for civil rights organising, with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., at the time of his assassination in 1968, advocating for the rights of sanitation workers and organising the Poor People's March on Washington. King saw that the connection between economic opportunity and civil rights was indisputable, arguing that black Americans could never secure their freedom without achieving meaningful economic power.

The infrastructure was in place at the federal level for black Americans to expect the government to be responsible in their representation, as it was for white people throughout the 20th century. In this time period, the Johnson administration introduced affirmative action: a series of policies designed to combat racial discrimination in higher education and hiring practices.[16] Though "... affirmative action has done more to advance fair treatment across racial lines more than any other recent public policy," it lacked a "racially oriented attack upon poverty and disadvantage" and it did not provide the level of material gains extended by New Deal programs to whites.[17] Of the few major programs directly aimed at addressing racial inequality, affirmative action remains a contentious issue. Many contend that affirmative action

extended an inordinate level of support to minorities and that any preferential treatment is unjust and even racist. Today, we see the hypocrisy of white Americans who oppose affirmative action, castigating it as "big government"; when they themselves were beneficiaries of robust social programs that contributed to privileged status.

The civil rights movement failed to secure King's vision of racial justice through economic advancement. This ensured that the financial challenges that plagued minority communities remain prominent in racial justice organisation in modern life. While there has been some progress, the current movement toward racial justice has reached an impasse; redress through courts and litigation continues to be difficult, and faith in the morality and efficacy of governmental institutions has declined. Civil rights era activists came of age during a time of consensus regarding the federal government's power and prerogative to provide economic and financial assistance. However, in the current moment, the opposite rings true; President Ronald Reagan made it no longer politically expedient to push for augmentation of welfare programs, and today's America still suffers from the consequences of his decision. Activists in the present moment have far less faith in traditional avenues of change, instead viewing institutions as categorically dysfunctional and in need of major reform.

The current levels of poverty and income inequality are a direct result discriminatory policy initiatives that functioned as affirmative action for white people, despite their lack of a history of disenfranchisement. Though the gap between blacks and whites "... has steadily closed for the top third of black Americans, the median income of the great majority of black Americans lags behind that of whites by nearly one third; and the figures for family wealth are even more unequal, not only in homeownership but in... stock holdings, savings accounts, and retirement funds."[18] In the face of intense white opposition to welfare programs and affirmative action, the current movement for racial justice struggles to establish definitive goals and develop strategies that are as clear-cut as that of the civil rights movement. Fundamental changes in public policy would give rise to the wellbeing of social and economic conditions that would come to define the meaning and lived experience of race in America. These policies widened the pre-existing economic and social gulf between blacks and whites, further binding race and class. The opposition to programs similar to the New Deal's—which aimed to address racial disparities—signifies a remarkable historical amnesia among white Americans, given their status as beneficiaries of the earliest forms of affirmative action. A government that provides for the wellbeing of all Americans is not beyond the realm of possibility, however, race-conscious public policy programs are critical to leveling the playing field and making amends for the American tradition of neglect and marginalization of the black American experience.

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CANDOR AND ELOQUENCE IN DISCRIMINATORY SPEECH:

Comparing Political Rhetoric Surrounding the 1924 Immigration Act and Executive Order 13769

Olivia Hilborn

The Immigration Act of 1924 appealed to the xenophobic anxieties of white America, stemming from fears of Italian immigrants as natural-born criminals. White men routinely sexually assaulted Italian women, and Italian men were occasionally victims of lynchings by the Ku Klux Klan. Presently, many Americans, including members of the Trump administration, are contemptuous towards Muslim immigrants. Upon taking office, Trump signed Executive Order 13769, commonly referenced to as the "Muslim ban." This order demanded the prohibition of entry to the United States by citizens of seven predominantly-Muslim nations: Iraq, Iran, Yemen, Syria, Libya, Sudan, and Somalia.[1] While the order was later deemed unconstitutional by a federal court, Executive Order 13769 demonstrated the ferocity—and palatability—of Islamophobia in the United States. Analysis of political rhetoric surrounding both the Immigration Act of 1924 and Executive Order 13769 reveals cross-generational commonalities in the hateful speech used to justify and excuse racism in the United States. Trump's rhetoric, along with that of the Dillingham Commission imbue their racism with sexist sentiments, while Ellison DuRant Smith, and Trump administration officials Jeff Sessions and Steve Bannon draw on nostalgia in their discriminatory language. Smith also uses the desire for racial or religious divisions in his speech, as do Calvin Coolidge, Donald Trump, and Steve Bannon.

The Dillingham Commission and the Trump administration both employ

racist tactics to maintain the illusion that they are working to protect women. This myth originated following the abolition of slavery and has never lost its gumption. White men asserted that black men were deserving of violence because of their treatment of white women, an argument with no historical basis. This slanderous tactic was also employed against Italian men during the 1890s, and maintained its prevalence through the 1920s. Motivated by anti-Catholic and xenophobic sentiments, members of the Ku Klux Klan lynched Italian immigrants, yet justified their crimes as punishment for the rape and sexual assault of white women by Italian men, "… a growing sea of American nativists—branded the Southern Italians savages and rapists, blaming them for the crime that was on the rise in the United States."[2] From 1907 to 1910, the United States Immigration Commission created the Dillingham Commission, a group that collected data for a report of the same name, a congressional review published in 1911. This report contained misleading immigration statistics and offered offensive sweeping generalizations of each ethnicity. Its publication had a tremendous impact on public opinion and contributed to the passage of the Immigration Act of 1924. The Immigration Commission actively promoted the stereotype of Italian men as rapists, "Certain kinds of criminality are inherent in the Italian race. In the popular mind, crimes of personal violence, robbery, blackmail and extortion are peculiar to the people of Italy."[3] The use of the term "peculiar" suggests that not only people of direct Italian descent commit these crimes, but that every Italian person is likely to engage in criminal activity.

Trump's justification of his "Muslim ban" also included sexist reasoning. In the text of Executive Order 13769, Trump states his rationale, "… the United States should not admit those who engage in acts of bigotry or hatred (including "honor" killings, other forms of violence against women, or the persecution of those who practice religions different from their own) or those who would oppress Americans of any race, gender, or sexual orientation."[4] The "honor" killings referred to in the executive order allude to the murder of women justified through their having brought dishonour upon their families. Honour killings do not typically result in punishment by law, in fact, they are committed because of the lack of legal protections for women's rights; the United Nations estimates that five thousand occur worldwide each year.[5] In the executive order, Trump proclaimed his interest in the defense of women, yet his words are overshadowed by nineteen accusations of sexual misconduct and a history of sexist comments as a presidential candidate and public figure. Allegations against him include groping, forcibly kissing, and making offensive comments toward and regarding women in private, social, and professional environments.[6]

Sessions and Bannon engage in a nostalgic bigotry that looks backward to a time when their identity—white, educated, cisgender, heterosexual men—occupied a singular place in the societal order, one not threatened by increasing

diversity and tolerance. Their rhetoric echoes that of Senator Ellison DuRant Smith, who in 1924 spoke on the floor of Congress to persuade his colleagues to vote in favour of the Immigration Act. In his speech, he asked the Senate to ensure the continued composition of America as a nation of people whose ancestors helped establish the country, "Those who come from the nations which from time immemorial have been under the dictation of a master fall more easily by the law of inheritance and the inertia of habit into a condition of political servitude than the descendants of those who cleared the forests, conquered the savage, stood at arms and won their liberty from their mother country, England."[7] Smith believed that the Founding Fathers and pilgrims were superior to others because of their conquest, and that those who have not accomplished such feats have no place in America. He overlooks the atrocities they committed, like the genocide of Native Americans and the destruction of natural resources, and instead focuses on their achievements that resulted from their violent habits. Smith reminisces of a time when heterosexual, white, Christian men lacked competition in their place as the top of the socio-racial hierarchy.

Instead of expressing nostalgia for the founding of America, Sessions opined in an interview that he longs for the policies of the 1920s:

> When the [immigration] numbers reached about this high in 1924, the president and congress changed the policy, and it slowed down immigration significantly, we then assimilated through 1965 and created really the solid middle class of America, with assimilated immigrants, and it was good for America. We passed a law that went far beyond what anybody realized in 1965, and we're on a path to surge far past what the situation was in 1924.[8]

Though the act discriminated against several groups and barred them from immigrating to the United States, Sessions views the legislation as a historic success. Sessions continues to consider high levels of immigration as problematic, not an American tradition to be celebrated. Rather than praise the diversity immigrants bring to American life, Sessions only takes satisfaction in those that have assimilated. The former Attorney General does not recall the prohibition of immigration by specific nations instead of a uniform slowing of immigration.

Steve Bannon, former White House Chief Strategist, employed the same tactic in discriminatory speech in an interview a few years past. He claimed that prior to the First World War, Earth was at its most peaceful time, "It's ironic I think that we're talking today, at exactly, uh, tomorrow, 100 years ago, at the exact moment we're talking, uh, the assassination took place in Sarajevo, um, of uh Archduke Franz, uh, Ferdinand, um, that uh led to really the end of the Victorian era and the beginning of the bloodiest century in mankind's history."[9] Contrary to

Bannon's assertion, the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were periods of extreme violence. Slavery existed worldwide and thrived in the United States. Imperialism raged throughout the world, and indigenous peoples in the New World were enslaved, tortured, and murdered. In the United States, several wars led to lives lost and landscapes bloodied, including but not limited to: the Revolutionary War, the Civil War, the War of 1812, the Spanish-American War, and the Mexican-American War. Crimes against women and people of colour were brutal and plentiful. Later in the interview, he uses nostalgia as a tool to target Muslim Americans, as means of returning America to its former "glory." Bannon's fetishization of the past embodies this strategic employment of nostalgia; he understands increasing diversity, not death and conflict, as history's great tragedy.

Similarly, Smith, Coolidge, Trump, and Bannon insist that there are biological differences amongst races and religions that explain differences in treatment in society and culture. They argue, like the Dillingham Report, that certain groups are predisposed to violence and should therefore remain separate from other ethnic groups.

In 1924, amid growing concern regarding the increase in numbers of mixed-race children, Senator Ellison DuRant Smith expressed his worry that since America had thrived for so long as a predominately white nation, the blurring of ethnic lines would result in national inadequacy:

> Thank God we have in America perhaps the largest percentage of any country in the world of the pure, unadulterated Anglo-Saxon stock; certainly the greatest of any nation in the Nordic breed. It is for the preservation of that splendid stock that has characterized us that I would make this not an asylum for the oppressed of all countries, but a country to assimilate and perfect that splendid type of manhood that has made America the foremost Nation in her progress and in her power, and yet the youngest of all the nations.[10]

Smith offensively analogized Europeans as breeds of dogs, and claimed that Europeans becoming Americans would confuse the concept of a "typical American." He proposed that the United States "shut the door" and maintain the current population composition instead of adding new races and religions to it—to create a "pure, unadulterated American citizenship."[11] Smith also alluded to *The Passing of a Great Race*, a 1916 book by Madison Grant, in which Grant attempts to provide a scientific justification for the theory of superiority of the white race.[12] The mere citation of this text utterly clarifies the racism present in Smith's world view.

In 1923, in his first State of the Union Address, Coolidge expressed a similar anti-immigrant perspective to Smith, stating that "American institutions rest

solely on good citizenship. They were created by people who had a background of self-government. New arrivals should be limited to our capacity to absorb them into the ranks of good citizenship. America must be kept American. For this purpose, it is necessary to continue a policy of restricted immigration."[13] The only acceptable path for an immigrant in Coolidge's eyes is to become an American citizen. He calls for restricted immigration, yet, does not specify a uniform restriction amongst all countries; his proposal that these restrictions be targeted against specific nations was done so the name of intolerance, not in effort to ensure the security of the American people.

The world in the present moment may seem more enlightened than that of the 1920s, but in the vain of racial boundaries, there is little advancement. In an interview with CNN's Jake Tapper, then-candidate Donald Trump repeatedly categorized people of Islamic faith as "other," separating them from the rest of the world, and the United States. Although at the time of this interview, fifty eight percent of Americans disapproved of the idea of a Muslim ban, Trump insisted, "Where does this hatred come from? ... I wanna [sic] know where it's coming from… And it's from a group of people, it's from a specific group of people. Why is there such total hatred? We have to know the answer, or we're never going to have a safe country."[14] This is one of many occasions throughout Tapper's interview that Trump refers to Muslims as a "specific group of people." He ignores the acts of terrorism committed by Americans, particularly white men, such as the myriad shootings throughout the United States in the past two decades. Trump claimed that the reason to ban all Muslim immigration and travel to the United States is to discover why radical Islamic terror occurs, yet disregards the fact that ninety five percent of Muslims reject radicalism.[15]

Steve Bannon took Trump's initiative of segregating Muslims one step further by framing himself as a foil to them. Throughout his speech, Bannon referred to himself and white Christian Americans as "Judeo-Christians." When discussing the state of Islam and Muslim immigrants to the United States, Bannon exclaimed, "I believe the world, and particularly the Judeo-Christian west, is in a crisis… And it is a crisis both of capitalism but really of the underpinnings of the Judeo-Christian west and our beliefs."[16] The "crisis" of Muslim influence in predominantly Christian nations, Bannon worries, will negatively influence the beliefs and practices of Christians.

In their political speech, Steve Bannon, Jeff Sessions, Donald Trump, Calvin Coolidge, and Ellison DuRant Smith employ the strategies of sexism, nostalgia, and the desire for racial or religious boundaries in society and culture. The rhetoric that they engage in is an attempt to justify discrimination against different races and religions in the United States. Coolidge's administration pushed the 1924 Immigration Act through Congress—a document that prohibited different races from immigrating to America, especially Italians. Senator Ellison DuRant Smith aided in his

effort and gave a speech on the floor of Congress advocating for racial purity and the passing of the bill. These themes are present in modern political rhetoric surrounding Donald Trump's Executive Order 13769, also known as the "Muslim ban." This order bans travel to the United States from seven majority-Muslim nations: Iraq, Iran, Syria, Sudan, Yemen, Somalia, and Libya, with the false justification of protecting the American people. Besides President Trump, former White House Chief of Staff Steve Bannon and former Attorney General Jeff Sessions perpetuate the myths of violence of the Islamic faith and spread Islamophobia throughout the nation. The ethnic and religious groups that the American people deem acceptable shift with time, but the speech that communicates hate does not.

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NO DOG IN THIS FIGHT:

American Non-Interventionist Foreign Policy and the Bosnian Genocide

Emily Chu

When recalling the horrors of rape and torture witnessed at Serbian concentration camps, Selma Hecimovic, a Bosnian Muslim pleaded, "I really don't know what else has to happen here, what further suffering the Muslims have to undergo… to make the so-called world react."[1] Despite numerous calls for action such as Selma's, the response to the Bosnian genocide was one plagued by American inaction. The United States, a newly rendered unipolar power following the end of the Cold War, sought to redefine its foreign policy after a series of extremely unpopular military interventions, most notably the Vietnam War. Beginning with the H.W. Bush administration, U.S. foreign policy came to favour non-intervention in any circumstance unless it was "vital" to U.S. national interests.[2] The Balkans—a region that lacked geostrategic importance—was not considered to meet this criteria, a stance that strengthened once American involvement in Somalia severely damaged the reputation of interventionist foreign policy. In order to justify a policy of non-intervention amidst growing violence, the Bush and later, Clinton presidential administrations framed the genocide as a civil war, an inevitable consequence of historic ethnic tensions in the region.[3] Furthermore, they attributed pessimism to the prospect of intervention by framing the conflict using the Vietnam War, further validating their non-involvement. Thus, despite loud international and domestic calls for intervention, many from within the U.S. government itself, the prevailing norm of non-intervention in the White House,

reinforced by noncommittal rhetoric and an international community that depended on U.S. military support, prevented timely and decisive action to end the killing in the Bosnian genocide—inaction that resulted in the death and displacement of thousands of Bosnian Muslims.

Following the Cold War, United States foreign policy was divided. In one camp were ideologues who believed that the U.S. should protect American values wherever they were threatened, and in the other were those who believed the domestic activities of foreign states were not America's concern. The leading figures in the Bush administration, such as Secretary of State James Baker, National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft, and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Colin Powell, were all entrenched in the latter camp.[4] Importantly, Colin Powell adhered to strict criteria that compelled armed intervention only in cases where "vital" national security interests were threatened, U.S. victory was guaranteed through an attainable objective, there was a plausible exit strategy, and the plan enjoyed general domestic and international support.[5] Therefore, Powell acted as a "norm entrepreneur" for U.S. foreign policy, as the "Powell Doctrine" shaped the government's preference for non-intervention.[6]

In contrast with the high degree of national attention paid to the oil-abundant Kuwait during the Gulf War, Bush believed Bosnia held "little material significance" to American geostrategy.[7] This reduced strategic value contributed to American hesitation to intervene in the conflict, with Bush seeking to avoid risking the lives of American troops for seemingly little material gain.[8] Further, the conclusion of the Cold War effectively ended any potential strategic importance the Balkans may have posed to the U.S. in their efforts to combat the spread of communism, further reducing the regions value.[9] Scowcroft argued that Bosnia was only of national interest concern "if the war broke out into Kosovo, risking the involvement of our allies in the wider war," reflecting the prominent belief that America would not transgress borders to resolve internal disputes—only in transnational conflicts demanded attention from the international community.[10] He continued by saying, "If [the fighting] stayed contained in Bosnia, it might have been horrible, but it did not affect us."[11] Additionally, Baker famously remarked that the United States had "no dog in this fight," suggesting that the U.S. had no interests—humanitarian or tactical—in the region whatsoever.[12] The Bush administration made it clear that confined conflict within a small, resource-scarce country was not of national concern. Therefore, the final months of the Bush administration saw little progress on Bosnia, but when Bush was defeated in the 1992 presidential election by then-Governor Bill Clinton, dissenters saw the incoming Democratic administration as a fresh start that would enable definitive action in Bosnia.

In 1992, presidential candidate Bill Clinton seemed eager to condemn Bush for his idleness regarding Bosnia. Prior to taking office, he repeatedly expressed

support for military intervention if necessary.[13] Following Clinton's inauguration, Secretary of State Warren Christopher reiterated that the U.S. "cannot afford to ignore" the situation in Bosnia, giving hope to the many that the inaction of the previous administration disillusioned.[14] However, the sentiment of this statement was not reflected in Clinton's presidency, with the president frequently resisting calls for intervention to avoid committing to an incredibly expensive—both financially and politically—mission. The norm of non-intervention remained a potent force in American foreign policy under Clinton, perhaps even more prominent than during his predecessor's tenure. At its core, Clinton's foreign policy was multilateralist, a philosophy aptly articulated by Madeleine Albright, Clinton's first United States Ambassador to the United Nations (UN), in which she stressed that the U.S. "will not act unilaterally when a multilateral presence is clearly needed and available."[15] While this suggested that Clinton had a strong faith in the post-World War II international institutions such as the UN and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), this approach also required a delay in American action to form a consensus with European allies, who often differed in policy preferences regarding Bosnia. In particular, the "Lift-and-Strike" plan to arm Bosnian Muslims and bomb the Serbs, which would have marked a substantial step towards punishing the Serbian aggressors, was rejected by various European allies who feared a retaliation against peacekeepers.[16]

Regardless, Clinton also faced domestic opponents, most notably General—and potential Republican presidential candidate—Colin Powell, and also Warren Christopher, who forced him to rescind his calls for immediate intervention.[17] Powell, a military aide in the Reagan and Bush administrations, who continued to serve as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff until September of 1993 despite Bush's defeat, persistently advocated against any form of military engagement including air strikes, acting as the self-proclaimed "voice of caution."[18] He led the Pentagon's campaign against Clinton's demands for intervention, stating that America had grown "comfortable" with limited war.[19] It was difficult for Clinton—who lacked military experience and was often castigated as a "draft-dodger"—to challenge Powell, a decorated Vietnam veteran, on military matters.[20] Additionally, Secretary of State Christopher dismissed Bosnia as irrelevant to American interests as the U.S. was not personally responsible for the outbreak of war.[21] When Clinton proposed the "Lift-and Strike" policy to deter Serbian aggression, Christopher gave little effort to convince European allies to endorse the policy, indefinitely thwarting any military intervention.[22] Christopher embodied a reflexive non-interventionism, and tirelessly worked to dissuade Clinton from employing a military response. Undoubtedly, both the Clinton and Bush administrations were victims of "Vietnam Syndrome" and "Gulf War Syndrome," which reinforced strict non-involvement unless the full force of the military could be

used to win a guaranteed, popular, American victory—consequently, an approach later termed the "Powell doctrine."[23] As a result, neither president devised a plan to end the killing, as intervention was not considered to be a viable option. Thus, the early 1990s saw America embrace a foreign policy of non-intervention that was so pervasive that not even genocide could compel military intervention, however, America faced increasing pressure to justify this policy as Serb aggression against the Bosnians attracted further international attention.

As Bosnia escalated, America's non-interventionist stance faced increased opposition domestically. Domestic dissent reached its peak during the early months of Clinton's presidency, with Senators Joe Biden and Bob Dole introducing bipartisan legislation to break the arms embargo and send $50 million worth of weapons to Bosnian Muslims for self-defense to relieve peacekeepers whose presence was being used by the government as "an excuse for inaction."[24] Biden in particular was very passionate about the issue, criticizing the Clinton administration in a 1993 Report to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, attacking the persistence of the government to seek diplomatic solutions despite the escalating violence, and the "misguided Pentagon premise" that the full-scale deployment of ground troops was the only military option available.[25] Despite their effort—and Dole's national prominence and power as the Republican Senate leader—Dole and Biden were repeatedly ignored by the White House.[26] In addition, this dissatisfaction was also reflected at the State Department, where a series of high-profile departures sent a message of displeasure with the strategy. Among the resigned was Marshall Freeman Harris, who stated that his desire to leave resulted from anger with an American government that "accepts the forceful dismemberment of a European state and that will not act against a genocide."[27] Harris specifically stated that Secretary of State Christopher neglected to recognize the conflict as a genocide because the U.S. would face immense pressure as the world's leading power to end the aggression, but refused to consider intervention an option.[28]

However, these criticisms became easier to dismiss in light of the failure of the U.S. intervention in Somalia, rendering non-intervention in Bosnia justifiable in the eyes of public. Although President Bush initiated American involvement in Somalia to deflect criticism of the U.S.' noninterventionist status, this action spurred further support for America's passive stance in global conflicts following the death of several American service members in October of 1993. This reinforced notions that the UN should remain an organizational body, rather than one concerned with global policing that risked American lives.[24] Following this incident, nearly 66% of Americans wanted to protect peacekeepers, only 29% believed the U.S had a moral obligation to protect Bosnians, and even fewer (21%) supported sending U.S. ground troops to do so.[30] The catastrophe of intervention in Somalia weakened domestic calls for action in Bosnia, allowing the Clinton administration

to remain inactive in hopes of an independently secured Bosnian resolution.

Unfortunately, the conflict persisted, and the United States justified its inaction by framing the conflict as an analogue to the Vietnam War. First, the U.S. employed neutral rhetoric that diffused blame to make the classification of the Bosnian situation seem more ambiguous than it was in actuality. Rather than being declared a case of "international aggression by an outside power against an independent international recognized sovereign state," Bosnia was reduced to an "intractable civil war" built upon historical ethnic hatreds, an idea which was left unchallenged due to the general public's lack of familiarity with the region.[31] Rebranding the genocide as a civil war suggested that all sides involved were accountable for the atrocities committed, which weakened the "moral clarity" necessary for U.S. intervention.[32] Furthermore, American political leaders and journalists amplified this understanding of the conflict by portraying the Balkans as a violent and unstable region that festered nationalistic war.[33] The region was repeatedly characterized as a place of long-standing ethnic and religious violence, promoting the notion that violence was a commonplace feature of the area; as well as the ideas that intervention was therefore ineffective in creating a long-term solution and that ending the conflict was not America's responsibility. Additionally, newspapers reflected the political rhetoric that all sides in the conflict had perpetrated terrors and resolution-making was often dismissed due to the "ancient hatreds" between the combatants.[34] Categorizing the conflict as a civil war became simpler once the Bosnian Muslims retaliated. As a result of the Holocaust, the prevailing view of genocide victims was that they are "defenseless."[35] Muslim retribution made it feasible to project the equivalence of blame. In this way, the violence came to be known as "tragic" rather than a "mitigatable atrocity" with clearly defined victims and aggressors, and deferred the America's responsibility to intervene.[36] Lawrence Eagleburger, Secretary of State to President H.W. Bush, cogently articulated this sentiment and expressed hesitance towards American involvement in the conflict, stating that "until the Bosnians, Serbs, and Croats decide to stop killing each other, there is nothing the outside world can do about it."[37] This notion persisted through the 1990s, with Clinton himself echoing this philosophy when he stated, "… until these folks get tired of killing each other, bad things will continue to happen."[38] This rhetoric deliberately constructed the Balkan identity as a primitive one,[39] and in doing so, Clinton sought to convince the public that the government could not forcefully impose the ideals of self-determination and the rule of law onto the Balkan people.[40] Moreover, constructing a savage Balkan identity implied that they could be civilized through peaceful resolution, a notion that helped the U.S. further justify their preference for diplomacy.[41] Although this categorization may be justifiable, if it was difficult to prove that the Serbians' chief goal was indeed mass killing, this

classification is disengaged from statements made by former Serbian political leaders which clearly articulate genocidal intent. Radovan Karadžić—former President of Republika Srpska and a convicted war criminal—stated "there will be a war until their obliteration," referring to the need to make Muslims "disappear" from Bosnian territory in order to create a "Greater Serbia."[42] Evidentially, is not a lack of evidence that prevented the U.S. from invoking the Genocide Convention and taking action, but their strict adherence to a policy of non-intervention, which was reinforced by framing the conflict in Bosnia as a civil war, rather than a genocide. Ultimately, placing blame on all sides of the conflict by exploiting moral ambiguities undermined the prospects of U.S. intervention.[43] This inaction left Serb aggressors unpunished and allowed the killing to continue unabated for some time, a decision that intensified scrutiny as media attention increased.

America faced increased pressure to intervene once comparisons to World War II and the Holocaust began to emerge, but again, the government employed a Vietnam comparison counter-narrative to downplay the moral utility of intervention. Perhaps the greatest impact of the media was the August 1992 release of photos documenting Serbian concentration camps, images reminiscent of the Holocaust; following their release, the percentage of Americans supporting air strikes rose by eight percent. It quickly became clear that the parallels between the events in Bosnia, and the well-known Nazi concentration camps were too problematic to ignore, and a narrative of comparison provided political ammunition to dissenters, who deemed the current American response to this "new" Holocaust as weak as those prior to World War II.[44] Bush was forced to respond, though he employed sufficient rhetorical ambiguity to ensure his position on intervention remained unclear. He described how "the shocking brutality of genocide in World War II, in those concentration camps, are burning memories for all of us, and that can't happen again."[45] However, to prevent this from happening he merely proposed American "access to any and all detention camps," demonstrating his narrow focus on the camps, and not the genocide as a whole.[46] Here it is critical to note that while the media drew greater attention to the Bosnian conflict, it only convinced sympathy as a result from the American public regarding the concentration camps, and not the other genocidal acts which occurred in the months prior. Media interest during this brutal revelation eclipsed coverage of the Srebrenica massacre, demonstrating that "the manner in which people are being killed is more important than how many are affected."[47]

In order to maintain a justifiable stance on non-intervention amidst this devastating comparison, the U.S. created a counter narrative that drew heavily upon the overwhelmingly negative American experiences in Vietnam.[48] Evoking language of uncertainty, the Balkans were described as a "confusing and dangerous" region.[49] The Serbian terrain was mountainous, which suggested tactics

reminiscent of the guerilla warfare that increased uncomfortable flashbacks to Vietnam.[50] An American response to Bosnia continued to be justified as an aversion to engaging in a "Vietnam-like quagmire."[51] Although as a presidential candidate Clinton criticized Bush for remaining "silent and paralyzed" in the face of this new Holocaust, he later stated that the Holocaust was "on a whole different level" than Bosnia, attempting to dissociate the two atrocities from one another.[52] Clinton was also haunted by the Vietnam comparisons; his pollster and political advisor Dick Morris once justified non-intervention to him by saying, "You don't want to be Lyndon Johnson."[53] Once again, the U.S. successfully reframed norms around Bosnia by linking it one of the most unpopular wars in American history. By emphasizing the commonalities between the two conflicts, the U.S. government was able to portray the potential Bosnian campaign as lengthy, arduous, and seemingly fruitless. Although this ignored the compulsion to stop genocide under international law, it perpetuated the idea that military intervention would be extremely costly, a potential failure, and therefore undesirable.

Although the United States managed to suppress opposition and avoid intervention for many years, the uncertain future of American global leadership weakened the hold of non-intervention and forced the U.S. to intervene. In November of 1995, Clinton wrote a letter to Congress asking them to endorse the deployment of peacekeepers to uphold the upcoming Dayton Peace Deal, writing "peace in Bosnia serves America's values and interests," and that America "must do everything we can to end the war in Bosnia now."[54] Had the U.S. delayed action further, they would have severely undermined their future in European leadership who were pressing for intervention, therefore the secural of peace came to the forefront of American national interests.[55] However, by this point, thousands of Bosnians had already been killed, and it was clear this was not a proactive decision to save the persecuted, but a reactive move to preserve the United States' international reputation.

The norm of non-intervention was so firmly entrenched within American foreign policy that intervention was never properly considered to be an appropriate strategic response to the Bosnian genocide. Instead, both the Bush and Clinton administrations actively reframed the norms surrounding the conflict to convince the American public and the international community that intervention was not possible and would prove incredibly costly to the nation. America remained staunchly committed to non-intervention, and aside from a few notable dissenters, rarely questioned its value. Evidently, the American experience in Bosnia demonstrates that the violation of human rights alone does not sufficiently warrant military intervention unless the U.S. has clearly-defined national interests in the region. Hence, the primacy of state interests eclipsed the protection of human rights in Bosnia, a tension which continued to plague American foreign policy and their interventionist struggles throughout the rest of the 1990s.

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