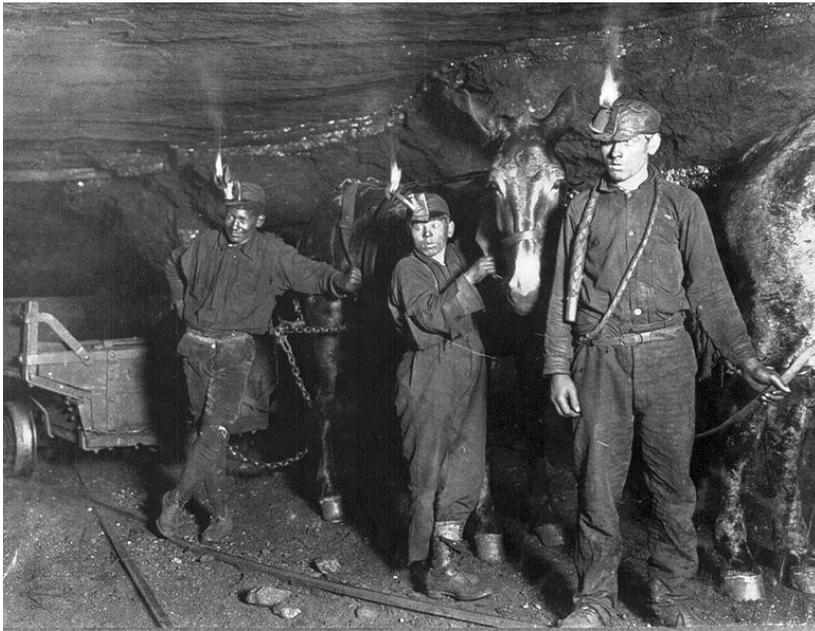


# The Earlham Historical Journal

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## **The Earlham Historical Journal**

Established in 2008, we are an interdisciplinary journal that aims to publish works of outstanding research that employs a historical slant in any academic field.

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### **Cover Image**

Hine, Lewis Wikes. *Child coal miners - drivers and mules, Gary, W. Va., mine*. September, 1908. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Records of the National Child Labor Committee. November 13, 2016. <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/nlc.01052>

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This issue of the Earlham Historical Journal focuses on Earlham students' research on the interactions of self-interest and prejudice in different historical contexts. It includes an analysis of urban development, xenophobia in the car market, attempted Pan-Africanism, and labor organizing in American mines.

We begin the journal in California, with Corinne Lunden's "Hegemonic Urban Planning: Contested Space and Interests in Mid-Century East LA." Lunden presents a post-modern analysis of the intersection of race and class in urban development in Los Angeles. She argues that the modernist approach of city officials was based in racial fears of Mexican-Americans, leading to unjust displacement of their communities.

The journal continues with Tyler Tolman's "The Toyota Accelerator Crisis: A Shattered Asian Miracle," an exploration of the influence of xenophobia in the American car market. Tolman argues that the American media and governmental actions in the 2009 Toyota accelerator crisis was a result of their prejudiced and fearful view of Asian competition.

In "Pan-African ideals and the Organization of African Unity's intervention in the 1967-1970 Nigerian Civil War," Aderonke Abodunrin analyzes the failed attempt at Pan-Africanism in the Organization of African Unity's response to the 1967-1970 Nigerian Civil War. She argues that the member nations' emphasis on preserving complete autonomy dismantled the potential benefits of a unified Pan-African response.

The journal concludes with Brandon DiGregorio's "Company-Owned Americans?: Militant Unionism and the Merging of Corporation and State in Southern West Virginia 1900-1925." DiGregorio investigates the social conditions of miners as a motivating factor in labor action in early 20<sup>th</sup> century West Virginia. He argues that, with the support of local government, coal companies took paternalistic control of every aspect of the miners' lives, causing them to organize and pursue more equitable conditions resembling socialist goals.

This issue of the Earlham Historical Journal aims to bring greater understanding to the manifestations of self-interest and prejudice in various historical contexts. While each paper investigates a different region and time, they all contribute to a diverse academic discourse. Lunden emphasizes race in legal displacement of communities. Tolman discusses the role of racial stereotypes in the public sector.

Abodunrin explores the impacts of self-interest in international coalitions.  
DiGregorio examines the role of power structures in mining communities.

This issue of the Earlham Historical Journal represents the search for truth that is at the core of research amongst students at Earlham College. It is our hope that these papers promote further discussion and exploration of these and related topics.

On behalf of the editorial board,

Jacob Noble and Sonia Norton

Anyone interested in submitting articles for the  
Spring issue should contact Sonia Norton at  
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# Hegemonic Urban Planning: Contested Space and Interests in Mid-Century East LA

BY CORINNE LUNDEN

The culture and community of the Los Angeles Basin, which for thousands of years had evolved as a network of indigenous tribes, was deeply altered in 1781 when colonized by Spanish settlers. What then became the Pueblo de Los Angeles was transformed yet again almost a century later by the invasion of American troops along with subsequent waves of immigration. These continuous trends of displacement have deeply impacted the ongoing formulation of Chicano identity in barrios east of the Los Angeles River. Urban redevelopment and revitalization, as well as resistance against the negative results of these forces, have played such a significant role in localized Mexican-American community action and cohesion that they have become prominent features of modern Chicano cultural identity in East LA. In this paper I take a postmodern approach to conceptualizing the modernist projects of displacement in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century; I investigate the historical political motivation for, and social implications of, redevelopment projects affecting these Mexican communities taking place from the 1930s to the 1970s. This paper highlights a shift in relations between the downtown urban political and social elite and Mexican-American communities throughout the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, motivated by modernist imaginaries of the city as well as recognition and fear of Chicano potential—potential which has conceivably been impossible to actualize within the given economic political order.

A more comprehensive version of this project would present a historiography of planning, social thought, Chicano studies, housing policy, community activism in LA, and a deeper investigation into the historical representations of LA's past. For the intentions of this argument, however, this paper will primarily emphasize discourses engaged with the history of Mexican-Americans in Los Angeles and therefore a history on displacement; on community, cultural, and racial identity; on forms of theorizing resistance in East LA; and on the theoretical grounds influencing all these ongoing dialogues. My project aims to question why there seems to be no space, either metaphorically or physically, for achieving more than meager advancements towards overturning the violence of “internal colonialism.” I attempt to synthesize these currents in the writing of history to articulate how forms of resistance sustained by an increasingly sophisticated race consciousness have been effective but insufficient against the overpowering doctrines of the political-economic environment. I investigate three cases of displacement and subsequent reimagining

of community spaces, and conclude with an investigation of an academic project conducted at UCLA undertaken at a turning point in modernism.

To begin this investigation I hope to establish a foundation in an epistemological framework regarding the politics of space and identity. Many urban and cultural studies practitioners analyzing the dynamic landscapes of Mexican-American communities draw from the theoretical foundations put forth by theorists such as Michel de Certeau in *The Practice of Everyday Life* and Henri Lefebvre's conceptions of spatial practices.<sup>1</sup> The assertion that geographies are saturated with politics and ideology informs the basis for the work of scholars like Raul Villa, Edward Soja, and Rodolfo Acuña. Soja writes at length about the changing role of capitalism in the experience of cities and the struggle for control over the social production of space. Using Lefebvre's contributions to critical social theory, specifically his understanding of trialectics, Soja asserts the role of place in social praxis and challenges the compartmentalized nature of objective space and conceived space. In his presentation of Thirdspace, the imagined and material worlds merge, where space can be at once concrete and subjectively constructed.<sup>2</sup>

Soja applauds Lefebvre and his avant-garde peers for discerning the role of space and geography in social production of habitat; Villa argues that this same perception is equally prevalent in the work of Chicano writers and artists in the Southwest. Chicano residents' community knowledge and critical consciousness, individually and collectively, is read as an equally insightful counterpart to scholars of postmodern geography. Villa asserts that Chicano art, literature, and cultural practice in general are not just tools to be analyzed but mechanisms of analysis themselves.<sup>3</sup>

Raul Villa's work draws upon critical theory from scholars like David Harvey, whose 1989 work *Conditions of Postmodernity* outlines how "modernism has been identified with the belief in linear progress, absolute truths, the rational planning of ideal social orders, and the standardization of knowledge and production. Post-modernism, by way of contrast, privileges 'heterogeneity and difference as liberative forces in the redefinition of cultural discourse.'"<sup>4</sup> The emergence of Chicano Studies and the legitimacy it is recognized to hold can be read in accordance with the "pluralistic stance of postmodernism" that "all groups have a right to speak for themselves, in their own voice, and have that voice accepted as authentic and

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<sup>1</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *The Production Of Space* (Oxford, OX, UK: Blackwell, 1991).

<sup>2</sup> Edward W Soja, *Thirdspace* (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1996).

<sup>3</sup> Raúl Villa, *Barrio-Logos: Space and Place in Urban Chicano Literature and Culture* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000).

<sup>4</sup> David Harvey, *The Condition Of Postmodernity* (Oxford, England: Blackwell, 1990), 9.

legitimate.”<sup>5</sup> The centrality of voice and agency in the field of Chicano Studies emerges not only in more contemporary examples of Mexican-American activism, but also as a deeply present concern in the discourse surrounding the roots of Mexican presence in the Southwest.

Contributing his own voice and perspective to the sphere of Chicano Studies, the historian Rodolfo Acuña provides a narrative of Mexican-American history and identity beginning with Anglo conquest of the Southwest. He contends that the relationship of the incoming settlers with Californios was one of colonization, and that this colonial relationship has continued in some form to this day. The denial of this imperialism, he argues, signifies the effectiveness of the myth of Manifest Destiny. Unlike Villa, Acuña at times characterizes Mexican Americans as politically powerless. However, he presents the ways in which communities struggled to defend themselves against the onslaught of development, and certainly does not regard them as passive actors. His work contributes an extensive depth to this history, beginning with the aftermath of the Mexican-American War. Frequently he narrows in on dislocation as a leading mode of abuse against East Los Angeles barrios, occurring in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century as well as in the postwar city. To Acuña, this period in the 1950s and 1960s was an intentional coordinated attack through use of the media, law, and landscape.<sup>6</sup>

Ernesto Galarza has expressed consideration of the timing of this assault, and its correlation with a strengthening collective demand for cultural independence. He suggests that these disruptions were the response of the establishment to the growing political potential of Chicanos in East Los Angeles.<sup>7</sup> I would interject that these two trends have rather been mutually reinforcing: flourishing potential certainly was a threat to the control of dominant powers, but cultural cohesion also came into being in response to the increasing likelihood of dislocation and eradication.

Similarly, Norman Klein investigates the realities behind blight removal and the invisible damage it causes. His discussion of how social imaginaries become public policy will be applied later on to a deeper investigation into the underpinnings of urban planning methods.<sup>8</sup> His work attempts to demystify the ways in which the

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

<sup>6</sup> Rodolfo Acuña, *Occupied America* (San Francisco: Canfield Press, 1972).

<sup>7</sup> Ernesto Galarza, Herman E Gallegos, and Julian Samora. 1969. *Mexican-Americans In The Southwest*. (Santa Barbara: McNally and Loftin).

<sup>8</sup> Norman M Klein, *The History Of Forgetting: Los Angeles and the Erasure of Memory*, (London: Verso, 1998).

growing instability of white hegemony has contributed to the intensity of reactions in urban planning, whereas Acuña considers changes in planning as a tool of postwar growth machinery, an aspect of emerging neoliberal city building. Both challenge the dialogue to search for a deeper underpinning directing the progression of urban planning.

A gaping hole in the historiography presented thus far is an examination into the variety present within Chicano identities, particularly applying a lens of gender in experiencing urban space. Dolores Hayden brings this to light through exposing the shaky divisions between public and private life, and the limited access to space of groups based on race, class, and gender. She argues that “the body, the home, and the street have all been arenas of conflict” for women.<sup>9</sup> The same applies in intricate ways for other victimized classes, and would doubly apply to their complexity of experience for Latina community organizers. Like Klein, Hayden engages with conceptions of social memory. Her work makes the assertion that public history can be utilized as an emancipatory practice.

On the other hand, Klein, writing a few years later, presents a thesis that seems to push against this vision, or at least investigates the power of public history and its potential for malice in addition to preservation. He discusses the idea of “collective forgetting” and presents memory as being largely informed by myth, which can in turn assist to eradicate the past.<sup>10</sup> This is a decidedly postmodern argument. Returning to Harvey’s claims regarding the importance of heterogeneity in postmodern discourse, we see how historians and social theorists alike begin to reject totalizing discourses and metanarratives. Utilizing this approach, Klein investigates how neighborhoods that were predominantly Mexican were reimagined as criminal, unfixed, and disposable, and in turn were more efficiently destroyed.

Hayden also examines the ways in which those able to assert themselves as the dominant power altered physical community spaces over time. Drawing on histories of mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Californio life previous to the Anglicization of the region, particularly from scholars such as Richard Griswold del Castillo who study Los Angeles barrios during the first decades following the Mexican-American War,<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Dolores Hayden, *The Power Of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History*, (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1995), 22.

<sup>10</sup> Norman M Klein, *The History Of Forgetting: Los Angeles and the Erasure of Memory*, (London: Verso, 1998).

<sup>11</sup> Richard Griswold del Castillo, *The Los Angeles Barrio, 1850-1890* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979).

Hayden argues that Californio families and communities lived in communal ways that were disrupted but not eliminated by conquest. The effects of this limitation of communal space continue to this day, making the Western theoretical division of private and public spheres a perplexing duality for Chicano communities. These matters regarding the lived realities of day-to-day life in East Los Angeles Mexican American communities will be valuable for an exploration of localized community defense mechanisms.

Additionally, comprehending the dynamics of a collective struggle for neighborhood preservation must be informed by an examination of the groundwork of our social infrastructure, namely the legal system, in order to see what has continued to affect and shape our political structures and the lived realities of Americans. The United States' first comprehensive housing act, passed in 1949, created low-rent public housing for poor and low-income families as well as financial assistance for urban renewal projects, which largely included the aspect of slum clearance. Alexander von Hoffman exposes the contradictions apparent in this act and its complicated effect on low-income families, and criticizes its reliance on simplistic solutions. In practice, public housing developments as well as de-slumming efforts ended up fostering the conditions they were intended to reverse.<sup>12</sup>

Slum clearance as it played out ended up having enormous political allure. The narrative that America's poor city dwellers were living in horrible conditions of corruption and squalor elicited both sympathy and fear, fueling the support for removal of seemingly blighted neighborhoods. According to Gail Radford, early 20<sup>th</sup> century housing laws created a two-tiered system for federal policy.<sup>13</sup> The middle class was given programs that assisted with mortgages and private industry development of housing, while the "poor people's program" of public housing provided housing directly through the government.<sup>14</sup> A subsection of planners opposed this division, suspecting correctly that public housing would never have a broad base of support. In the 1940s, as the white middle and upper classes migrated to the burgeoning suburbs, economic interests and city officials became alarmed about the condition of urban blight across the country, considering it a threat to the economic endurance of the city as a whole.

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<sup>12</sup> Alexander von Hoffman, "A Study in Contradictions" (2000).

<sup>13</sup> Gail Radford, "Modern Housing for America: Policy Struggles in the New Era," (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

<sup>14</sup> Alexander von Hoffman, "A Study in Contradictions" (2000), 303.

As stated by Richard Freeman, by the 1960s, policies regarding the creation of public housing were replaced with a focus on removing the poor, primarily through President Lyndon Johnson's "Model Cities" program. Under this program, minorities were displaced from their communities, giving developers the license to establish more expensive residences. This dispersal of slum dwellers only served to eliminate social networks and stability, in addition to merely creating new blighted areas where families in poverty would relocate.<sup>15</sup>

Confronting this powerful tide in history stood community structures struggling for preservation and self-determination. Studying the endeavors and dynamics of these groups reveals a number of counterhegemonic lessons that had emerged during noteworthy moments of oppressive spatial assaults. It also raises matters of consideration regarding what freedom may indeed be possible in the given political-economic environment. To conceptualize the historical nuance of these assaults it is vital to look towards the actions and motivations of the dominant elite powers both during, prior to, and following the events in question.

Through investigations into a number of historical occurrences in which the interests of the downtown elite emerge, the most clear and consistent motivation has been capital. In the 1930s, when community organizational structures were less sophisticated or cultivated than they would become by the '50s and '60s, the elites valued the barrios of Los Angeles primarily for their ability to be commodified and consumed.<sup>16</sup> This becomes blatantly clear through an examination of a promotional video of Olvera Street in 1937, "A Street of Memory," directed by William M Pizor. For whose direct benefit this was made is undocumented; regardless, it was created to benefit the tourism industry and put the Mexican quarter on display.

Olvera Street is located west of the river, and is in the heart of the downtown. This area was the site of the city's economic and cultural development under Spanish colonial rule until Mexico's independence in 1821, and under Mexican rule before California was ceded to the United States in 1847. Due to the construction of the railroad and the city's massive growth in population by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, according to William Estrada, it became "a forgotten remnant of the city's Hispanic roots as Anglo-American cultural hegemony set in."<sup>17</sup> After decades of neglect and

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<sup>15</sup> Richard Freeman, "The 1949 Housing Act versus 'urban renewal'". EIR Volume 23, Number 50, December 13, 1996.

<sup>16</sup> Rodolfo Acuña, *A Community Under Siege*, 1984.

<sup>17</sup> William D Estrada, "Los Angeles' Old Plaza and Olvera Street: Imagined and Contested Space" *Western Folklore* 58 (2). Western States Folklore Society (1999), 119.

poverty, the street had in fact become a center for disenfranchised Los Angelinos, often serving as a meeting place for working-class movements, as many immigrants from the 1910s were influenced by radical politics in their countries from which they emigrated. Beginning in 1926, Christine Sterling, a white newcomer to Los Angeles, took it upon herself to restore the historic Avila Adobe, saving it not only from dilapidation but complete destruction from the proposed development of Union Station. Her project eventually expanded to the complete reconstruction and reimagination of the street, a romanticizing and commercializing undertaking.<sup>18</sup> Olvera Street is idealized by Sterling, as well as in this short film, as timeless “Old Mexico,” connected to a nobler, simpler past.

While this presentation is condescending, the street does indeed have a past that reaches back to the earliest days of Los Angeles as a settlement. However, the nature of that past is obscured in how the street life is displayed in the film, reflecting not the history of resistance, strikes, political action, and poverty, but happy, simple Mexicans. The voice of Wallace MacDonald, the narrator, describes the scene thusly: “Populated with people in Mexican and Spanish costumes, their shops adorned with gay awnings, Olvera street throbs with the spirit of the past.”<sup>19</sup> Towards the end of the promotional video he insists, “The courtesy of the past is maintained. Soft voices, soft footsteps, soft music, the busy world is forgotten. Around the corner they still live as they did yesterday.”<sup>20</sup> With a more complete understanding of the political agenda dictating Olvera Street’s existence, it is obvious that much has changed in the lives of the residents throughout the previous decades, and certainly transformed since Los Angeles’ founding around this area. Construction of a new, groomed historical narrative indicates the modernist need to impose rational order, and raises the question of *why* these community members and spaces of communal social life had to be mythologized.

The people of this community are not portrayed to exist for themselves, but primarily for the needs and interests of the visitors. Describing a scene of a man at a pottery stand, sitting along the street with a guitar, the film narrates: “Truly a street of memories. Soft speaking olive-skinned guides, languid in business. You buy or you don’t buy, what does it matter. Happiness is his when humming an old love

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> William M Pizer, *A Street of Memory*. (1937). Los Angeles California. Accessed through The Open Video Project, Digitized 2001.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

song, and he is lost without the inevitable guitar.”<sup>21</sup> Not only do these characters exist for the amusement of the visitors, but they are ostensibly happy to do so. Estrada articulates how this demonstrates “a deep political symbolism and a clear expression of cultural hegemony”, which emerges when considering “the dialectical relationship between who is doing the ‘preserving’ and what is being ‘preserved.’”<sup>22</sup> The act of violence at play here is not singularly the displacement that accompanied Olvera Street’s commercialization, but additionally its transformation into a defanged tourist site in order to assert and stabilize the power of elite civic interests.

The narration directly or indirectly commodifies or sexualizes Mexican women’s bodies a number of times in the 8 minute 43 second video. When describing the delicious food available at La Casita, the camera moves down from the restaurant’s hand painted sign to show a young woman preparing food. As the shot fixates on the woman, MacDonald exclaims that the enchiladas and tamales are “served hot in more ways than one” with a tone that one might imagine would accompany a wink.<sup>23</sup> The suggestive comment about her beauty serves to make the young woman herself a commodity available to be consumed, her beauty another confection to be feasted on by outsiders, who are present on the street to peer into the lives of these “Others” and collect trinkets to flaunt their cultural depth. Later the narrator remarks, “Beauty in every booth, if not in the article, surely in the attendant.”<sup>24</sup> As a young woman working at the market greets her customers goodbye, she turns her body away from the camera as the narrator sighs an “mm-hm!” of approval. The remark is not kind nor complimentary, but illustrates the entitled masculine lens that places the unnamed woman, along with the entirety of the street, as existing for the pleasure of the tourists both male and female. Foucault’s assertion that the body is the site at which repression is ultimately registered is most apparent in the simplification and sexualization of Mexican women in this context.<sup>25</sup>

The film additionally serves to glorify and simplify the lives of Mexican-Americans as workers. Discussing the trend of buying cactuses as souvenirs, the narrator shares how “you may have the pottery that holds your cactus painted to individual design. No noisy machinery here to spoil the pleasure of a day’s work in

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> William D Estrada, “Los Angeles’ Old Plaza and Olvera Street: Imagined and Contested Space” *Western Folklore* 58 (2). Western States Folklore Society (1999), 118.

<sup>23</sup> William M Pizor, *A Street of Memory*. (1937).

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> David Harvey, *The Condition Of Postmodernity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 48.

creating attractive combinations. A never-ending procession of different designs.”<sup>26</sup> A man in a sombrero, smoking a cigarette is shown using a fine brush to pain the pottery. He sits on the ground, with his feet stretched out in front of him, one crossed over the other. The implication that machinery spoils an otherwise pleasurable task is one that portrays the community as living in the peaceful life of the past. The culture of this street is commodified to the extent that any claim to authenticity is lost; as stated by Harvey, “history becomes a contemporary creation, more costume drama and re-enactment than critical discourse.”<sup>27</sup> A historic building, la Golondrina, is shown in the film as having been painted with the label “The Quaint Mexican Café” in bold red capital letters, further providing the place with a Disneyesque feeling of illegitimacy.

The project that this film undertakes of connecting Olvera Street to a genuine Mexican-American history is a fascinating insight into what threads of history the dominant elite conceptualizes as important to Los Angeles Mexican identity. It exhibits for the viewers the adobe house of Commander Robert Field Stockton U.S.N., which was established as headquarters when America took possession of the town in 1847. The narration shares how “between 1927 and 1930, through the loyalty and civic pride of the descendants of the early settlers, romantic, colorful and picturesque glory of the past was restored.”<sup>28</sup> This segment raises the question of whose history deserves to be protected and preserved; it positions the defeat of Mexican rule as something to be celebrated by 20<sup>th</sup> century Mexican-Americans, divorcing them of their cultural lineage for the sake of their American nationality and their new depoliticized identity.

The tourism promotional film ends with the scene of a child sitting outside on a fountain, with the city hall building visible in the distance; it postures, “Who can say which is the envious one? The aged plaza that lifts its tired eyes to the modern admired city hall of Los Angeles, or the sun burned building that looks down on the peace and restfulness of this street of memory...” before fading to black.<sup>29</sup> Olvera Street’s reconstruction is a distinctly modernist project, apparent through its lack of historical continuity and imposition of social order.

Commercial interests of enterprises such as the *Los Angeles Times* exercised this force, as the Chandler fortune was used to launch Sterling’s undertaking. This was in

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<sup>26</sup> William M Pizor, *A Street of Memory*. (1937).

<sup>27</sup> David Harvey, *The Condition Of Postmodernity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 62.

<sup>28</sup> William M Pizor, *A Street of Memory*. (1937).

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

part to establish Union Station in a location that would better impact his own real estate, but was also conceivably a means of indirectly silencing free speech that had taken place at the plaza, as suggested by Estrada. The radical thought and action that had blossomed around the plaza was read as posing a significant threat to the established political and economic order. The reconstruction not only redirected the futures of the Mexican-Americans who were displaced, but manipulated their perceived pasts as well. Estrada does concede that although it clearly denies Mexican agency, Sterling's project may have served to ease anti-Mexican sentiments, complicating the dichotomy of persecution one might assume between her and the residents and workers of Olvera Street.

Starting before Sterling's recreation of Olvera Street, the majority of Mexican residents were being relocated either by force or choice from "Sonoratown" across the Los Angeles River. The barrios that were established mostly contained dilapidated and overcrowded housing, but mutualistas, or mutual aid societies, were prevalent in the communities as well as a growing number of newspapers, *The Belvedere Citizen* and *The Eastside Sun* being of particular significance. By the 1940s, there was a shift in *The Los Angeles Times'* coverage of Mexican Americans, from glorifying to increasingly negative. The press' portrayal of violence made the Mexican community more vulnerable to slum clearance.<sup>30</sup>

Despite these negative changes, this period showed increased Mexican American involvement in Democratic Party politics. However, postwar development and division of labor made it increasingly difficult for groups with little power or resources to reach government. The federal government had a policy following a growth philosophy, increasing their assistance to big business. A number of Mexican organizations formed which took an accommodationist approach, advocating working within the system. Issues of concern were on the rise—threats of evictions from public housing projects and displacement due to urban renewal was ever increasing. Nineteen-forty-nine saw the passage of the redevelopment act, as well as the election of Edward Roybal to the City Council, as the first Mexican-American City Council member. Roybal was a consistent advocate of his community, often singlehandedly going against the votes of his fellow councilmen. His contestations against urban transformations were incredibly significant: both in the fact that he was able to enact positive, albeit minor, changes, but also in that his presence represented the potential for Mexican political movements to gain traction. The events of what

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<sup>30</sup> Rodolfo Acuña, *A Community Under Siege*. 1984.

came to be known as the battle of Chavez Ravine solidified his standing as a genuine representative of the community.<sup>31</sup>

After the National Housing Act of 1949, Chavez Ravine, a working class Latino community, was targeted to be a site for public housing. After years of community pushback and organizing the government eventually acquired the land and the majority of homes were demolished by 1953. However, a number of families remained in the area; the Arechigas were the final family to be displaced, and had to be forcibly removed from their home the day it was bulldozed.<sup>32</sup> Studying the coverage of The *Los Angeles Times* on the Chavez Ravine controversy and the portrayal of the Arechiga family exposes the antagonism of the civic elite towards the Mexican community of Chavez Ravine, and the Mexican community on a city-wide scale.

The *Los Angeles Times* during this period was extremely conservative, and was widely regarded as the mouthpiece of the Republican Party. The paper regularly used its power to influence planning in ways that would profit its own class interests, as well as those of its allies in city government. It aggressively supported the election of conservative Norris Poulson for mayor in 1953; it was also considered by some to have playing a major role alongside him in sabotaging Chavez Ravine.<sup>33</sup> In the May 14, 1949 publication of the *Los Angeles Times*, two pieces were published outraged over emerging information regarding the Arechiga family, originally printed by the *Los Angeles Mirror News*.

The first article ran with the title, “Hold Property Worth \$75,000.” It claimed the family was “squatting on a real estate cushion of 11 homes... flabbergast[ing] both sides of the Chavez Ravine dispute.” It had received “nationwide sympathy” from supporters who “went publicly for them as poor, destitute people.” Its tone and wording make the family out to be scamming the city as well as the nation, for considering the offering of \$10,050 for its two parcels “insufficient.”<sup>34</sup> In actuality, a private appraiser had valued the property at \$17,500, and numerous members of their extended family occupied the homes described, a number of which were only being rented.<sup>35</sup> This misrepresentation and defamation speaks to the extent of the

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Thomas S Hines, "Housing, Baseball, and Creeping Socialism: “the Battle of Chavez Ravine, Los Angeles, 1949-1959”. *Journal of Urban History* 8 (2): (1982). 123-144

<sup>33</sup> Rodolfo Acuña, *A Community Under Siege*. 1984, 71.

<sup>34</sup> “Hold Property Worth \$75,000; 11 L.A. Homes Owned by Chavez Evictees: Income in Rents Revealed” *Los Angeles Times* (1923-Current File) - Los Angeles, Calif. May 14, 1959.

<sup>35</sup> Rodolfo Acuña, *A Community Under Siege*. 1984, 75.

interest the planners, politicians, and corporations had for clearing the land, and the lack of respect Harry Chandler and his paper held for the residents of Chavez Ravine.

The same day's issue included the piece "Mayor Bitterly Flays 'Rigged' Chavez Pleas," comprised of a transcript of Mayor Poulson's statement to newspaper, television, radio and newsreel representatives. He claimed that this emerging information "exposed the hypocrisy of this whole rigged demonstration."<sup>36</sup> He criticizes other councilmen for not upholding the laws they swore themselves to when they took office; he alludes to Councilman Roybal, not by name, accusing him of seeking limelight. He remarks that "the television actors who jumped to their defense competed with one or two of our City Councilmen for recognition as the greatest clowns of the year."<sup>37</sup> This need to attack Roybal for supporting the Committee to Save Chavez Ravine demonstrates his desperation to ensure that the public would not sympathize with the organizers.

He asserted that the family received due process, but instead flouted the law and "themselves chose to be evicted by force," leaving no alternative. Prompting the question being asked by readers and the LA public as a whole, Poulson poses the question, "Is the Arechiga family a destitute victim of the government? Not at all. The Arechiga family is a victim of its own eagerness to extract from the taxpayers more than it was granted by valid court decisions. The family used its own children as pawns to gain sympathy. It was obviously, plainly, publicly, shamelessly, flouting the law."<sup>38</sup> He subtly incites racial prejudices when arguing that "The Arechiga case is a good example of mob hysteria and how it can be inflamed by some people in prominent places. We have no room in America for mob action. We need calmness, reason and a respect for our society and laws."<sup>39</sup> The use of the image of a mob elicits a racially charged response, pushing the white audience to mistrust the intentions of the Chavez Ravine community. Racism is employed to leverage dominance over the situation, paralleling Harvey's argument that "ideological and political hegemony in society depends on an ability to control the material context of personal and social experience."<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> "Mayor Bitterly Flays 'Rigged' Chavez Pleas" *Los Angeles Times* (1923-Current File) Los Angeles, Calif. May 14, 1959.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> David Harvey, *The Condition Of Postmodernity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 226.

Through the voice of the *Los Angeles Times*, the elite interests attempted to launch a smear campaign against the Arechigas, and ultimately succeeded in doing so. Their motivation for this was certainly not due to a prioritization of public housing as a necessity for the city; Poulson orchestrated a complex deal with the Dodgers' owner, Walter O'Malley, cancelling the construction of the housing units and appropriating the land for the private, commercial use of constructing a baseball stadium.<sup>41</sup> It was integral that the public not sympathize with the plight of the Arechigas and the other community organizers of the campaign to save Chavez Ravine, in order for the civic powers to continue their sweeping assault against the Eastside residents, not only in this particular incident but the ongoing waves of displacement taking place.

Not all Angelinos were swayed by the media presentation put forth. Mexican-Americans and other Los Angeles communities defended alternative perspectives on the Chavez Ravine case. Joseph Eli Kovner, publisher of the *Eastside Sun*, was consistently an outspoken advocate for the community, condemning the actions of the city regarding Chavez Ravine in addition to numerous instances of land clearance. Across the river, the liberal political magazine *Frontier* was published in Westwood, Northeast Central LA. Positioning itself as "the Voice of the New West," in June of 1957 it covered the history of Chavez Ravine, "the story of a helpless minority whose rights were indifferently brushed aside by a city administration responding to the real estate lobby."<sup>42</sup> The *Frontier* special report additionally gives insight into the dirty politics of the *Los Angeles Times*. As Poulson was elected during the decade long "battle," the incumbent Mayor Bowron, insisted on "fair treatment for the lobbyless people of Chavez Ravine, [bringing] down upon his head the imperial wrath of the *Los Angeles Times*... In the last three weeks of the election the *Times* gave Poulson 1,019 inches of space to only 219 inches for Bowron."<sup>43</sup> The report shows not only how manipulative the *Times*' approach to news coverage was, but that there were numerous opponents who questioned its power and vested interests in private enterprise and expansion.

However, the *Frontier* has been considered by some to be "a lonely voice within a political wilderness."<sup>44</sup> The power of commercial interests dominated the 1950s, and

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<sup>41</sup> Thomas S Hines, "Housing, Baseball, and Creeping Socialism: "the Battle of Chavez Ravine, Los Angeles, 1949-1959"." *Journal of Urban History* 8 (2): (1982).

<sup>42</sup> "Public Housing and the Brooklyn Dodgers: Los Angeles: Double Play by City Hall in the Ravine," *Frontier*, June 1957, 7.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*, 9.

<sup>44</sup> Robert Gottlieb, "Next Los Angeles: The Struggle for a Livable City," (Berkeley, CA, USA: University of California Press, 2004), 28.

there was only so much change that opposition could incite. Nonetheless it existed to promote “the idea that a progressive revival in Los Angeles and California was possible, even with a business-dominated mayor and a conservative governor.”<sup>45</sup> The need to clear Chavez Ravine, despite being a cohesive community, displays the motivation the politicians of Los Angeles were guided by to prioritize the interests of private enterprise over its own citizens. Photographs from the eviction show the presence of a significant amount of police officers, as well as the media presence that sensationalized the story.<sup>46</sup> One photograph in particular captures the moment of trauma this was for the children, crying and confused by the mass of people.<sup>47</sup> Images of the bulldozer’s actions document the destruction as well as the presence of community life existing; surely the majority of the cars pictured were there for the events of the day, but the houses visible serve as a reminder that this was in fact a stable community, not just a slum to be eradicated.<sup>48</sup> Although replaced with a commercial venture that itself embodies modernist ideals of pro-growth, the intended housing project represents the modernist development of rational and functional environments, as modernism saw the ideal city as functioning like a machine.

As argued by Rodolfo Acuña in *A Community Under Siege*, these “urban renewal programs victimized the poor.”<sup>49</sup> Slum clearance was utilized as an excuse to displace and demolish places that were undesirable for the downtown economic and political interests. Another snapshot of modernist tensions regarding urban renewal took place in 1968, with Boyle Height’s inclusion in Los Angeles’ Model Cities planning program. Again, the *Los Angeles Times* serves to subtly misrepresent the misgivings of the community in its May 26 article, “Boyle Heights Boils over Federal Grant: Some Don’t Want It.” It quotes an unnamed community spokesman asserting how “Deterioration in Boyle Heights is getting out of hand. Unless the area is given some direction it’s going to get worse—hopelessly worse.” The article goes on to say, “Now in its second year, the controversial Model Cities program is the federal government’s newest attempt to correct the physical and social problems of cities by

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Miller. *Chavez Ravine Evictions*. May 8, 1959. Los Angeles Examiner Collection, 1920-1961, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA.

<sup>47</sup> Snow and Paegel. *Chavez Ravine Evictions*. May 8, 1959. Los Angeles Examiner Collection, 1920-1961, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA.

<sup>48</sup> Miller.

<sup>49</sup> Rodolfo Acuña, *A Community Under Siege* (1984), 48.

encouraging broad locally-developed planning and action programs.”<sup>50</sup> Here, we observe an episode of history that accomplished similar goals of the original Chavez Ravine housing project, those of dictating a deliberate order to daily life and the physical space in which it takes place.

Framing the opposition as resentful, it presents the intentions of the program as almost indisputably good, “tying together locally developed approaches to problem-solving and existing federal grants-in-aid.”<sup>51</sup> It brushes over the fact that the neighborhood had been promised by officials that it would not be included in the Model Cities application. The article emphasizes the community organizations that do lend support to the proposal, including the East Central Area Welfare Planning Council and the Los Angeles Community Service Organization, both of which are criticized by Acuña for playing a role that he considers reactionary. The *Times* piece obscures the doubts of the opposition; stating that the concern “centers around the threat of urban renewal or urban renewal-like tactics in physically upgrading the neighborhood,”<sup>52</sup> it fails to directly acknowledge the issue of displacement. Arthur Montoya is quoted, a community activist and president of the Maravilla and Belvedere Property Owners Association, who published a regular column in Kovner’s *Sum*. It quotes him as stating how “the mere pumping of federal money into the area won’t improve it,”<sup>53</sup> but fails to include an actual defense of why this is true, leaving the readers to likely disregard his position.

Another subtle message underneath the writing comes out in the statement of how East-Northeast neighborhoods have “remained largely untouched by [the central city’s] sphere of influence.”<sup>54</sup> This would easily be read as a falsehood when there has been a huge influence of downtown visible in the *lack* of support the area has received throughout its history. “Furthermore, there is a suspicion in the community, which has a reported 70% rate of homeownership, that ‘big interests’ have purposely kept the neighborhood downgraded for future exploitation.”<sup>55</sup> The implications of terminology like “suspicion” delegitimize these concerns, and clarifies that these *Times* pieces are written to lend support to particular modernist narratives.

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<sup>50</sup> Ray Hebert, “Boyle Heights Boils Over Federal Grant: Some Don’t Want It, Resentment Rises Over Boyle Heights Planning,” *Los Angeles Times* (1923-Current File) Los Angeles, Calif. May 26, 1968. 1-3.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

The fourth and final source I investigate to support my analysis of modernist development projects is not regarding one particular historical event, but is rather a publication from the *Aztlán* journal at UCLA that provides tactical information for barrio defense projects against urban development, published in 1974. In recognition of the forces of capitalist development and state planning, editors Mario Barrera and GERALDA VIALPANDO of *Action Research in Defense of the Barrio* synthesize three interviews with Chicano community activists in order to provide practical knowledge for grassroots community efforts. As Don Parson claims when discussing Chavez Ravine and Bunker Hill, “With the demise of the urban liberalism as a way to channel popular protest into a formal political structure, direct action became the means to combat modernism.”<sup>56</sup> Written at a turning point in modernism, with shifts in the discourse surrounding urban renewal and the emergence of neoliberalism, this text attempts to serve as an intervention, providing knowledge and initiating conversations regarding what forms resistance might take.

The pamphlet states two purposes in its existence; calling attention to policies and processes impacting Chicano communities, in order to “stimulate the formation of barrio defense projects in other areas that are being similarly affected,”<sup>57</sup> as well as present examples of the integration of action and research. The introduction goes on to state,

Since the dislocation of Chicano communities appears to be widespread rather than an isolated phenomenon, it is logical to assume that there are broad social forces at work here. A more detailed investigation of the topic may provide important clues concerning the relationship of Chicanos to the larger society today, and to ways in which that relationship may be changing or resisting change.<sup>58</sup>

The interviews express the role of “metropolitanization—the growth of super cities and the swallowing-up of smaller, more human communities that stand in the way of the developmental plans for the giants.”<sup>59</sup> The introduction touches on the “internal

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<sup>56</sup> Don Parson, “This Modern Marve: Bunker Hill, Chavez Ravine, and the Politics of Modernism in Los Angeles,” *Southern California Quarterly* 75 (3/4). [University of California Press, Historical Society of Southern California]: (1993), 335.

<sup>57</sup> Ernesto Galarza, Guillermo Flores, Rosalio Muñoz, Mario Barrera, and GERALDA VIALPANDO, *Action Research* (UCLA: Aztlán Publications, 1974), 1.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid*, 1.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid*, 2.

colonialism” present in these communities, creating powerlessness and exclusion from decision-making.

In the third of the three interviews, the organizer Rosalío Muñoz reports on the efforts of the East/Northeast Committee to Stop Home Destruction, defending the Lincoln Heights area of East Los Angeles from forced displacement. In addition to his work with the Committee, Muñoz has been published as a journalist in the *Eastside Sun* and other well-known sources that are outspoken in questioning the effects of urban planning. Muñoz speaks well of the community he lives in, but emphasizes the “lack of political power and the condition of economic independence.”<sup>60</sup> Muñoz’s analysis in addition to the remarks of the editors expresses the significance of this work at this particular time, of an unsettling turn in cultural development. Activists like Muñoz, who had to reconceptualize the dynamics of the world his community existed in, were taking part in a redefinition of cultural discourses.

He presents in the interview how the process of displacement operates through the city’s master plan. New developments create jobs but not positions the community members are qualified for, and serve to force out the homeowners through rising taxes. Community residents recognize representatives of the elite, the Housing Development Corporation, the Planning Commission, and the Community Redevelopment Agency, as mediums of implementing unwanted change. Seeing these organizations as centers of power and control, community organizers filled the vacancies in the Housing Development Corporation’s Board of Directors—before the City Council shut it down through cutting off funding.<sup>61</sup> Through these histories it becomes apparent, although not directly articulated by Muñoz, that despite a growing knowledge and political leverage of the barrio residents, the city power structures continue to have a larger arsenal of weapons.

Muñoz calls attention to the fact that there is no cohesive Mexican American stance on these issues. However, he criticizes the groups who hope to develop the economic power by cooperating with the white interests, getting “caught up into gabacho related kinds of things.”<sup>62</sup> He considers these individuals as sellouts, vendidos, arguing that “developmentalism doesn’t work without political power behind it or without the say-so of the people that are being affected.”<sup>63</sup> It is apparent

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid, 29.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid, 31.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid, 32.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid, 33.

to Muñoz that the values of the urban elite are so antithetical to Chicano interests that working inside the system will always fail to implement substantial change. His arguments laid out in the interview can be read as reflective of emerging postmodern inquiries, as he rejects the totalizing narratives of order and rationality presented to him through city planners and officials.

Speaking facetiously from the presumed perspective of the city's intent behind these forces, Muñoz says, "There's too many of them Mexicans. They're spreading all over the place. It's too hard to keep them gerrymandered, they're going to start electing politicians, they're going to start taking over the city and getting political power."<sup>64</sup> He and his peers recognize the important political force Mexican-Americans are beginning to pose. In order to prevent its arrival, those holding power intentionally disperse minorities and make the city instead an ideal space for the white middle class.

The interview with Muñoz provides an argument for the importance of community space and an understanding of the threat that displacement poses. He states, "Being concentrated in a barrio provides a base for getting political power. It's harder to get singled out and divided and conquered... Also, it's a way of maintaining our culture."<sup>65</sup> This returns us to the themes expressed by Raúl Villa, centering the importance of community consciousness in its ability to formulate responses to the onslaught of dislocation due to urban planning and revitalization, as well as to provide healing and social networks of support. Returning to Harvey's assertion that "one of the principle tasks of the capitalist state is to locate power in the spaces which the bourgeoisie controls, and disempower those spaces which oppositional movements have the greatest potentiality to command," we can determine that the community spaces Muñoz and others work to defend, are being targeted specifically because of the growing political threat they pose.<sup>66</sup>

As neoliberal logics have guided contemporary urban planning for the past four decades, so too did dominant modernist ideologies dictate the better part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This investigation into modernist social thought within planning has revealed a reality of dominance and oppression under a veneer of equality, indicating the insufficiency of action that does not additionally combat the political-economic environment of capitalism itself. Regardless of their eventual fates, analyzing the recognized potential of spaces such as Olvera Street, Chavez Ravine, Boyle Heights,

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid, 31-32.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid, 34.

<sup>66</sup> David Harvey, *The Condition Of Postmodernity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 237.

and Lincoln Heights illustrates the qualities of thriving sites of resistance that hold significant potential for social emancipation.



Fig 1. *Chavez Ravine Evictions*, by Miller, 1959.



Fig 2. *Chavez Ravine Evictions*, by Snow and Paegel, 1959.



Fig 3. *Chavez Ravine Evictions*, by Miller, 1959.

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# The Toyota Accelerator Crisis: A Shattered Asian Miracle

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BY TYLER TOLMAN

*“In 2009 and 2010, Toyota recalled nearly 9 million vehicles, mostly due to accelerator or braking problems. Media reports vilified the company, Congress subpoenaed top executives, and Toyota’s stock plummeted. Toyota devotees were stunned.”*<sup>1</sup>

To claim that the United States perspective towards the Toyota Motor Corporation (TMC) bore no reflection of xenophobic sentiment—particularly discrediting the ability of an East Asian business to produce technological innovations comparable, or even superior to those of the West—ignores and undermines the fearful, divisive rhetoric surrounding the progressions and downfalls of the Japanese-based organization, exemplified and exacerbated by the 2009 accelerator crisis. Entailing the recall of nearly nine million Toyota and Lexus models “due to sudden acceleration problems”<sup>2</sup> by 2010, the accelerator crisis initiated a devastating downfall in the company’s public image, resulting in the immediate loss of the prestige, respectability, and acceptance amongst the American public within an unsettlingly short timeframe. An enraged public denounced TMC for its carelessness and degradation in quality, but a widespread sigh relief regarding the downfall of a Japanese miracle simmered underneath.

The West could not accept the idea of an Asian power surpassing a Western power for intellectual reasons, provoking cultural theory to explain sudden surges in Japanese development, a temporary, unsustainable explanation regarding Asian excellence. Initial merits of success morphed into loaded accusations of a broken Japanese exceptionalism, flooding public discourse with explanations for a short-lived Toyota rising. The proposed factors that led up to the Toyota scandal, deviation from the company’s founding guidelines, company leadership outside the trusted family, and a lack of feasibility in balancing increased quality with heightened efficiency, vilified TMC for straying from its moral high ground with isolationist fervor. In other words, Toyota simply did not possess the ability to maintain its

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<sup>1</sup> R. Shapiro and S. Van Sice, *Toyota Motor Corporation: 1990-2010*, HBS No. 9-611-035 (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Publishing, 2015), 1.

<sup>2</sup> M. Greto, A. Schotter, and M. Teagarden, *Toyota: The Accelerator Crisis*, HBS No. TB0243 (Glendale, AR: Thunderbird School of Global Management, 2010), 1.

virtues and emphasis on quality while undergoing such rapid, irresponsible growth. TMC's initial success stemmed from sporadic innovations, resulting in long-term failure due to its lacking of Western business strategy. However, these generalized explanations, reeking of anti-foreign ideology, failed to acknowledge TMC's historical consistency and the previously understandable realities of making errors in an increasingly complex, technologically advanced industry, bearing little legitimacy when analyzing both the historical context and the element of foreignness in Toyota Motor Corporation's relationship with the United States.

Western fascination with the Toyota Motor Corporation alternated between cultural dismissal and genuine investigation regarding the company's success within the automobile industry. Before the rush to condemn Toyota Motor Corporation for its carelessness and broken glory, academic discussion dating back to as early as the late 1960's started to fixate on discovering Toyota's secret to such unprecedented success, especially considering its emergence from "the destruction and bitter defeat of World War II."<sup>3</sup> Japan held a secret that western powers desperately sought to unravel. During the initial years of the 21st century, as Toyota surged towards success by raising productivity, reducing inventory, and cutting operation expenses, "hundreds of firms visited Toyota firms" with the intention of learning the inner workings of the Toyota Production System.<sup>4</sup> Words of admiration did not hesitate to define Toyota as "the most striking development in recent world history,"<sup>5</sup> "a paragon of quality and productivity."<sup>6</sup> By 1980, Japan replaced the United States as the largest automobile-producing country in the world.<sup>7</sup> As Japan transitioned into the new global leader in technology and production volume, Japanese business strategies became an intriguing subject, a sought after secret "to eliminate waste in operations" with the utmost efficiency.<sup>8</sup> The conclusions resulting from the intrigue, however, varied based on historical context.

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<sup>3</sup> Michael Cusumano, *The Japanese Automobile Industry: Technology and Management at Nissan and Toyota* (Cambridge (Massachusetts) and London: Harvard University Press, 1985), 1.

<sup>4</sup> R. Shapiro and S. Van Sice, *Toyota Motor Corporation: 1990-2010*, 1.

<sup>5</sup> Cusumano, *The Japanese Automobile Industry: Technology and Management at Nissan and Toyota*, 2.

<sup>6</sup> R. Shapiro and S. Van Sice, *Toyota Motor Corporation: 1990-2010*, 1.

<sup>7</sup> Cusumano, *The Japanese Automobile Industry: Technology and Management at Nissan and Toyota*, 90.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, 271.

Although Toyota initially inspired Western businesses to improve their production process and become more competitive in the automobile industry, the lack of immediate boom in the final decades of the 20th century (1970s-1980s) sent business analysts into a cloud of doubt and resentment.<sup>9</sup> The inability to immediately replicate and outperform Toyota, to reestablish the status quo of an automobile industry led by Western innovation, resulted in cultural justifications dismissing Toyota's enhanced performance as a mere result of Confucian influence at work within an overpopulated East Asian region.<sup>10</sup> Suspected "cultural barriers to following the *Toyota Way*" discredited theories of actual innovation and instead strengthened notions of Japanese merely fulfilling their stereotype, imitating Western production methods with more willpower and precision. "Asians more naturally observe things in greater detail," able to harness their innate talent for perfection at a faster rate than white Americans.<sup>11</sup> The Japanese did not have a secret weapon to out-produce American motor corporations after all. They just worked faster and harder, fueled by their Confucian heritage to devote themselves entirely to "the corporate philosophy" for the sake of "achieving exceptional results."<sup>12</sup> Outperformed by Japan, the United States invalidated Japanese success in an attempt to justify their own inability to catch up.<sup>13</sup>

However, the Toyota Motor Corporation continued to challenge the false assurances of temporary cultural influence through decades of continued, nearly uninterrupted growth and progress. By 2008, Toyota took the spotlight, passing General Motors "to become the largest car company in the world."<sup>14</sup> Toyota's ability to produce new models at a faster pace and for a cheaper price reflected constant pushes for efficiency and improvement. Under the guidance of former President Katsuaki Watanabe, for example, Toyota embraced a "trimming the fat" strategy. TMC launched the Construction of Cost Competitiveness in the 21st Century (CCC21) program in 2000 with the intention of sourcing "90% of its parts more

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<sup>9</sup> Jeffrey Liker, *The Toyota Way: 14 Management Principles from the World's Greatest Manufacturer* (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 2004), 201.

<sup>10</sup> Liker, *The Toyota Way: 14 Management Principles from the World's Greatest Manufacturer*, 306.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 306.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 39.

<sup>13</sup> Danny Hakim, "Toyota Overtakes Ford as World's No. 2 Automaker," *New York Times*, January 27, 2004.

<sup>14</sup> R. Shapiro and S. Van Sice, *Toyota Motor Corporation: 1990-2010*, 1.

cheaply” while simultaneously “increasing part quality,” resulting in savings that totaled upwards of ten billion United States dollars over a five-year period.<sup>15</sup> In 2005, adding to the progress of the CCC21, Toyota heightened its overall goal with the implementation of the Value Innovation campaign, more aggressively streamlining and simplifying the manufacturing process.<sup>16</sup> The initiatives were seen as revolutionary in their own right, and provided what proved particularly effective in order to “simplify production processes” and “utilize materials more efficiently.”<sup>17</sup> The company’s product development capabilities and effective transactions with suppliers once again became methods to emulate for hopeful Western business.<sup>18</sup> Toyota Motor Corporation, a Japanese company, became a role model in a formerly Western dominated market.<sup>19</sup>

The results of business strategies, like the CCC21 program and Value Innovation campaign, spoke for themselves, confirming legitimate Japanese innovation. Toyota Motor Corporation had started to build actual Western respect for its resilience; United States discussion started to propose the idea that Toyota’s credibility extended beyond overly generalized cultural justifications, accepting that Toyota’s outperformance might not have had a visible end after all.<sup>20</sup> “‘Japanese-ness’ no longer seemed such a magic bullet,” and identifying the actual key to success led to the study of individual organizational capabilities versus Confucius-driven discipline. “‘Toyota was able to think outside the box,’” outpacing General Motors by “working aggressively” to make the absolute “most of its advantages.”<sup>21</sup> Analyzing Toyota’s edge over General Motors, Lee Hawkins Jr. and Norihiko Shirouzu from the *Wall Street Journal* deviated from cultural justification, crediting Toyota’s surge to “the latest know-how” in various manufacturing processes.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 3.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 3.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>18</sup> Takahiro Fujimoto, *Evolution of a Manufacturing System at Toyota* (Cary, GB: Oxford University Press, 1999), <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/alltitles/docDetail.action?docID=10317736>.

<sup>19</sup> Cusumano, *The Japanese Automobile Industry: Technology and Management at Nissan and Toyota*, 117.

<sup>20</sup> Robyn Meredith, “Detroit Silent As a Toyota Hits Market: New Model, the Echo, Starts Below \$10,000,” *New York Times*, September 30, 1999.

<sup>21</sup> Lee Hawkins Jr and Norihiko Shirouzu, “A Tale of Two Auto Plants; Pair of Texas Factories shows how Starting Fresh Gives Toyota an Edge Over GM,” *Wall Street Journal*, May 24, 2006.

<sup>22</sup> Lee Hawkins Jr and Norihiko Shirouzu, “A Tale of Two Auto Plants.”

Toyota was able to disassociate itself from dismissals nothing more than another unsustainable Asian miracle. Scholars proposed that Toyota's success stemmed not from "traditional Confucian ethics such as diligence, frugality, family solidarity," and "stress on education," but rather competitive thinking and production methods.<sup>23</sup> This is significant in that using Confucianism to justify economic growth comparable to the most advanced Western countries dismisses serious consideration of an Asian country's ability to be innovative and ambitious in its own right. The Confucius explanation rejects an Asian country's ability to "deviate from average behavior" through "rigorous attempts" that reveal anything other than imitation.<sup>24</sup> It negates notions of permanency and progress originating from a non-Western origin. TMC had momentarily escaped this cultural dismissal. And while the United States was reluctantly starting to consider Toyota as something other than yet another short-term result of the Asian miracle, the recall impeded the ideological progress.

Toyota Motor Corporation's quality crisis provided a means for the United States auto-industry to discredit an intruding foreign power, a threatening *non-Western* innovation. With an estimated six million vehicles linked to "at least five fatalities" in 2009, the company's public relations crumbled into nothing more than reports and publicity regarding "possible defects" and monitored implementation of the recall process.<sup>25</sup> The broken gas pedals and "misaligned floor mats" embodied TMC publicity. Threats of civil penalties and hearings with the intent to add further pressure and "highlight the political heat building under the Japanese car maker" deconstructed a forming power, reestablishing an ideological gap in where true technological innovation *safely* came from.<sup>26</sup> Efforts to experiment with "less-absorptive plastic" and "give the new pedal some resistance" through less dependence on one of its United States suppliers, CTS Corporation, were overshadowed by "sticking-accelerator reports in Europe" later that year.<sup>27</sup> A

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<sup>23</sup> Ming-Yih Liang, "Confucianism and the East Asian Miracle," *American Economic Association*, *American Economic Journal: Macroeconomics*, 2, no. 3 (July 2010): 207.

<sup>24</sup> Liang, "Confucianism and the East Asian Miracle," 208.

<sup>25</sup> Linebaugh, Kate, Josh Mitchell, and Norihiko Shirouzu. "Toyota's Troubles Deepen; Probe Not Over as Car Maker May Face Penalty; Earlier Pedal Fix Failed." *Wall Street Journal (Online)*, Jan 31, 2010.

<sup>26</sup> Linebaugh, Kate, Josh Mitchell, and Norihiko Shirouzu. "Toyota's Troubles Deepen."

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

company taking responsible action to address “its biggest-ever safety” disaster had to operate under publicity focused on failure.

Western insistence on East Asian inferiority bubbled underneath American discourse, even during celebratory headlines of Toyota’s progress and plans for expansion. A year of Western fascination with the company’s unprecedented growth became laced with fear of a foreign power encroaching on United States markets in 2008. Micheline Maynard with the *New York Times*, for example, exemplified subtle suggestions of xenophobia by constructing Toyota’s success around its foreignness, emphasizing the oddities of Toyota’s foreign employees when reporting on innovative production methods, consisting of workers using golf balls “to limber up their fingers before they learn new tasks,” “speaking languages that include Russian and Turkish,” and operating mindlessly under Japanese executives and senior managers.<sup>28</sup> As Toyota revealed plans for 2008, hoping to sell 9.85 million vehicles worldwide as well as increase its number of manufacturing plants, the United States portrayed Japanese ambition as purposely in conflict with domestic “worries about a slowing [United States domestic] car market.”<sup>29</sup> Media strategically manipulated the rhetoric to place an alienated Toyota in competition with a threatened General Motors, reporting business prospects in a competitive and aggressive context. The United States played the role of the vulnerable victim before a heartless, problematic Toyota, “hit hard by a subprime mortgage crisis and rising oil prices,” indirectly advocating a closing of the United States economy to protect domestic industry and consumer interests.<sup>30</sup> In response to Toyota’s 2008 plans for expansion and increased production, the Associated Press omitted the consensual nature of car sales, the benefit of increased domestic production, and the need to ensure a continued circulation of income. This morphed Toyota’s ambitions into merciless plans to capitalize on “America’s economic woes” and simplified Toyota’s business interests under an overall negative portrayal.<sup>31</sup> Toyota could not be represented as a

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<sup>28</sup> Micheline Maynard, “At Toyota, A Giant Strives To Show Its Agility: Automaker Works To Refine A Formula For Global Success,” *New York Times*, February 22, 2008.

<sup>29</sup> “Toyota Aims to Be No. 1 In 2008 Vehicle Sales: Forecast Comes Amid Slowing U.S. Growth,” *New York Times*, December 26, 2007, C3.

<sup>30</sup> Maynard, “At Toyota, A Giant Strives To Show Its Agility: Automaker Works To Refine A Formula For Global Success.”

<sup>31</sup> “Toyota Aims to Be No. 1 In 2008 Vehicle Sales: Forecast Comes Amid Slowing U.S. Growth.”

successful company on the rise; it needed to be “a giant” arrogantly striving “to show its agility” in a global arena.<sup>32</sup>

During the initial aftermath of the 2009 accelerator crisis, Toyota’s secrets to success suddenly mutated into recipes for disaster. Leading figures in business, like Michael Greto, Andreas Schotter, and Mary Teagarden, did not hesitate to vilify the same initiatives previously deemed revolutionary and efficient. Reinterpreting the CCC21 program and Value Innovation campaign in particular, the former praise crumbled to symbolize a sacrifice of “quality at the expense of extreme cost reductions” resulting from pressing cutbacks rather than ingenious, efficiency-maximizing efforts.<sup>33</sup> Creative money-saving techniques were dismissed as aggressive policies with low reliability, and Toyota later became an example of what not to do when undergoing accelerated growth in production.<sup>34</sup> As Toyota’s J.D. Power’s Automobile Quality Ranking fell from the 6th most favorable to the 21st between 2009-2010, signaling an especially difficult time for Toyota in terms of public relations and favorability. The company had no other option but to publicly apologize and reevaluate its “penny-pinching measures” in coexistence with the *Toyota Way*, the founding morals of the company stressing accountability, innovation, and prioritizing the safety and satisfaction of the customer.<sup>35</sup> The damage to the Toyota brand appeared irreparable. However, given such rapid polarization in the fluctuation of pro-U.S. auto-industry opinion and rhetoric, the U.S. industry was unusually prepared to vilify the Toyota Motor Corporation. American automobile companies capitalized on the anti-Japanese justifications surrounding Toyota, intensely covering the recall with the intent of facilitating the dissociation between *foreign* and *reliable*.

U.S. coverage of Toyota’s progress preceding the 2009 recall provided hollow support, considering news of improvements and growth continued to come in tandem with a recurring underpinning of concern and caution. Toyota was “a name rapidly coming to be both celebrated and feared.”<sup>36</sup> While Toyota continued to

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<sup>32</sup> Maynard, “At Toyota, A Giant Strives To Show Its Agility: Automaker Works To Refine A Formula For Global Success.”

<sup>33</sup> M. Greto, A. Schotter, and M. Teagarden, *Toyota: The Accelerator Crisis*, 1.

<sup>34</sup> M. Greto, A. Schotter, and M. Teagarden, *Toyota: The Accelerator Crisis*, 3.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>36</sup> “Toyota’s Firm Foothold in U.S.,” *South China Morning Post*, November 24, 1969.

progress during the years leading up to the accelerator crisis, potentially overtaking Ford as the world's second largest automaker, coverage included ominous foreshadowing of the end to "American dominance over the global auto industry," a threat that later circulated within the United States.<sup>37</sup> Media paired Japanese success with American anger. As Toyota honed its skills to become a more competitive automobile producer, even "the soaring value of the yen" could not impede new, high-tech models, sporting upsettingly appealing prices "well below those of comparable models made by Detroit auto makers."<sup>38</sup> The announcement of the Echo in 2008, priced below \$10,000, stunned "outraged American auto executives" into silence, unable to resist "the widening trade deficit with Japan."<sup>39</sup> Supportive superficially while secretly hoping for failure, the shakily constructed support and awe of Toyota's progress fell without resistance after the announcement of the recall, morphing instantaneously into discourse strictly about everything Toyota did wrong.

Toyota's failure was not a devastation for public safety, but rather a patriotic celebration. News of faulty accelerator pedals received exceptionally insolent responses, criticizing Toyota by bordering blatant mockery. Toyota might have been "a little safety deaf," deliberately misleading investors and consumers about the extent of the accelerator problem, and antagonizing comments grew more obvious.<sup>40</sup> The principal goal in coverage of the recall crisis centered on showing a dramatically dropping Toyota alongside significant improvements in car safety made by Ford, essentially reclaiming the automobile producing empire for the United States.<sup>41</sup> Criticism of Toyota reflected a nationalistic approach to further distance and alienate an already endangered brand and credibility. Toyota had steered off course, away from decades of "high and stable performance."<sup>42</sup>

Unrelenting U.S. attention given to Toyota's struggling public image demonstrated historic inconsistency and xenophobic motivation, evident in analyzing media representations of the Toyota Motor Corporation before and after the 2009 recall. Leading up to 2009, Toyota's rising and improving image put the company in a competitive rivalry with American corporations, specifically Ford Motor

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<sup>37</sup> Hakim, "Toyota Overtakes Ford as World's No. 2 Automaker."

<sup>38</sup> Meredith, "Detroit Silent As a Toyota Hits Market: New Model, the Echo, Starts Below \$10,000."

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> M. Greto, A. Schotter, and M. Teagarden, *Toyota: The Accelerator Crisis*, 7.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>42</sup> Fujimoto, *Evolution of a Manufacturing System at Toyota*, 6.

Corporation and General Motors; and it was Toyota's emergence as a threat that fueled and incentivized Western urgency to push Toyota down in credibility whenever possible, explaining the uninterrupted coverage of the 2009 recall incident. This did not mark the first time Toyota slipped in its efforts to improve and progress as a company, but rather the first time the West really acknowledged the performance of an Eastern business rival.

Before the Toyota Motor Corporation started to challenge the status quo of the global economy, still in the process of harnessing its manufacturing capabilities, coverage of Toyota's setbacks was gentler, less frequent, and more empathetic of various inconveniences and errors in production processes. In comparison with the fury and stigmatization of the 2009 recall, the U.S. brushed over any Toyota scandal, still confident in its role as the world leader in automobile industry. For example, in 1966, more strictly enforced safety standards through closer inspection revealed "411 defects or hazards" in almost 3,000,000 vehicles made in Japan.<sup>43</sup> The Japanese Ministry of Transport divided the blame for 75% of the defective vehicles amongst Toyota, Honda, and Nissan, discovering safety concerns in the corrosion of the brake-pipe and dubious front-brake hose fixtures.<sup>44</sup> Unnoticed errors and safety hazards sprang into visibility up until 1969, but the rush to punish and condemn Toyota and other Japanese automobile producers failed to reflect the same sentiment of anger and outrage in 2009. Classifying the 1969 recall as a need for "minor changes" in the Toyota Corolla in newspaper reports, confirming "a number of minor but worthwhile improvements to the interior layout" stresses the minimal reaction and publicity of a recall that later totaled 13,500,000 vehicles when also including Western automobile producers.<sup>45</sup> The media essentially chose to gloss over the incident for the preservation of its own image, and passed the opportunity to attack a nonthreatening Toyota Motor Corporation.<sup>46</sup>

Recalls in the United States and Japan, in the case of 1969, "did not necessarily reflect a decline in quality" nor a deviation from traditional values and integrity. The vehicular problems, concerning the durability of the brakes, remained unattached to proposals of Toyota's failure to ensure quality or demonstrate the proper amount of

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<sup>43</sup> Cusumano, *The Japanese Automobile Industry: Technology and Management at Nissan and Toyota*, 335.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 335.

<sup>45</sup> "Minor Changes for the 1969 Toyota Corolla," *South China Sunday Post - Herald*, September 8, 1968.

<sup>46</sup> Cusumano, *The Japanese Automobile Industry: Technology and Management at Nissan and Toyota*, 335.

transparency brought forth in 2009. The West took a comparatively milder route in addressing the 1969 recall crisis, not demanding that Toyota take full responsibility for the errors that put American lives at risk, as was the case in 2009.<sup>47</sup> Suggested “increased safety and quality standards” were to blame, leaving everyone unprepared and unable to immediately adjust.<sup>48</sup> With the condition that automakers notify customers of defects and offer repairs, a cumulatively larger recall than that of 2009 did not require nearly as much attention, shaming, and condemnation.<sup>49</sup> The practical dismissal of the 1969 recall, almost ignoring the severity and danger comparable to Toyota’s accelerator functioning in 2009, highlights a self-contradictory, arbitrary quality when defining the Western media’s decision process, deeming it necessary to incessantly punish Toyota for recurring mistakes in 2009 but not four decades earlier.

Criticism regarding Toyota’s 2009 recall focused primarily on the centralization of decision-making power in Japan and the portrayed loss of integrity, reshaping Toyota from a subject of cautious praise into a dumping ground to vent anti-foreign rhetoric.<sup>50</sup> Toyota became a mysterious other that the United States could no longer trust. Former Toyota employees in the United States revealed that while Toyota and the United States had been collaborating for years, the interactions remained very limited, keeping “all key engineering decisions” within Japan, just outside of U.S. influence.<sup>51</sup> “Toyota did not have a U.S. headquarters,” and it expanded too rapidly to effectively manage its growing manufacturing plants, “spilling over into Canada and Mexico.”<sup>52</sup> Expressed bitterness towards Toyota not having a U.S. headquarters emerged in the midst of the 2009 recall crisis, popularizing the notion of an evil company lacking in transparency and determined to “intentionally keep consumers in the dark.”<sup>53</sup> In spite of suggestions of the inevitability of making errors in a field with products containing “about 2,000 functional components, 30,000 parts, and 10

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<sup>47</sup> M. Greto, A. Schotter, and M. Teagarden, *Toyota: The Accelerator Crisis*, 12.

<sup>48</sup> Cusumano, *The Japanese Automobile Industry: Technology and Management at Nissan and Toyota*, 335.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, 336.

<sup>50</sup> Maynard, “At Toyota, A Giant Strives To Show Its Agility: Automaker Works To Refine A Formula For Global Success.”

<sup>51</sup> M. Greto, A. Schotter, and M. Teagarden, *Toyota: The Accelerator Crisis*, 8.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, 8.

million lines of software code,”<sup>54</sup> it was “aggressive globalization”<sup>55</sup> and abandonment of company morals that guaranteed Toyota’s failure to achieve perfection in an increasingly intense and technologically advanced industry. Rhetoric concerning the 1969 and 2009 recalls reveal flawed contradictory logic, only adequately explained when considering the role of U.S. intimidation before a Japanese superpower.

Toyota’s public image depended and continues to depend on U.S. perception of their own automobile industry in contrast with that of Japan’s. Even as Toyota continues to integrate itself with the global community for mutual economic benefit, expanding manufacturing plants within the United States, the company’s foreignness renders it easily untrustworthy. As Toyota rose and fell in front of the United States, its lack of domestic American ties played a pivotal role in its alienation, cautious adoration, and unsuspectingly harsh criticism. In 2008, Toyota threatened the United States’ fragile ego, surpassing General Motors as the largest vehicle-producing corporation in the world.<sup>56</sup> Since then, the United States has kept a careful eye on Toyota, eager to dismiss it as another short-lived Asian miracle, acknowledge its innovative ideas with xenophobic undertones, and vilify it without mercy. To claim that Western-oriented economic patriotism played no role in the rhetoric surrounding Toyota’s progression as a corporation ignores and undermines the contradictory nature of Western media representation, validating clearly inconsistent constructions of Toyota Motor Company driven by unsustainable Confucian-inspired determination.

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<sup>54</sup> R. Shapiro and S. Van Sice, *Toyota Motor Corporation: 1990-2010*, 13.

<sup>55</sup> M. Greto, A. Schotter, and M. Teagarden, *Toyota: The Accelerator Crisis*, 4.

<sup>56</sup> R. Shapiro and S. Van Sice, *Toyota Motor Corporation: 1990-2010*, 1.

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# **Pan-African ideals and the Organization of African Unity's intervention in the 1967-1970 Nigerian Civil War**

BY ADERONKE ABODUNRIN

From colonization, to the struggle for independence, the African continent has often been viewed both internally and externally as a milieu of fragmented states, lacking cohesion and most importantly: peace. Indeed, the colonial legacy of the continent, coupled with the history of enslavement of the Black diaspora has demonstrated a very real dilemma for the future of Blacks across the globe. However, the birth of Pan-Africanist thought provided a glimmer of hope for advancing and uniting Black peoples.<sup>1</sup> There are varying opinions on how best to define Pan-Africanism, all which generally encompass a similar principle: the unity of Black peoples on the African continent and the African diaspora. For the purpose of this paper, I will be employing the definition provided by Costantinos BT Costantinos. He defines Pan-Africanism as follows:

Pan-Africanism represents the complexities of black political and intellectual thought over two hundred years [and] the Pan-African movement changes according to whether the focus is on politics, ideology, organizations or culture. [It] is a belief that African peoples, both on the African continent and in the Diaspora, share not merely a common history, but a common destiny.<sup>2</sup>

Costantinos' articulation as well as definition of Pan-Africanism encompasses the complexity of the ideology by demonstrating the different dimensions in which it can

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<sup>1</sup> Costantinos dates the Pan-Africanist movement to as early as the 1800s. He focuses on the expression of a religious Pan-Africanist movement that came out of what he describes as Ethiopianism. He writes the following, "Ethiopia's African diasporic religious symbolism grew in the 1800s among blacks in the United States and the Caribbean, through a reading of Psalm 68:31, 'Ethiopia shall soon stretch forth its hands unto God,' as a prophecy that God would redeem Africa and free the enslaved. The verse served as a bulwark against a racist theology that declared black people were the descendants of Ham, the cursed son of Noah whose children were to be the hewers of wood and drawers of water. Ethiopianism thus emerged initially as a psychic resistance to racist theology, soon becoming the basis of a nascent political organizing."

Berhutesfa Costantinos, "The Promises & Pitfalls of Pan-Africanism Ideological and Agency Trajectories for African Integration," 2.

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

be expressed. The Nigerian Civil War provides a politically complex context with which to attempt to “test” the way Pan-Africanism has been used as a political and diplomatic tool. The war itself broke out as a result of the secession of the South-Eastern region of Nigeria (the State of Biafra) from the Federation of Nigeria on May 30, 1967. It is the complexity of the Nigerian Civil War that aids in analyzing the various hurdles that Pan-Africanism has faced in attempting to create substantial political unification of African states.

This paper will analyze the actions taken by the OAU under the broader goal of promoting Pan-African ideals while still recognizing nation-state sovereignty. Thus, the underlying questions that this paper will work to answer will be: How does an organization that is promoting political and economic integration respond to a national struggle within one of its member states? Furthermore, how can such an organization reconcile the ideals of nationalism with its goal of integration? These questions will help to frame the paper’s broader goal of analyzing political Pan-Africanist efforts.

The argument throughout this paper will focus on the function of Pan-Africanism within the political landscape of the African continent between the 1920s to the late 1960s. The 1960s were particularly significant on the African continent because many states were gaining independence from their colonial rulers. Thus, the analysis will focus on one of the most well-known Pan-Africanist organizations: The Organization of African Unity (OAU) founded in 1963. The OAU’s position as a Pan-Africanist organization was fundamentally based on pulling down all colonial legacies and essentially creating an African destiny narrated by Africans. The influence of the OAU and its employment of Pan-African ideals will be explored through its involvement in the Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970) -a conflict that did not directly involve any former colonial powers. Furthermore, this paper will examine the extent by which Pan-African ideals were utilized by the OAU during the Nigerian Civil War in order to promote a unification of newly-independent African states as a way to pave way for cooperation and collaboration among African states.

Cynthia Kahn highlights the tensions that were present during the 1968 OAU Heads of State Summit, that involved a strained debate between the majority of OAU members that supported the Federal Nigerian Government and the four states (Tanzania, Zambia, Ivory Coast, and Gabon) that chose to support the secessionist state of Biafra. Kahn concludes that the tense exchanges between the dissenting OAU members and those supporting Nigeria simply “reflected the growing disillusionment of many OAU members with the ineffectiveness of the various

movements and their seeming inability to resolve personal squabbles.”<sup>3</sup> In Kahn’s opinion the events of the 1968 OAU Summit were a clear demonstration of what she described as “the OAU [being] in danger of dying.”<sup>4</sup> With a similar focus on the relations between OAU member states, Olajide Aluko describes the growing position of influence that Nigeria held on the continent and in the OAU as one synonymous with a hegemon. However, even with its respected role, Aluko, much like Kahn, also alludes to the tensions present within the OAU, especially with regards to Nigeria’s involvement in the internal political issues of certain member states, such as Uganda and South Africa.<sup>5</sup> Such involvement was significant because it was often in opposition to the decision taken by the OAU as a political body.<sup>6</sup> Thus, Kahn and Aluko are similar in that they both attribute the primary weakness of the OAU as being a result of internal political disputes among member states. While Kahn focuses on the general disputes, we see Aluko take a step further by focusing on the role of Nigeria within the various national disputes.

In his examination of the collapse of the OAU, Kofi Oteng Kufuor cites the most significant problem of the organization as its ‘strict adherence to its members’ sovereignty,” which was followed by a principle of no-interference.<sup>7</sup> Kufuor also demonstrates how the organization’s preoccupation with member sovereignty meant that the “OAU never put in place mechanisms to monitor or enforce members’ compliance with its resolutions or decisions.”<sup>8</sup> Kufuor’s analysis provides valuable insight into why the OAU failed to realize its objectives and how this translated to a greater failure for substantial cooperation to take place between African states. Furthermore, his analysis is able to bridge the observations of Kahn and Aluko to provide an even clearer picture of the conditions that hindered the OAU from reaching its greatest potential.

However, while these scholars focus on the shortcomings of the OAU, G. Aforka Nweke discusses the contributions that the OAU made towards African integration. For Nweke, the OAU Charter symbolized the “the blueprint of intra-African

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<sup>3</sup> Cynthia Kahn. “The O.A.U.: Hurrying Nowhere?” *Africa Today* 15, no. 5 (1968): 4.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>5</sup> Olajide Aluko. “Nigeria’s Role in Inter-African Relations: With Special Reference to the Organization of African Unity.” *African Affairs* 72, no. 287 (1973): 146.

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

<sup>7</sup> Kofi Oteng Kufuor. “The Collapse of the Organization of African Unity: Lessons from Economics and History.” *Journal of African Law* 49, no. 2 (2005): 133.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

functionalism.”<sup>9</sup> The OAU’s objective to establish African integration was not only stated in the Charter but as Nweke shows, was actively pursued by the organization. He cites the OAU’s role in “generating an African common front” which allowed facilitated negotiations on the continent and beyond.<sup>10</sup> However, even within his seeming praise of the organization, Aforika remains skeptical of the OAU’s ability to completely create the much-needed political and economic integration of all nations states.

Each scholar presents an important way to gauge the efficacy of the OAU with Kahn and Aluko more focused on the internal disputes within the organization while Kufuor and Nweke focused more on the structure of the organization in relation to its objectives. Much like Kahn, Aluko and Kufuor, I am aware of the high stakes involved in the OAU’s decision to support Nigeria as opposed to Biafra, and I engage with these different stakes throughout the paper. Thus, I have provided my own contribution towards this topic between these two areas- OAU internal disputes and the OAU structure and function. By so doing I hope to demonstrate why the OAU should not be viewed as a failure in unifying African states. This will be carried out by accounting for the realities that OAU had to contend with during its existence.

By demonstrating how secession, and territorial sovereignty of post-colonial states, were encompassed in the Nigerian Civil War, it is possible to highlight the tensions present within the OAU’s adherence to its principles during a national conflict. The paper will endeavor to discuss how the role of the Organization of African Unity was further complicated due to its decision to reject the sovereignty of the newly-formed secessionist Nigerian region and how this decision had significant impact on the implementation of political Pan-Africanism. By working through these different aspects of this event, I argue that the generally perceived failure of the OAU during the Nigerian Civil War came about as a result of the conflicting principles of the OAU and those of Pan-Africanism. Furthermore, I hope to demonstrate the efficacy of the Pan-African movement as a way to politically unify African states, given states are willing to recognize their nationalistic identities as a facet of the larger identity of Pan-Africanism.

The discussion of Pan-Africanism is incomplete without a brief mention of a key advocate of the early roots of Pan-Africanism: Dr. William E. Burghart DuBois, an

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<sup>9</sup> Nweke, G. Aforika. “The Organization of African Unity and Intra-African Functionalism.” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 487, no. 1 (1987): 145.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

African-American Civil Rights activist. The contributions of DuBois towards the expansion of the Pan-Africanist movement was critical as it provided a platform for the development of Pan-Africanism on the African continent. Furthermore, DuBois played a significant role in the creation of a platform to facilitate discussions on how to further the goal of developing African unity discuss this common aim. One of the most important platforms being the Pan-African Congress conference which was first initiated by DuBois in 1919.<sup>11</sup>

The Pan-African Congress conference allowed for greater discussion of the oppressive conditions that many Africans (both on the continent and in the diaspora) were living under as a result of slavery and colonial rule. The sixth Pan-African Congress conference took place in 1945. The conference was significant because it revealed a clear shift in the direction of Pan-African theory, that from being based on the diaspora, to one that focused on the emancipation of Africans on the African continent. Many of the attendees included political activists such as Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana and Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya who, at the time, were amongst the many Africans fighting against colonial rule.

It is important to situate the 1945 conference within the context of the period. The end of the Second World War in September 1945 and the establishment of the United Nations in October 1945 were clear indicators of changing world dynamics. The devastating human and financial cost of the war had compelled world leaders to reconsider how states interacted with one another. Therefore, African independence activists would have been eager to take full advantage of this historical moment as a way to further legitimize their own nationalistic goals of independent African states. In addition to this, the response of Pan-Africanists to the changing world order as a demonstration of the potential for Pan-Africanism to be utilized as both a tool for African nationalism, as well as a platform for African States to be recognized as sovereign outside of the African continent cannot be ignored. This also provides substantial basis for continued mention of the United Nations Charter within the Charter of the Organization of African Unity. The OAU's Charter not only recognized the UN Charter, but it also established the OAU's support for the UN Charter. Referring to the UN Charter further demonstrated the way in which OAU members attempted to acquire legitimacy through the United Nations.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Colin Legum describes DuBois and Garvey as “great rivals.”

Colin Legum. *Pan-Africanism: A Short Political Guide*. New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., 1962, 25.

<sup>12</sup> Phrases within the 1963 OAU Charter such as, “This Charter shall, after due ratification, be registered with the Secretariat of the United Nations through the Government of Ethiopia in

Furthermore, this clearly demonstrates that OAU members were aware of the important opportunity that the overlapping principles of the OAU and the UN, namely, nation-state unity and cooperation could potentially have for the development of the OAU.

The resolutions drafted and passed during the sixth Pan-African conference demonstrated that the primary focus of the attendees was achieving the emancipation of African peoples from the oppression of the imperialist regimes of European colonizers. The dialogue featured phrases such as, “we demand for Black Africa autonomy and independence, so far, and no further, than it is possible in this One World for groups and peoples to rule themselves subject to inevitable world unity and federation.”<sup>13</sup> The authoritative language used highlighted the changing the dynamics between Africans and former European colonial powers as well as the strong desire for independence. Thus, the main takeaway from the sixth Pan-African conference was the development of African nationalism based on Pan-Africanist ideals, and viewed as a way to combat colonial oppression and realize the unification of Africans on the African continent.<sup>14</sup> African leaders and intellectuals alike were seeking a new narrative free of colonial influence and they believed that Pan-Africanism could assist in creating this narrative.

The sixth Pan-African Congress of 1945 paved way for a new expression of Pan-Africanism that focused on the emancipation and independence of African people. The impact of the conference can be linked to later conferences such as The First Conference of Independent African States in 1958.<sup>15</sup> The main declaration of the First Conference of Independent African States detailed many of the Pan-African aspirations held by the Heads of State gathered, such aspirations included, the need for, “Unity among ... [Africans] and our solidarity with the dependent peoples of Africa” as well as the objective of, “...[recognizing] the right of the African peoples to independence and self-determination.”<sup>16</sup> The significance of “self-determination”

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conformity with Article 102 of the Charter of the United Nations,” demonstrate that OAU members were both in support and need of the United Nations in order to create legitimacy for its own aims.

<sup>13</sup> *Resolutions and selected speeches from the Sixth Pan African Congress*. Dar es Salaam: Tanzania Publishing House (1976).

<sup>14</sup> The conference was attended by the following independent African states: Egypt, Tunisia, Sudan, Morocco, Ethiopia, Liberia and Ghana.

<sup>15</sup> Colin Legum, 139.

<sup>16</sup> The 1960 “United Nations Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples” stated the following with regards to self-determination: “All peoples have the right to self-determination; by virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.”

was a critical principle that quickly became a necessary stipulation for the establishment of other Pan-African organizations, such as the Organization of African Unity. However, the conflict between the principle of self-determination and the call for unification and cooperation amongst African States would only be fully realized during national and regional conflicts on the African continent. It also highlighted one of the key obstacles that the OAU experienced while attempting to practice and further Pan-Africanism on the basis of state sovereignty. In addition to demanding “self-determination,” the resolutions passed during the first Conference of Independent African States demonstrated an important step towards unifying African states against colonial rulers and bringing about the independence of the continent. Not only was the eradication of colonialism used as a tool to unify the different states towards the Pan-African ideal, but it was also used as a method for validating the Pan-African movement as a whole. By deciding to create a strong connection between the need for African emancipation from colonial rule and world peace the conference attendees attempted to highlight that African independence was not simply a necessity for the African continent, but also for the world. This connection is clearly reinforced in the following statement, “Recognizing that the existence of colonialism in any shape or form is a threat to the security and independence of the African States and to world peace.”<sup>17</sup>

The connection between African independence and world peace suggested various ways to view the conference attendees’ determination to be recognized outside the African continent. It suggested that colonialism was inherently violent, thus proposing that independent African states would bring about a more peaceful world. It is difficult to imagine that conference attendees were not also playing upon the legacy of the Second World War, which was initiated as a result of the invasion and division of Poland by Germany. Therefore, in describing that world peace and African independence were somehow synonymous, conference attendees were also suggesting that colonialism was not simply inherently violent, but also illegal. The effort to connect the United Nations aim of promoting world peace and the Pan-African aim of independence suggested the possibility of the threat of retaliation by the independent African states if independence was not provided for all African states. In both instances, it was obvious that the intention of this particular wording in the resolution was to draw attention to the urgent matter of the complete decolonization of African states. Several African states had already gained official independence from colonial powers, but there were other states still under colonial

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<sup>17</sup> Colin Legum, 141.

rule by a European power. Thus, the call was not simply for complete decolonization, but also for a total halt in the interference by former colonial powers in the affairs of the continent. However, while unity of the African states was upheld and solidarity with external organizations (such as the United Nations) was demonstrated, the strong belief in the “independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity” of all African states was also repeatedly highlighted in the document.<sup>18</sup>

A Second Conference of Independent African States took place in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in 1960, with fifteen independent states convening to discuss how to further the goal of unifying the states, politically and economically. However, while the calls for a united continent were being put forward, there remained a call for each state to maintain its sovereignty.

The First (1958) and Second (1960) Conference of Independent African States served as the basis for the founding of the Organization of African Unity in 1963. Much of the language employed in the principles of the OAU Charter was either identical or very similar to that of the resolutions passed during the two conferences. While, the prior conferences and gatherings of African Heads of State had all been temporary, the establishment of the OAU was symbolic in that it represented a tangible outcome from the past conferences. The convening of thirty African heads of state between May 22<sup>nd</sup> and May 25<sup>th</sup>, 1963 marked a significant historical event for the continent. These thirty heads of state created six resolutions tackling various issues pertinent to the advancement of the continent such as colonization, independence, and the need for African unity. In addition, a charter for the organization was also drafted with clear support for what would be known as the Organization of African Unity (OAU).

By 1963, a significant number of African states had already gained independence which lead to the question of how African States were to move forward following independence. As a culmination of the prior Pan-African conferences, the heads of state primarily established the OAU as a way to facilitate the independence movements and to set the stage for putting the Pan-African vision of uniting African peoples, into action. The phrase that clearly demonstrates the promotion of a Pan-African vision by the OAU is found in the preamble of its Charter states, “*Inspired* by a common determination to promote understanding among our peoples and cooperation among our States in response to the aspirations of our peoples for brotherhood and solidarity, in a larger unity transcending ethnic and national

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

differences.”<sup>19</sup> The emphasis placed on “cooperation”, “solidarity” and “unity” of African peoples on the African continent was and is a fundamentally Pan-Africanist vision. Although the OAU members were aware of the differences in the culture, colonial legacy and languages of each state, they still believed that a unification and solidarity of States and peoples would be beneficial. Furthermore, this idea of the benefits that unification held is explicitly outlined in other sections of the preamble.<sup>20</sup> OAU members were clearly advocating for a Pan-African approach by advocating for unity among states and I believe that their decision to employ Pan-Africanism was a deliberate one. There was a clear belief that only Pan-Africanism *assured* the advancement of African states and this is key to understanding both the practice and break-down of Pan-Africanism during the Nigerian Civil War.

In terms of qualifying to be a member of the OAU, the primary prerequisite was independence, followed by an affirmation to adhere to the principles of the Organization's Charter. The OAU Charter highlights the purposes of the Organization which reiterates the need for “the unity and solidarity of the African States”<sup>21</sup> through (and not limited to) “political and diplomatic cooperation.”<sup>22</sup> Thus, it is important to note that the need for “solidarity” was not simply symbolic, the OAU members were advocating for a large-scale project that involved the harmonization of political, economic, educational, diplomatic, scientific policies.<sup>23</sup> This ‘harmonization’ of policies was deemed beneficial for the overall goal of creating a new narrative of African States that in many cases did not acknowledge the differences (territorial and otherwise) of said States. Thus, while the unity of African States was generally regarded as the primary objective of the OAU, it was interesting that the same members stipulated that each African State had the right “defend their sovereignty, their territorial integrity and independence.”<sup>24</sup> Although, it is necessary to analyze the relevance of the sovereignty and territorial integrity stipulation as a way to recognize the legitimacy of African governance of African territories, it is also important to recognize a clear inconsistency in advocating for unity and cooperation while also declaring that States have the freedom to resist any encroachment on their

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<sup>19</sup> Colin, Legum, 231.

<sup>20</sup> Zdenek Cervenka. *The Organization of African Unity and Its Charter*. 2nd ed. London: C. Hurst and Company (1969), 231.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 232.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Article II of the OAU Charter describes all the different fields which OAU members felt harmonization and commonality was necessary.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 232.

sovereignty and territorial integrity. It is difficult to imagine how such large scale cooperative efforts could be achieved without any form of encroachment upon state sovereignty or territorial integrity. Whether it was easier for OAU members to agree to large-scale cooperation given their stated right to protecting sovereignty and territorial integrity, is something we can only assume given the stakes. However, the stipulation does paint a necessary landscape of the ideological tensions present during the establishment of the OAU. Furthermore, these conflicting ideologies also followed through in the OAU's intervention during the 1967-1970 Nigerian Civil War which will be discussed in the following section.

An argument that is often lacking in the discussion of the OAU as a result of significant focus on the failure of the OAU to live up to the standards stated in its Charter. The first argument is that the OAU should be celebrated for its ability to gain international recognition and as a continental force, even with regards to the Nigerian Civil War. The second discusses the reasons why the OAU can be considered a failure in its attempts to bring peace and unification to Nigeria. The OAU is frequently described as a failed mission of Pan-Africanism on the African continent. Although such criticism is valid and accurate, it unfortunately works to overshadow the positive results and efforts of the organization. The onset of the Nigerian Civil War prompted international attention due to Nigeria's prominent role as the most populous African nation with significant crude oil wealth.<sup>25</sup> Nigeria's former colonial power, Britain, already had very high stakes in crude oil extraction efforts through the Shell-British Petroleum company, and therefore a Civil War would not provide the most favorable conditions for oil extraction activities. Furthermore, the fact that the majority of the oil fields were located in the Eastern region that had declared itself a secessionist state, created even higher stakes for the British government.<sup>26</sup> The risk of losing of both the Nigerian and British governments lucrative oil investments as a result of the secession of the East was a very real and daunting reality and as Chibuike Uche states, "British oil interests played a much more important role in the determination of the British attitude to the war than is usually conceded."<sup>27</sup> Therefore, considering these stakes the British role in the conflict had the potential to be high and extremely involved. However, although the British supported the Federal Government and the maintenance of former boundaries, it did not take on an overt and coordinated position in the

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<sup>25</sup> Chibuike Uche. "Oil, British Interests and the Nigerian Civil War." *The Journal of African History* 49, no. 1 (2008): 113.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

conflict. This is not to say that there was no British or external involvement during the War, but the prominent role of the OAU as the ‘first responders’ to the conflict clearly demonstrated a change in the dynamic between Africa, its former colonial powers and the rest of the world. This changing dynamic should be attributed to the OAU’s ability to act as an organization that was focused on African interests and which was governed by African leaders. The OAU’s position on the international platform was of particular significance and this was captured successfully through the words of the then United Nations Secretary General speaking before the heads of state during the fifth session of the OAU assembly in September of 1968. In his speech, the Secretary General said, “the OAU should be the most appropriate instrument for the promotion of peace in Nigeria.”<sup>28</sup> Similar sentiments were reiterated during the organization’s sixth session as the Secretary General “emphasized that in the long-run only the acceptance of the OAU recommendations could put an end to the crisis.”<sup>29</sup> Such sentiments were a significant demonstration of the external recognition of the legitimacy of the OAU. Considering that many African states had only recently achieved their independence and were still navigating how they intended to move forward, the OAU’s ability to draw international recognition and respect as leader of the diplomatic efforts during the Nigerian Civil War is noteworthy. The collaboration between the United Nations and the OAU was an important signal of changing world dynamics, especially with regards to the coordinated approach that came as a result of the Nigerian Civil War.

In his analysis of the collaborative relationship between the United Nations and the OAU during the Biafra conflict, Berhanykun Andemicael suggests that the OAU was successful in preventing direct non-African interference and dominance during the Civil War. He discusses how the OAU took the role of mediator, while the role of the United Nations was primarily concerned with the humanitarian needs that arose from the violent conflicts. This shift in power dynamics clearly imply a change in the influence of non-African actors in African issues. It also demonstrated that international organizations such as the UN were taking note of the need for African institutions and organizations to create their own solutions to issues pertaining to the African continent.

Andemicael’s suggestion that the OAU and United Nations shared a complementary role during the Civil War crisis creates further avenues for

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<sup>28</sup> Andemicael Berhanykun. *Peaceful Settlement among African States: Roles of the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity*. United Nations Institute for Training and Research (1972), 35.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

understanding the role of Pan-Africanism during that period. Andemicael successfully demonstrates this complementary role when he says, “the ‘Biafran’ charges of genocide were refuted in late 1968 by a team of observers representing the United Nations and the OAU and the Governments of Canada, Poland, Sweden and the United Kingdom; the team was invited by the Federal Government to observe the conduct of its troops as they advanced into ‘Biafran territory.’”<sup>30</sup> The visit by the OAU and United Nations observers highlighted a greater cooperative role between these two organizations rather than simply one of the United Nations dominance in African affairs dictating a plan of action to the OAU. Such efforts put in the context of Pan-African ideals demonstrate the organization's ability to successfully coordinate and take the lead role in issues of primary African interest and involvement.

While a discussion of the important strides and positive efforts of the OAU is needed, readers must remain critical of the ways in which the organization was able to create substantial amelioration or influence in the Nigerian crisis. The ambitious rhetoric, with all its promises of unity, integration, cooperation and independence, failed to produce very many substantial and realistic results. One of the first reasons for this is the conflict between nationalism and political Pan-Africanism. The language of the 1963 OAU Charter was problematic, in that it attempted to put two contrasting ideologies together in order to produce a coordinated approach. While the Charter called for greater efforts of integration and cooperation between states, it also stipulated the right of each nation to defend its territorial integrity and sovereignty.<sup>31</sup> This was problematic because, in facilitating a political Pan-African ideal, states had to be ready to give up some form of sovereignty and maybe even territorial integrity. The Charter did not adequately illustrate the trade-off between nationalism and Pan-Africanism that was needed for any Pan-Africanist efforts to succeed. Highlighting a trade-off and perhaps a loss of individual control over given territories might not have attracted as many African heads of state to sign the Charter, but it would have provided a clearer role of the organization and the power it actually had on the continent. The OAU's lack of power and influence was clearly demonstrated in its inability to involve itself in any substantial manner during the Nigerian Civil War without the permission of the Nigerian Government.

It is important to recognize that the connection between the OAU's failure during the 1967-1970 Civil War pertains to the minimal mention of how the

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Colin Legum, 281.

organization planned to reconcile its colonial legacy with its broader aim of creating an African narrative for Africans and by Africans. Returning to the Organization's 1963 Charter, there is a continued reiteration of the need for defending African independence and the right to independence. However, there was very little discussion of any plan of action. Why would a discussion of colonial legacy have been useful? First, it would have provided the organization with a much more structured role as a body working towards creating the framework for African institutions that would be able to succeed the colonially imposed institutions. Second, a discussion of the colonial legacy would have provided a platform to discuss the colonially imposed borders and division of territories and regions. The omission of such a pertinent issue to the future of the continent was manifested through the Nigerian Civil War. The OAU was not just unprepared to handle an issue of secession, but organizationally ill-equipped to deal with the demands of the crisis.

Secession in its own right is a complex term that often carries negative connotations of division and conflict between groups. As has already been discussed, the case of the Biafra state's secession was a significant challenge to the OAU and this was reflected in its response to the conflict. The secession was even more complex because it required OAU members to discuss the issue of colonially imposed borders. The OAU in its position as the metaphorical symbol of the unification of African states had significant authority and responsibility to decide the extent to which colonial legacies would influence the African narrative that they aimed to achieve. Deeply rooted within the ideology of Pan-Africanism was the notion that African-states should work towards a united African narrative that was free from external (or more colonial) intervention. While political Pan-African ideals supported this aim of unity, they did not provide a framework for working through issues of secession. This, however, did not weaken the ideology's objectives, rather it demonstrated the necessary role of the OAU in putting forward a structured action plan on how to reconcile colonial territorial boundaries with the lived-realities of the African people.

Secession insinuates division of land, people and oftentimes resources. However, in the case of the secession on the African continent with regards to the borders having been imposed by external forces should have drawn greater discussion among OAU members as opposed to a principle that failed to get into a sensitive and crucial subject. I argue not so much that OAU members were not aware of the importance of discussing the colonially-imposed borders, but rather that fearing the stakes involved in the crisis, many members felt compelled to support Nigerian nationalistic

efforts to destroy the secessionist attempt. In his discussion of the role of secession in former colonies, M. Rafiqul Islam states the following concerning the failure of the Biafran state: “the economic viability of Nigeria excluding Biafra was never seriously in doubt. Biafran oil was not indispensable to Nigeria as a whole. Yet there could be no doubt that oil was one of the major issues involved in opposing the Biafran secession.”<sup>32</sup> Islam’s analysis of the Nigerian situation provides a snapshot of the stakes that influenced the OAU’s intervention in the War and its decision to not recognize the secessionist Biafran state. Additionally, Islam discusses the role that fear of a total collapse of the Federation of Nigeria played in the strong support against Biafra. He captures this by detailing how, “the Federation of Nigeria showed all indications of being further beset by separatist claims if the legality of the Biafran secession were acknowledged.”<sup>33</sup> Therefore, the question of whether the Biafran state was a legitimate cause was a secondary issue to most of the actors involved because the stakes at play made it impossible for Biafra to garner any significant momentum and support both from within the continent and beyond. Furthermore, the apprehension of the international community concerning the possible division and collapse of the newly independent Nigerian Federation made it nearly impossible for the Biafra secession to gain any viable support. However, the reluctance of OAU members to discuss the role of secession and the recognition of it also played into the general approach of the organization, which involved its inability to respond directly to the different dimensions of its Pan-African objective of which secession was a part.

As demonstrated, the principle of territorial integrity and sovereignty proved to be an immense obstacle to the OAU efforts of bringing peace and stability to Eastern Nigeria, which was the epicenter of violence during the Civil War crisis. The principle not only hindered the OAU’s efforts but also divided the member states on the position that the organization should take. As leader of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, General Gowon, took full advantage of the principle and “warn[ed] all states that recognition of Biafra as an independent sovereign state would be viewed by the Nigerian federal government as interference in the internal affairs of Nigeria and an unfriendly act against the people of the federation.”<sup>34</sup> As a result, Amate describes how several OAU member-states could do little more than “express concern about the situation and to urge that the OAU be allowed to help end the fratricidal

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<sup>32</sup> M. Rafiqul Islam. “Secessionist Self-Determination: Some Lessons from Katanga, Biafra and Bangladesh.” *Journal of Peace Research* 22, no. 3 (1985): 213.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> C.O.C. Amate. *Inside the OAU: Pan-Africanism in Practice*. St. Martin’s Press (1986), 442.

warfare.”<sup>35</sup> While the majority of OAU members aligned themselves with the OAU principle of territorial integrity as a basis for their support of the Nigerian Government, others, namely Tanzania, Zambia, Gabon and Ivory Coast aligned themselves with support for the secessionist state.<sup>36</sup> It is important to discuss the opposing views held by OAU members and its significance to the larger goal of political Pan-Africanism and its implementation by the OAU. Recognizing the 1960’s as a definitive period in the formation and development of independent African states is key to this discussion. For several African states, independence only came as a result of many decades of resistance and bloody violence. This was demonstrated through the language of the Charter which stated the organization's determination “to safeguard and consolidate the hard-won independence” of all African states.<sup>37</sup> Achieving power and influence over their territories was a long and difficult task, and many of the current OAU members had also played significant roles in the independence struggles in their own states. The language of the OAU also showed that OAU members were future-focused, they wanted to build their economies and institutions and realize the full potential of their nations and the continent.<sup>38</sup> Thus, within such a backdrop, acknowledging or even recognizing secession might have proved a threat to many of the future-minded OAU members who were also very concerned about protecting their power over national territories. But it is significant that even in light of this, the states of Tanzania, Zambia, Ivory Coast and Gabon chose to align themselves with the state of Biafra. President Julius Nyerere of Tanzania criticized the OAU majority support for the Nigerian argument and argued that Nigeria’s territorial integrity was taking precedence over “the massacre of tens of thousands of people.”<sup>39</sup> Whether OAU members chose to support or condemn the legitimacy of the State of Biafra, it highlighted the opposing views held by member-states and their varied level of investment in the larger goal of continental cooperation and integration. Furthermore, while the crisis of the Nigerian Civil War might have seemed like an extreme case to some OAU members, it clearly demonstrated the way in which members could, in the future, potentially hinder or oppose other Pan-African-focused integration efforts in the event that they felt that

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Colin Legum, 281.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> The exact number of lives lost throughout the Civil War is unknown but it is estimated to be between one million to three million, the majority being those on the side of the State of Biafra according to <http://wars.findthedata.com/>.

their territorial integrity or sovereignty was being threatened. This further hindered the objectives of the organization and its Charter's pursuit of Pan-African ideals.

This paper discussed how a better understanding of the generally perceived failure of the OAU during the Nigerian Civil War could demonstrate the ability of the Pan-African movement to politically unify African states. By mapping out the journey of Pan-Africanism and its broad goal of uniting Africans and the African diaspora, the paper was able to demonstrate the fluidity of the Pan-African ideology. In addition to this, it was necessary to analyze the OAU in a more sympathetic light, by balancing my criticisms of the organization's ineffectiveness with recognition of the obstacles it faced. By analyzing the role of secession and the stability of colonial borders and legacies, I demonstrated the potential effectiveness of Pan-Africanism and the lack of proper implementation of Pan-Africanism by the OAU. Furthermore, I highlighted that the OAU Charter, with all its rhetoric, was not necessarily reason for the failure of the organization. Rather, it was the significant omission of coordinated strategies in responses to issues concerning colonial legacies to which all member-states could attest that was problematic. The lack of provision for such discussions as well as the underlying dynamics and interests within the organization were other factors that I identified as weaknesses to the OAU's failed Pan-African efforts during the Nigerian Civil War. Analysis also highlighted the unrealistic expectations of the OAU, in that members believed (or hoped) that nationalistic interests could still be maintained while championing Pan-African ideals. As the Nigerian Civil War demonstrated, nationalism could not always work alongside Pan-Africanism and thus all member-states would have to be open to re-shaping their nationalistic goals as part of a successful larger Pan-African goal.

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# “Company-Owned Americans”: Militant Unionism and the Merging of Corporation and State in Southern West Virginia 1900-1925

BY BRANDON DIGREGORIO

*“There is no fact more generally known, nor more widely believed, than that without coal there would not have been such grand achievements, privileges, and blessings as those which characterize the nineteenth century civilization, and believing as we do, that those whose lot it is to daily toil in the recesses of the earth, mining and putting out his coal which makes these blessings possible, are entitled to a fair and equitable share of the same.”*

—UMWA Constitution, 1890

“You didn’t even own your own soul in those damnable places,” recalled an elderly miner while describing the company towns of years past. “The company owned everything, the houses, the schools, churches, the stores – everything.”<sup>1</sup> This simple statement describes an epoch of West Virginia history in which the coal industry exercised extensive influence over the lives of its employees. Coal fueled the economy in the industrial golden age of the United States, giving rise to pressing moral and political questions about the future and consequences of industrial capitalism. The formation of corporations and the prospering of big industry in the wake of the industrial revolution created enormous disparities between the working and managerial classes, and subtle tensions began to rise in the midst of such economic growth. In southern West Virginia during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, these concerns were particularly stark and tangible.

Partly due to rapid industrialization in the area and partly to geographical isolation, coal companies were able to operate with paternalistic authority over the communities on the land to which they owned the mineral rights. Because many towns owed their existence to corporate interests, the company was the first and most visible authority in a given area. In many towns there was scarcely a government presence at all, or rather an ambiguous one, with government authority substituted with private employees and institutions. Even local “police” were private hires, many of whom were employed through the notorious Baldwin-Felts detective agency, a unanimously detested organization among the coal miners. Through the legal protection of private property rights and compliance with these private

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1 David Alan Corbin, compiler, *The West Virginia Mine Wars: An Anthology* (Appalachian Editions: Martinsburg, 1997), 1.

institutions, it becomes clear that the state and local governments did not exist to regulate the practices of these companies, but rather to legitimize and enforce them. Therefore, it was not necessarily the working conditions that drove miners towards unions and/or socialist principles. In fact, West Virginia coal miners enjoyed a good deal of autonomy while working in the mines and were rarely even visited by a foreman – much more autonomy than their factory-worker counterparts, whose movements were meticulously measured by overseers to ensure maximum efficiency. Instead, it was the restrictive, paternalistic atmosphere outside of the workplace that drove workers to radicalism – an atmosphere in which companies controlled the rights, pay, and social activities of their workers.

Scholarship regarding the Coal Wars has been wary of reducing the struggle to a Marxist “class war.” Although an exorbitant amount of evidence exists to support such a claim, it seems too simplistic for the myriad factors at play. Retrospective analysis makes it difficult to support the actions of the coal companies, and indeed much of the historiography regarding the Coal Wars disparages the mine operators as brutal and authoritarian. David Corbin, a West Virginia native and compiler of *The West Virginia Mine Wars: An Anthology*, even explicitly states that his work might not satisfy a reader looking for a more favorable representation of the coal industry, and his narrative therefore focuses primarily on the various abuses the coal operators committed.<sup>2</sup> However, the companies could not have exercised such control without the support and permission of governmental institutions. Although the corporate-state alliance is alluded to in historical accounts of the Coal Wars, such as Lon Savage’s enlightening work, *Thunder in the Mountains*, the extent to which industry and state and county governments were intertwined is lacking in most studies. This is not to say the blend of industry and government was so complete as to be a “capitalist dictatorship,” as a Communist newsletter exclaimed in 1921, but merely that the connecting tissue between the two is of particular note in West Virginia during a time of exponential population increase and significant extension of corporate power.<sup>3</sup>

Historians of Appalachia have made clear that the paternalism of the coal industry had much to do with the competitive, sink-or-swim economic atmosphere at the time. As John Williams explains in his introduction to *Thunder in the Mountains*, West Virginia industrialists were disadvantaged from the start due to the added transportation costs of being farther away from “the biggest markets on the

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2 Corbin, iv.

3 Corbin, 116.

seaboard, lakes, and rivers.”<sup>4</sup> To account for the higher costs of production, workers’ wages were consistently reduced to make more room for profit. Predictably, this caused an antagonistic relationship between the workers and operators, and eventually invited the presence of unions. Labor history titan David Montgomery also illustrates how the Coal Wars fit into the greater arc of economic history, attributing the frustrations held by workers and managers alike to the political and economic climate of the country at that time.

Consequently, much of the present scholarship credits the circumstances surrounding the Coal Wars to the adverse effects of industry, corporate interaction with a growing labor movement, and the shifting economy between wartime booms and peacetime depressions. All of these are important claims that cannot be forgotten, but there seems to be a factor missing in the equation when considering West Virginia specifically: mainly, the overlap of government and industry, and the ideological forces behind both. Without fully understanding this relationship, we cannot claim to have a complete account of the Coal Wars, of the nature of the coal operators’ power, or of labor history as a whole.

Furthermore, the macro narrative tends to undermine the agency of the West Virginia miners, instead attributing their actions to the greater economic forces beyond their control. While it is true that the drive to unionize was partly fueled by the union leaders’ initiative to prevent lower-priced nonunion coal from undercutting the prices in unionized areas, these reasons alone are not enough to justify the intermittent violence and massive uprisings in the region. The long duration of the Coal Wars in such a condensed region of southern West Virginia suggests factors of greater intensity were at play. The firm resistance of closely affiliated nonunion coal operators in the southern coalfields went beyond the mere protection of economic interests that occurred elsewhere. The operators could not have singlehandedly posed such a formidable front without the integrated help of government institutions, and the workers could not have organized such significant rebellions without the aid of the unions. Thus the situation resembles that of oppressed people fighting against a peculiar system of corporate and government compliance rather than a coincidental battlefield where unions and operators fought a greater economic battle via worker and mine guard proxies. Therefore, instead of viewing the miners as tools of the unions used to spread their influence to nonunionized areas and thus ensure the protection of trade agreements, this research proposes that the workers

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<sup>4</sup> John Williams, introduction to *Thunder in the Mountains*, Lan Savage (University of Pittsburgh Press: Pittsburgh, 1990), x.

used the unions as a tool to organize themselves and dispel the industrial tyranny under which they lived. From the scope of federal law, the West Virginia coal companies utilized the liberal philosophy inherent in the U.S. Constitution that favors the autonomy of business and industry.

As Selig Perlman, a prominent labor historian in the 1920s, aptly stated in his influential work *A Theory of the Labor Movement*, business and industry theoretically constitute a sphere of unhindered individual liberty, but in reality operate under their own “industrial government” rather than under the regulation of the American state.<sup>5</sup> Such “industrial government” allows for the expansion and prioritizing of industry and capital over the laborers who produce it. Furthermore, the constitution protects the right of industry to expand by acknowledging the importance of individualism and, by extension, the sanctity of private property. In this vein, it is the government’s duty to protect private interests, just as it is the duty of the individual to compete and produce.

However, the consequences of this relationship began to change as capitalism in the U.S. developed throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century. When businesses and organizations merged to form corporations, control over the new operation was often held by investment-bankers who handled the initial shifting of securities, appointed a board of directors, and selected managers of local plants. This formed what Perlman calls a “business aristocracy” of professional managers who themselves held little stake in the business as investors, but were able to dictate how management operated on the ground.<sup>6</sup> Hence a division between ownership and management began to form, allowing for a hierarchy in which local managers answered to the financiers of the business, who essentially worked as absentee managers. The invention of this new absentee-owner-local-manager system subtracted authority from each plant and created a gulf between laborers and owners in which the managers served as middlemen caught between corporate interests and labor demands. In southern West Virginia, this difficulty was even more tangible with the strong, unrelenting pressure from unions to reform the workplace.

In addition to union pressure from below, there was also pressure from the federal government above to comply with legislation that inhibited the companies’ power. In the specific case of U.S. Steel, the company executive Elbert Gary took careful measures to ensure that “U.S. Steel not be viewed as a monopoly operating in violation of the Sherman Antitrust Act” in southern West Virginia, which included

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<sup>5</sup> Perlman, Selig. 1928. *A Theory of the Labor Movement*. (New York: The Macmillan Company), 170.

<sup>6</sup> Perlman, 217.

“maintain[ing] U.S. Steel’s original size in order to keep the government at bay.”<sup>7</sup> Such self-aware actions taken by U.S. Steel suggest that big industry had to carefully navigate federal law so as to not reveal its extensive influence. The fact that companies did not take similar precautions in light of state laws says a great deal about the expectations of different levels of government – mainly that local (i.e., county) governments were perceived as friendly and the federal government as an obstacle. However, the federal government (via the Constitution) also provided the right to private property, which served as the foundation for the companies’ endeavors and was protected by all levels of government. The extent of the friendliness between companies and county governments may have varied from region to region, but the overall trend seemed to be one of compliance, if not active partnership. To the labor movement pushing for reform, this bond was nearly impenetrable.

The height of conflict between the laboring and managerial classes can be identified as roughly 1900 to 1935, the latter year being when President Roosevelt passed the National Labor and Relations Act. Throughout this period, the industry was able to exercise near-total authority in operating areas because it owned everything down to the land itself, and state officials did little to hamper this authority. In fact, there are many indications that the state complied with companies’ excessive paternalism. Firstly, “yellow dog” contracts were legally upheld, which prevented the employee from joining a union at the risk of being fired and pursued with a lawsuit. These contracts were binding by state and federal courts, and served as an apt antiunion device. Secondly, the coal operators’ hired guns partnered with the state police and volunteer militia during strikes, and especially during the Battle of Blair Mountain, the tumultuous week-long culmination of a quarter-century’s worth of labor struggles in southern West Virginia. Local law enforcement was also intertwined with the companies’ private hires in the civil sphere, mainly through the use of mine guards deputized by the sheriff and paid by the companies. Thirdly, miners and union organizers were indiscriminately imprisoned – often without fair trial and for indefinite periods of time – while corporate officials were indiscriminately *released* from prison and acquitted. A prime example of this is the acquittal of Charlie Everett Lively, who murdered agitators Sid Hatfield and Ed Chambers on the steps of the McDowell County Courthouse in 1920 and was acquitted of his crimes thereafter. Additionally, the guards aboard the “Bull Moose Special” (an armored train with machine guns), who committed a

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<sup>7</sup> Garay, 51.

“drive-by” assault on striking miners during the Paint Creek – Cabin Creek strikes as well as “countless other acts of terrorism,” were never so much as detained.<sup>8</sup>

Conversely, labor organizer Mother Jones and forty other miners were incarcerated indefinitely after the Paint Creek – Cabin Creek strikes, and were only released after substantial outside pressure from the media. The treason trials of 1922, which will be discussed in more detail later, also illustrate the disparity in justice with which the state and county governments treated workers and industrialists. Essentially, by pulling back on the enforcement of law where industrial interests were at play so as to allow control by private parties, and by actively enforcing laws that robbed laborers of individual agency, the West Virginia state government used inconsistent application of law to support the local coal operators.

At the turn of the century, coal was one of the only means of work that could be found for hundreds of miles across mountainous terrain. In fact, according to a 1924 survey, eighty percent of West Virginia miners lived in company-owned towns, leaving the people in the coalfields subject to the whims of corporations and the demands of capital.<sup>9</sup> At the same time, West Virginia’s economic relevance quickly became based solely on coal, leading to increased corporate presence and an influx of laborers in the area. As Bob Johnson explains in his enlightening sociological work “An Upthrust into Barbarism,” “the coming of coal had completely restructured the state’s economy around this single extractive resource and concentrated economic power in the hands of a few corporations that owned the rights to that resource.”<sup>10</sup> This “acute concentration of power in the state,” Johnson continues, “translated...to almost total social control over a quarter of the state’s population and to indirect political control over local and state governments besieged by the coal industry’s deep pockets and active lobbyists.”<sup>11</sup>

Thus the government and coal industry became intertwined out of mutual interests and necessity, that interest being the production of capital and that necessity being relevance in the national economy. To ensure these mutual interests, the industry and the government operated on a system of patronage Johnson alluded to in the above quote. Coal barons often dominated the counties in which their

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8 Elliott J Gorn, *Mother Jones: The Most Dangerous Woman in America*. (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001), 191.

9 Savage, xv.

10 Bob Johnson, “‘An Upthrust Into Barbarism’: Coal, Trauma, and Origins of the Modern Self- 1885 – 1951.” *Journal of American Culture* 33, no. 4: 265-279. *Academic Search Premier*, 270.

11 *Ibid*, 270.

operations were located for the parties to which they belonged by using business control methods such as gerrymandering, obtaining citizenship papers for potential voters, and the “careful” use of patronage. Politicians very often had investments in industry, and so it was in their best interests to cooperate closely with the coal barons to preserve those investments. Likewise, it was in the coal barons’ best interests to continue supporting a party or politician that protected and supported their business endeavors via legislation, and many barons were outspoken patrons of one party/politician or another. The linkage between the two therefore resulted in exacerbated autonomy for the coal barons and the ongoing prominence of a given party in certain areas. Barkey and Fones-Wolf, the authors of *Working Class Radicals: The Socialist Party in West Virginia, 1898-1920*, elaborate on and confirm Johnson’s claim with the specific examples of George Watson, the owner of the Fairmont Coal Company, who controlled Marion County for the Democratic Party, and “King Samuel” Dixon of the New River Company, who overwhelmingly supported the Republicans.<sup>12</sup>

The overwhelming power of the coal companies was bitter and complete at times, which attracted the attention of unions and spurred socialist agitators into action. Conversely, the companies quite often tightened their control over the workers in response to the UMWA’s militant unionizing. West Virginia was one of the only states not included in the Central Competitive Field (CCF) trade agreement, which set a standard of wages at sixty-five cents per ton of coal and established the eight-hour day. Wages in nonunion coalfields were significantly lower than those in the CCF; in fact, in 1912, miners in the southern West Virginia coalfields earned only about thirty-eight cents per ton – two-thirds the amount of the lowest paid worker in the unionized Midwest.<sup>13</sup> After years of tension, the miners’ strikes to bring the companies under the agreement quickly became bloody. Companies attempted to ward off union influence with the use of competitive “welfare capitalism,” where each company would attempt to supply its employees with social services and favorable work conditions to attract and retain new employees and direct them away from unionism. Quite often these attempts were unsuccessful, however, and miners

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12 Barkey, Frederick A, Fones-Wolf, Ken, . West Virginia and Appalachia, Volume 14: *Working Class Radicals : The Socialist Party in West Virginia, 1898-1920*. (Morgantown, WV: West Virginia University Press, 2012), 79.

13 Gorn, 170.

continued to strike for better wages and the abolition of the “industrial Kaiserism” of the company towns, demands that the companies continued to obstinately deny.<sup>14</sup>

Furthermore, the coal companies were prone to think of the UMWA as a tool of their competitors to the west that strived to undercut the capital that could be earned by selling cheaper, better-quality coal. Since the West Virginia state government relied on its local companies for economic stability, it was only natural for the government to support the interests of industry and trust the needs of the company. Consequently, companies continually refused to allow any outside influence of unions to touch their laborers, and legally upheld “yellow dog” contracts backed these actions. According to the Bituminous Operators’ Special Committee to the 1923 Coal Commission, the operators believed contracts with the UMWA were of benefit to neither the operator nor the miner, and instead “stifled efficiency and individual initiative” by creating “a relationship based not on mutual confidence and sense of responsibility, but on mutual hostility.”<sup>15</sup> The significance of this relation, according to Hoyt Wheeler, was the nature of ongoing industrial warfare with clear goals on each side that refused to be met because both sides considered themselves “locked in a struggle to the death”:

The union correctly perceived that its continued existence depended upon the complete organization of the bituminous fields. The operators correctly perceived that the radical position of the mine workers on nationalization of the mines was a threat to their existence. Both sides suspected, with good reason, that the other was a party to a conspiracy with outside forces, and was therefore bent not on the immediate economic issues under discussion, but rather on the destruction of the other side for broader reasons. For these and other reasons, both sides were intransigent and unwilling to compromise.<sup>16</sup>

These “broader reasons” included the coexistence of unionizing efforts along with socialist efforts to persuade workers to join the Socialist Party, especially in the early 1910s. These were two different objectives, but they shared certain elements that at times made distinguishing between them difficult, especially for the coal operators, to whom both efforts posed a threat. Union organizers often utilized socialist rhetoric to foster class consciousness and thus make unionizing efforts more

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14 David Montgomery, *The Fall of the House of Labor: The Workplace, the State, and American Labor Activism, 1865-1925*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 397.

15 Garay, 55

16 Hoyt N. Wheeler, "Mountaineer Mine Wars; An Analysis of the West Virginia Mine Wars of 1912 – 1913 and 1920 – 1921" *Business History Review* 50 (1), 1976, 90.

effective, which created a concerning overlap for industrial capitalists. At times such rhetoric was even infused with religious principles to articulate ideas of class consciousness through traditions more familiar to the average workingman. For instance, Barkey and Fones-Wolf cite the example of a Parkersburg Socialist who related class struggle to biblical themes: “We are aware,” he wrote, “that our fight against capitalism is the same fight that Jesus fought...We know the Capitalist [sic] class of that day crucified Jesus because he preached the truth, and the capitalist class is crucifying the truth and justice as long as they have the power to do so.”<sup>17</sup> Not only was drawing from Christian symbology effective in realizing the union organizers’ and socialists’ respective goals, but it also backed the workers’ cause with moral incentive.

This incentive, when coupled with the material interests at hand, led to a formidable movement on the part of the miners and a reactionary backlash on the part of the coal operators. Pragmatically, the operators knew as well as the miners the measures that must be taken to secure their respective economic objectives, whether it was hiring private guards to “protect” company property from union influence, or striking for fair wages and the guarantee of associational freedom for the workers. What complicated each position was the conflation of their disagreements with the notion of “class war,” and the unions’ erosion of managers’ control did little to mollify that concern. Compromise became more difficult when it was seen as an admission of defeat, especially when corporate officials believed the unions were attempting to take over mine management and guide company policy as they wished.<sup>18</sup> Joining the union was therefore a protest against the excessive protection of private property, and the mission to unionize all of West Virginia was an act of war, both ideologically and concretely, to the coal operators.

Given the concurrent Russian Revolution, a rampant suspicion existed that the labor movement would evolve into a movement resembling Bolshevism, a prospect that threatened not only the coal operators but also the political system at large. Although in reality many union organizers such as Samuel Gompers were openly against the socialists, whose interests diverged dramatically in certain respects that will be discussed later, such talk of “controlling the means of production” was rampant among the southern West Virginia miners. Even the UMWA’s 1890 constitution contained hints of socialist rhetoric with its mention of fair and equitable distribution of wealth amongst the miners. The mine operators were wary

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<sup>17</sup> Barkey and Fones-Wolf, 53.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 89.

of the socialists' ability to "inject politics" into the already violent conflicts, especially during the 1912 election in which Eugene Debs ran on the Socialist ticket.<sup>19</sup> Rabble-rousers such as Mother Jones also drew unprecedented national attention to the conflicts and posed a boisterous anti-capitalist front that frightened coal operators into thinking their employees were part of an incipient social revolution. Welfarecapitalism and the imposition of heavy restrictions on those living in company towns characterized the companies' frantic attempts to quell these threats. In this sense, the miners' attitude toward the coal operators was both a response to and a cause of the tightening of company control over the areas in question, which led to a cycle of mutual hostility that propelled each side into violence.

However, to call the miners socialists or their cause a socialist movement would be to place a label upon them in retrospect that may have had little to do with their self-identification at the time or with their intentions. While socialist influences *did* exist, not the least of which were Eugene Debs and labor organizer Mother Jones (who had previously been involved in the Socialist Party of America), the unionizing effort stood firmly apart from the socialists in vision and practice, especially under the leadership of Samuel Gompers. The socialists envisioned a future political system free of capitalist interests, but union organizers (and Gompers in particular) advocated for a collective bargaining campaign that aimed to improve material circumstances, especially through the increase of wages. Therein laid the greatest divergence between union organizers and socialists: while the socialists viewed the labor unions as a tool to eventually achieve a broader end, unionizing was itself the goal for which the union organizers strived. Unions intended to operate within the capitalist system, and at times used socialist rhetoric of class consciousness to create more sympathizers for their cause; socialists intended to dispel capitalism altogether, and saw unions as auxiliary organizations that served as a stepping stone to a socialist society.<sup>20</sup> This is not to say that the miners were united by socialism alone, but rather by "a developing consciousness of a common set of grievances" that unions and socialist rhetoric helped to realize.<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, no matter how influential the socialist presence was, companies disparaged the push to unionize as an economic threat to the state *and* an ideological threat to the political system.

Consequently, the presence of socialist rhetoric was enough reason for the West Virginia government to side with the coal operators and encourage anti-union

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<sup>19</sup> Green, 32.

<sup>20</sup> Howe, Irving, *Socialism and America*. (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985), 15.

<sup>21</sup> Gorn, 170.

tendencies. If the essence of American society (i.e., capitalism and private property) was at stake in the presence of fervent unionizers and restless workers – especially when joined against the main economic suppliers of the state – the state government’s logical response was to quell such potentially dangerous insubordination. Once the strikes turned violent, Governors Hatfield and Glasscock both declared martial law in a handful of counties (Kanawha County during the Paint Creek – Cabin Creek strikes, Logan and Mingo Counties during the Battle of Blair Mountain), suspending civil law, the writ of habeas corpus, and the right to trial by jury. Since many companies had their own private police force hired by the Baldwin-Felts detective company, the ruling of martial law made it much easier to exercise increased control over their areas of operation, imprison insubordinates, and expel agitators. During times of federal intervention, state troopers, federal troops, and private guns all worked together to suppress uprisings – a joining of forces particularly visible during the Battle of Blair Mountain. In fact, Bill Blizzard, leader of the “redneck” army of miners that marched on Logan County during the battle, made no distinction between Baldwin-Felts agents and state troopers. Blizzard referred to his opponents indiscriminately as “Baldwin-Feltses,” as did many of the miners in his ranks, suggesting the miners saw either no separation or a blurred line between private hires and state officials.<sup>22</sup>

The excessive authority and brutality with which the Baldwin-Felts guards treated the miners is perhaps the most apt example of the merging of government and corporate power in the area. The New York based magazine *Outlook* published an article in September of 1921 investigating the possibility of mine guards being “sworn in by the state but hired and paid for by the operators,” and denounced the act as an egregious misuse of corporate power.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, Baldwin-Felts agents were often deputized as county sheriffs and paid by coal operators. The duties of these agents involved obstructing union organizers from entering the area, ejecting union sympathizers, and breaking up strikes when necessary.<sup>24</sup> Don Chafin, the Logan County sheriff, was especially notorious for the brutality with which he fought the unions, and he made the most use of deputized mine guards. The miners’ hatred of Chafin became a rallying point for their uprising, and even spurred a marching tune

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22 Savage, 150.

23 "The Federal Peace in West Virginia." 1921. *Outlook (1893-1924)*, Sep 14, 41. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/136663800?accountid=10629>.

24 Garay, 55.

with the lyrics “We’ll hang Don Chafin to a sour apple tree.”<sup>25</sup> Chafin was extensively involved in government functions and industry alike, and his co-opting of the police force to suit the needs of coal operators made him a symbol of government corruption and industrial tyranny among the miners.

With the help of Baldwin-Felts guards, the coal operators in the Pocahontas Coalfields (McDowell and Mercer Counties) made their aggressively anti-union vision a reality. According to Howard Lee, West Virginia’s attorney general from 1925-1933 who aimed to end government corruption, the McDowell County coal operators formed a “super-oligarchy” that controlled “every branch of the county government and every phase of the lives of the people” in a “complete industrial autocracy.”<sup>26</sup> Operators ardently suppressed union influence with hired guards under the guise of protecting private property, sometimes even with the help of union-busting spies, such as the aforementioned E. C. Lively. As a result, those who associated with unions (or who were even suspected of associating with unions) were expelled from town, often evicted from their homes ostentatiously as a warning to other potential union sympathizers. This lack of associational autonomy and freedom even outside of the workplace – all in the name of the constitutional right to private property – pushed many workers to radicalism. Henry Franklin, one of Huntington’s leading Socialists, became a fervent union organizer due to these very conditions. Despite being paid “well enough,” according to his daughter, “he often stated that a man couldn’t call his soul his own in those communities.”<sup>27</sup> This type of complaint was very common in nonunion coal camps, which implies the extent of the companies’ intrusiveness into everyday facets of life.

In his account of West Virginia after the Paint Creek – Cabin Creek strikes, American Federation of Labor (AFL) president Samuel Gompers described the extent to which corporations abused their right to private property and caused civil unrest – a problem that the state government had utterly failed to address: The coal corporations own vast contiguous tracts of land in West Virginia and claim the absolute right to do what they will with one hundred thousand acres. The only roads through this land are those permitted by the companies; the only houses and villages, those constructed and owned by the company; no church or post-office can be erected or used without the approval of the owner; sanitation, school, social intercourse, business transactions, are all subject to the interference of holders of the

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25 Savage, 77.

26 Garay, 54.

27 Barkey and Fones-Wolf, 36.

proprietary rights. No one is allowed on that private soil who has not given a satisfactory account of himself and his mission to the police authority employed and directed by the owners. In short, the coal operators who own this section of the state arrogate to themselves all rights of government except such as must be conceded to the county.<sup>28</sup>

Gompers challenged the ability of coal barons to manipulate state structures and constitutional rights to enhance their power by using a provocative hypothetical example. If a corporation bought the Louisiana Purchase instead of the U.S government, he mused, could that corporation constitutionally exercise absolute control over such an enormous area with their right to private property? Although the tracts of land owned by the coal companies in West Virginia were substantially smaller than his example, he claims that “the size of the two territories does not affect the underlying principle” of unrestrained private property rights.<sup>29</sup> In a system where large landholders exercise unlimited power, own all property, and control all social institutions, those who live and work on that land are reduced to little more than serfs and debt peons. Furthermore, Gompers claimed the use of martial law ensured a transition from civil to military government that was never completely reversed. In this new dynamic, “all the constituted forces of government were exerted in behalf of property,” essentially causing civil authority to be uprooted and “displaced for military force” in the name of materialism.<sup>30</sup> These circumstances formed a practically feudal society that Gompers called “Russianized West Virginia” in reference to czarist Russia. To this end, Gompers promoted the cause of unionism as a harbinger of economic freedom with the claim that “organized labor has forced these conditions and perversions of justice upon public attention and now demands that the wrongs be righted.”<sup>31</sup>

Although Gompers, being the head of the AFL, wrote this article with the intent to demonstrate the need for unionizing the southern coalfields, the fact that his argument was simply a sequence of observations about how industry operated in the region implies that this need should be self-evident. In this sense, the transparency of his motives does not necessarily subtract from his argument, especially in light of the more recent scholarship of historians Savage, Corbin, Garay, and Williams, all of who largely reaffirm Gompers’ claims.

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28 Corbin, 17-18.

29 Ibid, 16.

30 Ibid, 17

31 Ibid, 18.

Discrepancies in such scholarship are not about the degree of power coal operators exercised; it is widely agreed to have been extensive. To illustrate this point with an example, Williams explains how the coal operators' monopoly on authority in the area "meant that mine owners and miners confronted one another not only as employers and workers, but as landlords and tenants and as purveyors and consumers of goods and services," which exacerbated social tensions and "helps explain why the worst violence – like the worst housing and the worst working conditions in the industry – seemed always to be found in the Appalachian states."<sup>32</sup> With contemporary research firmly in support of Gompers' description of the southern West Virginia coalfields, Gompers' article can serve both as a persuasive argument and an accurate description.

Gompers' vision of unionizing was not appealing to every miner in the area, however. In an article to *The New York Times* in 1913, directly after the Paint Creek—Cabin Creek strikes, E. A. Bradford describes a situation with the Hitchman Coal Company in which the UMWA's demands were unfavorable for both the company and the workingmen, spurring the miners to form an outside organization called the Independent Mine Workers of West Virginia and draw up a private contract with their employer.<sup>33</sup> Although Bradford, being a New York businessman, has an evident bias favoring the coal operators throughout the article, his claims hold true: unionizing was not a panacea for working people's problems, and could at times make matters more difficult. However, these anomalous cases made exaggerated points for the anti-union argument when used to show the failings of the UMWA. Workers who did not desire unionization usually felt this way for one of three reasons, none of which was the unions' supposed uselessness, of which corporate officials wished to convince the public. Firstly, it is possible that welfare capitalism provided an adequate living standard, thus discouraging the workers from seeking a union. While life in mining camps was demanding and exploitative, families could "scrape by" as long as the market demand for coal remained high enough.<sup>34</sup> Secondly, the wave of violence between unions and industry in the area may have disinclined the workers to associate with the UMWA. Thirdly, the workers may not have been willing to strike at the demands of the UMWA as part of a greater militant effort to unionize southern West Virginia, especially since their particular

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32 Savage, xv.

33 E. A. Bradford, "West Virginia's War Competition Between Capitalists." *New York Times* (1857-1922), Jun 29, 1913.

34 Gorn, 170.

operation may have been functioning acceptably – far from ideally, but acceptably. Regardless of the situation, however, the paternalistic nature of the employer-employee relationship was still evident through the omnipresence of company ownership, even in these anomalous determinedly non-union areas.

Although the gritty details of corporate oppression are best identified on the ground level, perhaps the most telling instance of the corporation-state overlap took place beyond the coal camps and in the courthouse of Charles Town, West Virginia. In the wake of the Battle of Blair Mountain, Bill Blizzard was tried for treason, and the close relationship between the government and industrialists manifested in a new and revealing way. Although eventually acquitted (treason is an enormously difficult charge to prove), Blizzard's trial spurred a heated debate throughout the country concerning the legitimacy of the charge in the complicated case of West Virginia. Many condemned the charge and cited it as further proof of the state's alliance with the coal operators, and a cascade of newspaper articles followed the indictment to publicly disapprove of the actions taken. According to two New York newspapers, helpfully consolidated in the June 1922 issue of *Literary Digest*, "no government existed in West Virginia against which treason was possible" because "government in West Virginia had broken down, and its power had passed in part to the mine operators."<sup>35</sup> Treason was therefore not a feasible charge, since the miners who marched on Logan and Mingo counties were only trying to "take the law into their own hands," which "the non-union coal operators, controlling the local government in the two counties, had already done."<sup>36</sup> Indeed, treason is not possible against a corrupt or absent government – "it cannot be treason by any definition to rebel against a denial of constitutional guarantees."<sup>37</sup> An article from the *New York Times* succinctly stated the popular opinion against the charge of treason: "Logan County can scarcely be said to have been under the rule of law or to have had a republican form of government. Private war was answered by private war."<sup>38</sup>

However, it was not only during war that private interests were pitted against each other. Private interests had a hand in the legal proceedings as well. During the treason trials, the prosecuting attorneys were corporate attorneys – not the attorney general of the state, the district attorney of Jefferson County (where the trial was held), or the district attorney of Logan County (where the indictment was issued).

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35 Corbin, *Literary Digest* (June 17, 1922), 139.

36 Ibid, 139.

37 Ibid, 141.

38 Ibid, 139.

The choice to have coal operators' attorneys prosecute against treason – a charge that indicates conspiracy against and betrayal of the *government* – truly shows the extent to which the coal operators and government represented the same interests – that is, the interests of capital and the corporate class. The *New York Herald* was apt to point out that “a State which allies itself unfairly with one class against another invites what, when it happens, it is likely to call ‘treason.’”<sup>39</sup> As these many articles suggest, the previous failings of the state and local governments to protect workers' civil liberties disqualified their ability to charge those same workers with such a serious crime as treason. The selective enforcement of law became clear, as did the use of the court as an instrument to punish those who revolted against the increasingly militarized corporation-state alliance. In this instance, the state apparatus was tainted by its close relationship with the coal industry, and the treason trial reflected this blemish with the use of corporate attorneys to represent the West Virginia government – a joining of forces that aimed to replace justice with retribution. Luckily for Blizzard and his associates, the pressure from outside to abandon the charges was immense, and the corporate-state apparatus could not incarcerate them for treason against a highly dysfunctional system.

Although similar situations of corporate authoritarianism occurred throughout the country, the overlap between government and private institutions – especially at the local level – had never been quite so explicit. The state government declared martial law to a degree hitherto unprecedented, which inevitably and, as much evidence suggests, *intentionally* worked in the favor of the coal industry. Additionally, the degree to which the miners mobilized in opposition to the cooperation between public and private institutions exceeded conflicts in other areas of the country. While the West Virginia Coal Wars were a culmination of working people's tensions in light of industrial exploitation throughout the nation, the conflicts were also spurred by a set of exaggerated conditions unique to the area – conditions that did not cease to exist with the explosive 1921 Battle of Blair Mountain, which was the largest armed uprising since the Civil War.

Even after years of strikes and violence, the miners of West Virginia did not accomplish all they intended to. In fact, one of the only successes of the Battle of Blair Mountain was the attention it garnered in the national media for the plight of working people. Corporations still operated with a great deal of autonomy and paternalism in West Virginia, and it was not until 1935 that the right to unionize was granted under federal law. However, not long after this victory for the workers, the

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid, 140.

boom of industrial America began to quickly give way. Just as the coal industry gave economic life to the region in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, it just as well took that life away as deindustrialization swept through the region. Since corporate interest was the only reason for the existence of many coal towns, the towns relied utterly on the companies for economic support. Once those interests withdrew from the area, local economies collapsed, causing an upsurge of unemployment and poverty that now makes up the little-regarded economic class referred to as the “invisible poor.”

The importance of this epoch has unfortunately been forgotten by many both inside and outside of West Virginia. Complex and violent narratives are hidden under “trivia, distortions, and ersatz pleasantries” in primary schools, creating a vacuum where important lessons should be.<sup>40</sup> Corbin makes the provocative point that “far lesser events in American history have received far greater attention than similar, but more significant events in West Virginia.”<sup>41</sup> The “historical distortion” of West Virginia history is therefore defined by its absence in the greater course of American history and the outright negligence of meaningful, accurate historical education in the area. Ironically, despite the inadequate attention given to West Virginia’s industrial history, the legacy of this history has become ever more apparent in recent years. In 2010, a devastating mine explosion in the Upper Big Branch coal mine in Raleigh County killed twenty-nine miners due to Massey Energy’s violations of workplace safety. Later, in 2014, the coal-cleansing agent MCHM leaked from a Freedom Industries chemical plant into the water supply of over 300,000 people. As of early 2016, West Virginia has become a Right to Work state, limiting negotiation between unions and employers, and essentially decreasing the leverage employees have in the workplace. Indeed, much of the radicalism present in West Virginia at the turn of the century has succumbed to what appears to be passive exploitation, a circumstance that James Green poignantly described in his newest work:

Today, outsiders seem to pay attention to the people of West Virginia when a mine explosion attracts television cameras to some little white church building in the hills, where viewers see worried faces of the miners’ friends and family members awaiting news of their loved ones trapped underground. News reports of impoverished conditions and chronic diseases, flooded creeks and toxic rivers, mine disasters and exploding mountaintops, have conditioned many

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40 Corbin, ii.

41 Ibid.

Americans to see the people of coal country as pitiful casualties of modern history, not as mindful people who made their own history.<sup>42</sup>

As Green suggests, the historical agency of Appalachian people has been overshadowed by urban history and overwritten by the ebb and flow of economics. Nowadays, coal has been incorporated into the regional identity of West Virginia as a positive aspect of the state's history. Instead of being an enduring symbol of exploitation, coal has been transformed into a symbol of pride for working-class Americans with organizations such as Friends of Coal, an advocacy group for the coal industry deceptively named to convey a harmless image of a large industrial benefactor that hides the state's violent past. This contemporary transformation of West Virginia people's historical narrative from one of radicalism and leftist politics to one of isolated conservatism and docility is a curious phenomenon that Appalachian historians have recently attempted to uncover.

After deindustrialization took a heavy toll on the economic wellbeing of the area, the resulting poverty seemed to eradicate the radical component that pushed workers in similarly desperate circumstances to rebelliousness years earlier. Unfortunately for West Virginia, the deindustrialized post-Reagan era stands out in the nation's historical memory as the main narrative and erases any trace of this radical component. Furthermore, the lack of national attention to the area has allowed for a massive amount of environmental exploitation at the hands of the coal industry, sometimes even by circumventing safety measures and government regulation, as in the case of the Upper Big Branch mine explosion. While Ronald Garay described the dilapidated coal town of Gary, West Virginia, as a "symbol of industrial obsolescence," the industries themselves have actually continued to work relatively unhindered with labor that has largely been replaced by machines.<sup>43</sup> Indeed, the tangled, overlapping relationship between industry and government has not come to as final a halt as many might think. It is simply much less visible than it was in the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The importance of this research therefore lies in connecting West Virginia's industrial history to the present to synthesize the historical narrative and gain a better understanding of the relationships between industry, government, and the populace.

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42 James Green. *The Devil Is Here in These Hills: West Virginia's Coal Miners and Their Battle for Freedom*. (Grove Atlantic: New York, 2015), 7.

43 Ronald Garay. *U.S. Steel and Gary, West Virginia: Corporate Paternalism in Appalachia*. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2011), 215.

Perhaps the most important finding is that the concentration of power in industry during the Coal Wars directly paved the way for widespread poverty and continued environmental exploitation by coal companies. Furthermore, the combination of liberal business philosophy and capitalist paranoia in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century enabled the consolidation of private and public authorities to suppress a radical labor movement while simultaneously benefitting the production of capital. Through selective law enforcement, protection of the right to private property (even when it became excessive), and unorthodox overlap of government and private institutions (such as the deputizing of mine guards), the West Virginia government allowed the coal companies to build a massively powerful industrial empire at the expense of working people's civil liberties.

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