## CONTENTS

Staff Information  
Contributors Page  
Letter from the Chief Editor  

### REVIEWS

Anna Veltfort’s *Goodbye, My Havana: A Saga of History, Idealism, and Undying Love*  
Joyce Salisbury’s *Rome’s Christian Princess: Reflections on the Regency Of Galla Placidia*

### ARTICLES

Just a Glass: An Analysis of the Role of Alcohol in *Konzentrationslager Auschwitz-Birkenau*  
The Nazi Weaponization of Jewish Victims: Jewish Complicity and “Privilege” during the Nazi Occupation of Greek Salonica  
‘Off the Pigs?’: The Black Panther Party and Masculinity  
Exploitation and Resistance: Enslaved Motherhood at the University of Alabama, 1837-1855  
A Moral Crusade: The Preservation of Segregation by Southern Baptists in Alabama  
Persistent Resistance: The Struggle Against School Integration in Tuscaloosa, AL; 1956-2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reviewer</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Linda Gao</td>
<td>Anna Veltfort’s <em>Goodbye, My Havana: A Saga of History, Idealism, and Undying Love</em></td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleen McLafferty</td>
<td>Joyce Salisbury’s <em>Rome’s Christian Princess: Reflections on the Regency Of Galla Placidia</em></td>
<td>06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dylan Sanderson</td>
<td>Just a Glass: An Analysis of the Role of Alcohol in <em>Konzentrationslager Auschwitz-Birkenau</em></td>
<td>09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maya González</td>
<td>The Nazi Weaponization of Jewish Victims: Jewish Complicity and “Privilege” during the Nazi Occupation of Greek Salonica</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chandani Desai</td>
<td>‘Off the Pigs?’: The Black Panther Party and Masculinity</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katie Marks</td>
<td>Exploitation and Resistance: Enslaved Motherhood at the University of Alabama, 1837-1855</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morgan Hundley</td>
<td>A Moral Crusade: The Preservation of Segregation by Southern Baptists in Alabama</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benjamin Trost</td>
<td>Persistent Resistance: The Struggle Against School Integration in Tuscaloosa, AL; 1956-2007</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The *Crimson Historical Review* is composed of undergraduate students at the University of Alabama who are passionate about history, academic writing, and publishing. Interested in becoming a staff member? Undergraduate students at the University of Alabama are invited to contact crimsonhistorical@ua.edu. The CHR is not operated by the University of Alabama. The opinions and views within this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the position of the University of Alabama and its staff.
Lingxiao ‘Linda’ Gao, the University of Notre Dame: a history major with minors in PPE and German. Linda is from Beijing, China and plans to pursue a PhD in history after graduation.

Colleen McLaafferty, Ohio University: a freshman from Cleveland, OH studying history, English, and law, justice, and culture studies. Her interests include social and political history. While she plans to earn her master’s degree, Colleen also hopes to pursue a career in policy and research. In her free time, she loves to read, write, and spend time outside.

Dylan Sanderson, the University of British Columbia: a recent graduate from Vancouver, Canada, who completed his studies with a double major in history and German. While interested in numerous areas of historical study, his primary research interests are Germany during the National Socialist period and the Holocaust. Dylan’s long-term goal is to be an active participant in the world of academia, pedagogy, and knowledge transmission, bridging the worlds of academia and more public discourses around the past while exploring and developing how historical knowledge can help bring about social justice, enrich and problematize understandings of the past, and provide context for the present.

Morgan Hundley, Duke University: a recent graduate from Birmingham, AL. Morgan majored in ancient religion and society, an interdepartmental program in religious and classical studies. She was also a history minor with a concentration in Europe and Russia. While at Duke, Morgan was a Deans’ Summer Research Fellow with the Religious Studies Department and a Seymour H. Shore Fellow with the Jewish Studies Department. During her dual fellowships, she explored how gender norms were constructed and maintained in both the ancient and contemporary worlds. In fact, her thesis investigated the mechanisms first implemented by the Southern Baptist denomination to stall the Civil Rights Movement, and later to undo female ordination. In the fall, Morgan will pursue a master’s in religious studies with a concentration in New Testament at Yale Divinity School.

Benjamin Trost, the University of Alabama: a graduate of Central High School in Tuscaloosa and now a freshman majoring in both biology and socio-environmental studies through the New College, with a minor in the Blount Scholars program. Benjamin is interested in historical analyses that utilize local histories as tools for truth-telling and reconciliation in America, and he hopes to continue his work in this area through the lens of environmental justice and ecological studies.

Chandani Desai, Georgia State University: born in Lawrenceville, GA, and raised in Buford, GA, Chandani first discovered her love for history after taking an Advanced Placement class in the tenth grade. At GSU, she used her background in technology and website-building to make history more accessible for the common person. She has since graduated magna cum laude with a B.A. in her favorite discipline. While Chandani has not yet settled on a career path, she aims to use her history degree to make the world a better place. Her historical interests include most everything, but she is experienced in South Asian history and American history.

Maya Gonzalez, University of California-Santa Cruz: a senior, who, upon graduating in spring 2021, will have completed majors in Jewish studies and history. Originally from San Diego, California, their areas of historical interest include Holocaust memory in film, genocide and gender, and modern Jewish history. After graduation, Maya will be attending the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, to earn a master’s degree in public history in hopes of pursuing a career in Holocaust and genocide education.

Katie Marks, the University of Alabama: a senior originally from Alabaster, AL, majoring in history with a minor in criminal justice. History has long been a passion of Katie’s and some of her favorite historical subjects include the Cold War, slavery in the Americas, the Civil Rights Movement, and modern Mexican history. She plans on going to law school after graduating from UA and intends to eventually work in either civil rights or immigration law.
Dear Readers,

To open I remind you of a classic—if not routinely over-stated—historical dichotomy: change and continuity. Whilst this contrast has perpetually evinced its truth, the past six months seem particularly representative: much has been altered for the better—fewer covid-related restrictions at the expense of less lives—, and still more has stayed the same—the continuation of a tragedy both global and personal.

This semester at the Crimson Historical Review has followed such a pattern: as life at the University of Alabama neared normalcy—thanks in large part to the courage and consideration of its faculty—, the Review maintained its policy of maximizing remote work and, in turn, its sterling publication record. CHR staff transformed sixty-plus submissions—a number which rivals any undergraduate journal, in the U.S. or abroad—into our most enterprising issue to date.

The present edition is not only a product of the ability of the broad group of authors detailed above, but also of those with whom they vested their trust: the CHR review board and copy editors. All of these young historians combined to produce, then perfect, articles examining topics ranging from the varied lived experiences in Nazi-occupied areas to masculinity in the Black Panther Party; they also marked important firsts for CHR, centering novel inquiry on our home institution’s complicated relationship with race—particularly, its complicity in slavery and segregation—and reviewing two recently-published monographs. Each piece is based upon a profound research question, well-situated in its historiography, and clearly and cogently argued: in other words, as brilliant as every person whose efforts guaranteed this volume’s success.

To this end, I extend, as always, my thanks to Dr. Margaret Peacock. As faculty advisor, she has proven instrumental to the Review’s sustained success; she is as generous as she is erudite—altogether superlative. Superlative, too, were Lily Mears, who now ends her tenure as Chief Copy Editor to lead production, and Logan Goulart, who leaves his position as Review Board Executive to study at U. Chicago. I know that Logan will shine up north, and that he will be adeptly replaced here by Gavin Jones. Lastly, I congratulate John French—he performed the role of Executive Administrator with characteristic dexterity—, and John Pace, whose promotion to Co-Chief Editor is entirely deserved.

Please enjoy Vol. III, No. II of the Crimson Historical Review,

Jackson C. Foster

Editor-in-Chief
JUST A GLASS: An Analysis of the Role of Alcohol in Konzentrationslager Auschwitz-Birkenau
Dylan Sanderson

While the role of alcohol amongst perpetrators of the Holocaust has received some scholarly attention, little focus has been paid to its use within the Nazi concentration camp system specifically. Using Auschwitz-Birkenau as a case study, this paper draws on accounts from survivors, perpetrators, and civilians to demonstrate the presence of alcohol in various contexts of camp life and explore both who used it and for what purposes, from prisoners to guards and from barter good to accompaniment to the perpetration of violence. This paper both demonstrates the value of studying the role of alcohol within the camp and argues for the need to address this gap in the scholarship so as to better understand the lived experiences of those who composed the camp’s population and the perpetration of the Holocaust more generally, as well as identifying some specific areas likely warranting future research.

Introduction

In his account of the nearly five years he spent in Konzentrationslager Auschwitz-Birkenau, Anus Mundi, Wiesław Kielar details an interaction between Edward “Edek” Galiński—his friend and an accomplice in attempting to escape—and the Blockführer Pestek: 1 “Just a glass, Herr Blockführer. A little glassful won’t hurt you. No one will notice, because everybody drinks.” The SS guard accepts, sharing a glass and conversation with Edek and Kielar. While it may come as a surprise, this is not the only documented instance of such an event occurring within the camp. 3 Although likely not as ubiquitous as Galiński’s comment might suggest, the selection of sources concerning Auschwitz-Birkenau consulted for this paper indicates that alcohol was present in several different aspects of camp life—appearing in other contexts as seemingly unlikely as a shared drink between prisoners and an SS guard. Given alcohol’s presence in different facets of life inside the camp—some of which will be explored throughout this paper—it warrants examination as a subject of historical inquiry to contextualize and address its relative absence in the analyses of camp life and, in turn, the history of the camp and those who experienced it more generally. As historian Edward B. Westermann argues, despite what he terms the “ubiquity” of its presence, “there has been little scholarly analysis concerning the use of alcohol or its role in the process of mass murder” during the Holocaust. 4 The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate the value of analyzing the use of alcohol within the camp as a unique

1 Blockführer, or block leaders, were Schutzstaffel (SS) men in charge of prisoner barracks. For more information, see: Nikolaus Wachsmann, KL: A History of the Nazi Concentration Camps (New York: FSG Books, 2015), 112, index 834.
phenomenon—as well as identify some areas warranting future research and inquiry—by identifying the roles played by alcohol in Auschwitz-Birkenau across certain cross-sections of its population.

Source Base Limitations

It is important to note that the number of sources consulted for this paper does not begin to address what is available in the form of memoirs, camp records, photographs, and other sources—especially regarding those yet to be translated into English. Nor is this selection intended as a representative sample. The primary sources consulted consist predominantly of accounts from eyewitnesses in the form of either memoirs or given testimony, including the voices of civilians, the SS garrison, and survivors, in translation if not originally published in English.

Perhaps most important to note is that we simply do not have the majority of victim’s voices. We do not hear from those who did not speak or write about their experiences, nor those that did not survive; those voices that are extant and available to us belong disproportionately to what Primo Levi—himself a survivor of Auschwitz—has described as a “privileged” group, “a minority within the Lager [camp] population [who] nevertheless … represent a potent majority among survivors.”

The reader should remain aware of this limitation, as it likely colors even this limited sample; in short, any conclusions drawn are tentative and require further research.

In terms of secondary scholarship, Westermann’s conclusion regarding the relative lack of scholarship in this area as one of the seemingly few scholars focusing specifically on the role of alcohol during the Holocaust appears to hold true in the context of the concentration camp system. Alcohol is mentioned by historians of the Holocaust, but often only obliquely and is rarely featured as the focus of analysis; more often than not it is mentioned primarily in the context of its use by perpetrators rather than the prisoner population or other groups. Indeed, while a seminal text in the study of perpetrators of the Holocaust published as far back as 1992, Christopher Browning’s *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland,* does raise the role of alcohol in the East and explores its use by perpetrators as a coping mechanism—opening the door for historians to begin to analyze this phenomena—very few scholars apart from Westermann seem to have adopted the role of alcohol during the Holocaust as the focus of their analyses.

In the context of research for this paper, no English-language scholarship was located that specifically addresses the role of alcohol within the camp system to any degree of depth; rather, when mentioned, it is primarily either passed over without comment or discussed only briefly.

Alcohol in Auschwitz-Birkenau

The role which alcohol played throughout the camp for those that had access to it varied across different contexts. For some, it was a means by which to cope with the intense psychological stress of camp life. For others, it functioned as a currency to curry favor and special privileges or acquire needed material goods. In the case of some members of the SS garrison, alcohol was also likely a coping mechanism, as

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well as a factor in the perpetration of violence—it was surely present during a number of documented instances. Furthermore, for those that did have access to alcohol, it could fulfill more than one of these roles—currency, coping mechanism, or potential factor in the perpetration of violence.

**Camp Population**

Within the population of Auschwitz-Birkenau, individuals belonging to four main categories are documented in consulted source materials as having used alcohol.\(^7\) Firstly, there was the SS garrison.\(^8\) It was divided into roughly two main groups: the guard troop battalion and the commandant staff, with the latter composing the camp’s administration.\(^9\) Of these two groups, the guard troop made up the majority, accounting for 72-82% of total SS camp personnel in the years 1940-1942.\(^10\) While the SS garrison was predominantly male, a small number of women did serve in three different formations, tasked respectively with duties in the hospital for SS men, the office of the commandant, and the women’s camp. Nurses and German Red Cross sisters composed the first group, with so-called SS-Helferinnen constituting the second—working as telephone, radio operators, and the like. The last group were female overseers either in the women’s camp or tasked with supervising external work details.\(^11\) While the majority of the garrison were Germans holding German citizenship, known as *Reichsdeutsche*, a significant portion—approximately 46% of those who served in the camp—came from outside the Reich’s pre-1939 borders, some of whom did not have German as their mother tongue; termed *Volksdeutsche*, the ideology of National Socialism considered them ethnic Germans and therefore suitable to serve within the ranks of the SS, with countries of origin including Poland, Hungary, Romania, and Serbia.\(^12\)

Secondly, there were the prisoners. In an attempt to erase evidence of the genocide they had perpetrated, the destruction of much of the relevant documentation by the SS in January 1945 precludes a determining of the exact demographics of Auschwitz-Birkenau; however, the extant camp records do provide some insight into the makeup of the prisoner population.\(^13\) While the prisoner population was predominantly Polish when the camp was established in 1940, from 1943 onwards Jewish prisoners of various nationalities constituted the majority.\(^14\) As historian Franciszek Piper writes, “Jewish citizens of almost all of the countries of Europe, and

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\(^7\) It is worth noting that some prisoners—primarily those of Auschwitz III Monowitz—did have limited contact with English prisoners of war, who themselves form a potential fifth group. They are omitted here due to a lack of explicit references to their use of alcohol in the sources consulted. However, it is known that alcohol was present in the English prisoner of war camp and that English POWs did provide “a great deal of help even though any contact with [inmates] was strictly forbidden,” as per: Hermann Langbein, *People in Auschwitz* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press in association with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2004), 462; Primo Levi, *If This Is a Man* (London: Folio Society, 2009), 203.

\(^8\) For a detailed accounting of the organization, duties, equipment, and other particulars of the SS garrison, see Setkiewicz, *Voices of Memory* 13, 7-35.

\(^9\) Setkiewicz, *Voices of Memory* 13, 10, 15.

\(^10\) Setkiewicz, *Voices of Memory* 13, 10.

\(^11\) While the female overseers were often mistakenly referred to as “SS women”, they were, at least in formal terms, “civilian private contractors.” Setkiewicz, *Voices of Memory* 13, 26-27.


even from other continents, were in the transports to Auschwitz.”¹⁵ A handwritten report produced in 1944 by the camp resistance movement and drawn from SS records lists Jewish prisoners of German, Polish, Hungarian, Slovak, Czech, Croatian, Dutch, Belgian, Italian, Greek, French, and Norwegian nationality across Auschwitz I, II, and III.¹⁶ During the same period, the second largest group of prisoners was composed of what the SS termed political prisoners, also from numerous countries.¹⁷ In addition, there are records of Jehovah’s Witnesses, priests, and Russian prisoners of war—amongst still other categories used by the SS to classify prisoners: “Asocial,” “Gypsies” (Sinti and Roma), “Homosexuals,” and those in “Probationary Custody” or “Reeducation.”¹⁸

Thirdly, there were the Kapos.¹⁹ In his work The Drowned and the Saved, Primo Levi defines Kapos as “those who occupied commanding positions: the chiefs … of the labor squads, the barracks chiefs, the clerks, all the way to the world … of the prisoners who performed diverse at most times delicate duties in the camps’ administrative offices, the Political Section … the Labor Service, and the punishment cells.”²⁰ They occupied a space within the camp which Levi terms the grey zone; Stef Craps summarizes this concept as encompassing:

Victims who compromise and collaborate with their oppressors to varying degrees and with varying degrees of freedom of choice in exchange for preferential treatment. Levi insists that one should refrain from passing easy judgment on these morally ambiguous privileged prisoners, who found themselves flung into an infernal environment and who, moreover, did not constitute a monolithic group but came in many different shades of grey, with different levels of culpability.²¹

Lastly, there were civilians who were not prisoners within the camp. These included individuals—often German civilians—hired by German companies to do specialized work inside the camp, sometimes alongside prisoners; furthermore, local Poles also came into contact with prisoners, primarily when the latter were tasked with labor outside of the confines of the camp.²² Within the limited scope of this paper, primary focus will be placed on the former two groups of the camp population—the SS garrison and prisoners—as the sources consulted provide the most information for said groups, allowing for the most potentially representative picture.

Alcohol and the SS

For the men composing the SS garrison at Auschwitz-Birkenau, sources indicate that alcohol played a role for at least some. First and foremost, it is essential to note that they were the sole group explicitly permitted alcohol by camp authorities. Indeed, the SS leadership attempted to use alcohol as “both a literal and metaphorical lubricant

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¹⁶ Długoborski and Piper, Auschwitz, 1940-1945, 2:42.
¹⁷ Nationalities of political prisoners in said document are listed as German, Polish, Czech, Dutch, Rumanian [sic], French, Russian, and Yugoslavian. Długoborski and Piper, 2:42.
¹⁸ Długoborski and Piper, Auschwitz, 1940-1945, 2:40-42.
¹⁹ For more information on the role of Kapos, see the former for a more general history of Kapos in the entire camp system and the latter for Auschwitz-Birkenau specifically: Wachsmann, KL: A History of the Nazi Concentration Camps, 512-27; Langbein, People in Auschwitz, 143-77.
²⁰ Levi, The Drowned and the Saved, 45.
²² Langbein, People in Auschwitz, 449-68.
for creating camaraderie” within the garrison, especially as a means to bridge the social gap between officers and enlisted men.\footnote{Edward B. Westermann, “Drinking Rituals, Masculinity, and Mass Murder in Nazi Germany,” \textit{Central European History} 51, no. 3 (September 2018): 367; Piotr Setkiewicz, ed., \textit{The Private Lives of the Auschwitz SS}, trans. William Brand (Oświęcim: Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, 2017), 7; Setkiewicz, \textit{Voices of Memory} 13, 29-30.} Evening socials—events which were quickly made mandatory for all personnel—featured beer, although “vodka played the leading role,” according to one SS man.\footnote{Setkiewicz, \textit{The Private Lives of the Auschwitz SS}, 7; Setkiewicz, \textit{Voices of Memory} 13, 29, 66.} An SS officers’ club was also established at the onset of the camp’s operation, with a contemporary account attesting to the sounds of revelry which emanated from it, continuing late into the night along with instances of property destruction which occurred as a result of the drunken behavior of SS men upon leaving.\footnote{Setkiewicz, \textit{The Private Lives of the Auschwitz SS}, 37.} The free beer provided on at least certain occasions may have helped to fuel this behavior.\footnote{Constantine FitzGibbon and Krystyna Michalik, trans., \textit{KL Auschwitz Seen by the SS} (Oświęcim, Poland: Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, 2012), 166.}

Based on the accounts of the Polish women and girls who were forced to work in the homes of SS families living within the vicinity of the camp, it is evident that drinking parties not officially organized by camp authorities were also a regular staple of social life for some members of the garrison, including officers. It is worth noting that when a family did not engage in this practice, it was deemed worthy of note as an exception to the norm by the Polish domestic workers who provided testimony—potentially indicating its prevalence.\footnote{Setkiewicz, \textit{The Private Lives of the Auschwitz SS}, 18-19, 27, 57.} Additionally, these testimonies mention the consumption of alcohol by women married to SS men, both with their husbands and independently, indicating that its consumption was not a strictly gendered endeavor.\footnote{Setkiewicz, \textit{The Private Lives of the Auschwitz SS}, 39, 76.}

The legal supply of alcohol available to members of the SS provided them with an item in demand on the camp’s black market; while much of the camp was cognizant of the fact that incoming transports of prisoners “frequently carried property of significant value,” it was “the SS men … who grew rich,” forcing prisoners to steal on their behalf, at times paying for jewelry and other valuable items stolen from victims with that which was available to them: vodka, a good the SS men had far readier access to than most prisoners.\footnote{Setkiewicz, \textit{Voices of Memory} 13, 145, 149-50, 160.} While such trade was illegal, it was nevertheless present.

Furthermore, punishment records kept by the garrison reflect that intoxication was a part of numerous breaches of discipline on the part of the camp’s guards. Instances range from the failure to salute a superior officer and sharing alcohol with a prisoner or Kapo to getting into brawls and becoming so intoxicated so as to fail to appear for duty the following day.\footnote{Christopher Dillon, \textit{Dachau and the SS: A Schooling in Violence}, Dachau and the SS (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 65.} These findings indicate a continued trend within camps operated by the SS, with “drunkenness” being listed as one of the most common reasons for punishment at Dachau as far back as 1937.\footnote{Christopher Dillon, \textit{Dachau and the SS: A Schooling in Violence}, Dachau and the SS (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 65.} Further research is needed to determine whether this is indicative of a high prevalence of consumption within SS guard troops, limited tolerance of excessive or conspicuous consumption by the SS, or some combination of the two, as well as how alcohol’s role amongst the garrison at Auschwitz-Birkenau contrasted with other camps and the SS more generally.
In addition to consumption while off-duty, at least some members of the garrison consumed substantial amounts of alcohol while actively fulfilling their roles and duties in the camp’s operation. Accounts from both prisoners and members of the garrison themselves attest to this.32 In her work *Hope is the Last to Die*, survivor Halina Birenbaum repeatedly relates the intoxication of the SS men who guarded her—even referring to their state at times as being “dead-drunk.”33 Another example comes from the memoir of Władimir Bilan, an SS man who served in the political department of the camp. Writing in 1944, he describes this period of camp life as being:

truly a vodka-fueled time, because vodka was drunk all day and everywhere. Soldiers could be seen carrying vodka in their briefcases, in their pockets, it could be seen in almost all vehicles, in offices, [cells], etc. In the evening, the pandemonium could be heard through the blocks. Drunken SS men staggered around, emptying their stomachs in the corridors … There was nothing strange about this because the state of lawlessness could corrupt even the best person.34

While camp authorities did encourage the use of alcohol in certain instances, these reported cases of excessive usage and ubiquity outside of official sanction—even while on-duty—had both causes and consequences.

**SS Garrison Alcohol Usage as Coping Mechanism**

Another telling post-war testimony comes from former SS non-commissioned officer Oswald Kaduk and gives some idea as to why at least some SS men might have drank to such an extent. When asked about how at his post-war trial he had mentioned that “after arriving in Auschwitz [he] began to drink” Kaduk replied:

I would like to state that never in my life did I drink such quantities of alcohol as in Auschwitz. This might seem laughable to you, but sometimes from the very morning, before reporting to the boss, and before giving the block directors their duty assignments—I drank alcohol. The boss knew about it, but I never got in trouble, I didn’t stagger.35

When asked for the reason behind such behavior, he stated, referring to the treatment of prisoners and conditions within the camp: “I simply couldn’t look at it all.”36 Toward the end of the camp’s operation, with the end of the war and the potential for the discovery of the atrocities perpetrated by the SS in sight, SS man Oberscharführer Mussfeld is described by survivor Miklós Nyiszli in the following manner: “For days at a time he remained locked in his room, drinking, with an apparently unquenchable thirst, to forget both the past and the darkly looming future.”37 Sources such as these suggest that members of the SS garrison may have relied on alcohol to cope with what they did, saw, experienced, and perpetrated in the camp. Lending credence to this notion is the known role of alcohol in another related context, the so-called “Holocaust by Bullets”—the mass murder of primarily Jewish victims in Eastern Europe by death squads composed of SS forces, police units, elements of the *Wehrmacht* (regular armed forces), and local auxiliaries.38 Sources reference the inability of some SS men

32 Kielar, *Anus Mundi*, 26; Setkiewicz, *Voices of Memory* 13, 65-66, 75-78.
34 Setkiewicz, *Voices of Memory* 13, 65.
35 Setkiewicz, *Voices of Memory*, 75.
36 Setkiewicz, *Voices of Memory*, 75.
38 For more information concerning the role of alcohol in the East, as well as some observations about its use within National Socialism, the SS/SA, police, and the concentration camp system more generally, see the work of Edward B. Westermann, including: “Drinking Rituals, Masculinity, and Mass Murder in
to “cope with the demands made on them,” many of whom “abandoned themselves to alcohol.”39 The “abuse … [of] alcohol in the wake of mass killings” seems to have been one means by which SS perpetrators attempted to “lessen [their] feelings of guilt and to find some way to cope with [their] actions.”40 While it is important to recognize the differences between these two contexts, these related instances may provide some insight into the potential usage of alcohol as a coping mechanism by some SS men at Auschwitz-Birkenau.

Camp authorities seem to at least some extent have also seen the potential role of alcohol as a coping mechanism. Whether they approved or not, for at least some of the camp’s operation those SS men who were tasked with overseeing crematoria operations were provided with alcohol for the so-called “hardship work” they undertook—in short, the murder of men, women, and children.41 The aforementioned Wladimir Bilan relates in his testimony that “vodka was given out in the Kremas [crematoria] in great quantities … It is therefore hardly strange that I almost never saw the Krema bosses [SS overseers] sober … In a word, this was a time of ‘drowning the conscience’ at Oświęcim [the Polish name for Auschwitz], while the victims were being annihilated without interruption.”42 This usage of alcohol does not seem to have been solely restricted to the lower ranks as in addition to the aforementioned SS officer’s club the longest-serving commandant of Auschwitz, Rudolph Höss, recounts in his autobiography how on many occasions he too “tried to ward off [an] impending bad mood with alcohol,” after which he became “garrulous and cheerful, even merry” and agreed to “many concessions [which] were wheedled out of [him] in this mood that [he] would’ve never agreed to when sober.”43

Alcohol and the Enabling of Violence

Sources also indicate the presence of alcohol in numerous instances of the perpetration of violence against prisoners by SS men. From testimonies of both prisoners and SS men alike, it is evident that some guards did commit brutal acts while intoxicated on duty. Some individuals are described as being in a near-constant state of intoxication, including SS man Oberscharführer Schillinger, who “was continuously drunk and ill-treated the prisoners at every opportunity.”44 Other SS men who had served in the crematoria are described by survivor Henryk Mandelbaum as often having “went around under the influence of alcohol and were aggressive for no reason.”45

The presence of alcohol in these situations raises the question of what role it played in the perpetration of violence by the SS within the camp and whether it affected the nature and extent of said violence. Historian Edward B. Westermann argues that “during the Third Reich, alcohol … contribut[ed] to acts of violence and atrocity by the men of … the Schutzstaffel (SS) … and [that] its use and abuse among the perpetrators has been documented extensively in the historical record.”46

40 Westermann, “Stone-Cold Killers or Drunk with Murder? Alcohol and Atrocity during the Holocaust,” 2, 7.
41 Setkiewicz, Voices of Memory 13, 66.
42 Setkiewicz, Voices of Memory, 65-66.
43 Setkiewicz, Voices of Memory, 40-41.
44 Kielar, Anus Mundi, 141.
45 Henryk Mandelbaum, Igor Bartosik, and Adam Willma, I Was at the Auschwitz Crematorium: A Conversation with Henryk Mandelbaum, Former Prisoner and Member of the Sonderkommando at Auschwitz, trans. William Brand (Oświęcim, Poland: Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, 2011), 64.
Continuing, he also writes that “the requirement for everyone to participate in the ritual of drinking and toasting to mass murder bound the perpetrators to the act—and to each other.”\(^{47}\) This establishes a precedent for the link between alcohol’s usage within the SS and the perpetration of violence.

Research by Westermann in another context of the Holocaust examines the relationship between alcohol and the perpetration of violence during the aforementioned mass killings in Eastern Europe. While it is important to keep in mind that Auschwitz-Birkenau was its own unique context with different factors at play, Westermann establishes “the connection between the abuse of alcohol … and the frequency of violent crime” more generally, citing numerous findings which indicate the often high correlation between alcohol and violence.\(^{48}\) In the context of the perpetration of genocide in the East, he argues that alcohol was often available at “murder sites” and that numerous testimonies record that “the killers were intoxicated,” with alcohol even acting as a “catalyst” for some instances of violence.\(^{49}\) These findings suggest another potential role played by alcohol for some SS men within the camp and point to the need for further research in this area.

There is also the issue of culpability and responsibility. To term alcohol a catalyst for violence could be read as an implicit relocating of blame from the perpetrator to something external, ignoring the inherently genocidal system and ideology upon which the camp’s existence and operation was predicated—as well as the perpetrator’s own culpability. While the relationship between alcohol and sexual violence within the camp specifically will be addressed in a following section, informative parallels can be made to interdisciplinary research done regarding the link between alcohol and the perpetration of sexual violence. As Diana Scully argues about the usage of alcohol as an excuse for sexual violence, it is just that—an excuse—and cannot be used as a justification for the perpetration of violence.\(^{50}\) Perpetrators often turn to “minimizing strategies,” creating “narratives [which] appear to be framed to reduce culpability (e.g. by blaming alcohol …)” by means of “externalizing blame onto situational factors.”\(^{51}\) This can provide a social function, with alcohol consumption acting as an excuse by which the perpetrator can attempt to “explain themselves in socially acceptable terms” so as to avoid ostracization, judgement, or being found responsible.\(^{52}\) Additionally, it can allow the perpetrator to see their own behavior as somehow not representative of their “true” self, insulating them from the effects of their actions.\(^{53}\) Given that exaggerating the role of alcohol in one’s time in the camp may have been advantageous for perpetrators recounting their experiences post-war, it is especially important in this context to approach these sources with a critical eye. While an in-depth discussion of the relationship between complicity and alcohol consumption is beyond the scope of this paper, it is essential to note that while

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\(^{48}\) Westermann, “Stone-Cold Killers or Drunk with Murder? Alcohol and Atrocity during the Holocaust,” 2-3.

\(^{49}\) Westermann, “Stone-Cold Killers or Drunk with Murder? Alcohol and Atrocity during the Holocaust,” 1, 5.


\(^{52}\) Jeffrey and Barata, “‘She Didn’t Want To … and I’d Obviously Insist,’” 98; Brennan et al., “A Qualitative Analysis of Offenders’ Emotional Responses to Perpetrating Sexual Assault,” 406.

alcohol may have helped perpetrators cope and even been a factor in their committing of acts of violence and genocide, they were nevertheless just that: perpetrators.

**Alcohol and Prisoners**

It is evident from available sources that alcohol was a part of the camp experience for at least some prisoners. For example, in the literary collection of short stories by survivor Tadeusz Borowski describing life in the camp, *This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen*, alcohol is featured eleven times.\(^5^4\) Although alcohol was not nearly as common among the general prisoner population of Auschwitz-Birkenau as the SS garrison, this did not stop some prisoners from “organizing” their own supply—camp slang for the process of trading and stealing to acquire something. Perhaps unsurprisingly, some turned to the substance to cope.\(^5^5\) Indeed, having celebrated his birthday with “boozed”, Wieslaw Kielar described the pleasure of feeling as if “[he] was floating on air … [which] was most agreeable and life in the camp appeared to be less frightful.”\(^5^6\) Further speaking to alcohol’s potential utility as a coping mechanism, survivor Miklós Nyiszli, who worked as a prisoner doctor within the camp, described his experience:

> I drink tea with rum. After a few glasses my internal tensions subside completely. My mind is purged, liberated from its tormenting thoughts, my whole body becomes enlivened. A pleasing warmth flows through me. I am drunk. I can feel the alcohol’s intoxicating work. Its effect is like a mother’s caressing hand, as if benevolence is raining down upon me.\(^5^7\)

When Ya’akov Silberberg, survivor of the Sonderkommando,\(^5^8\) was asked if “you men [referring to members of the Sonderkommando] wanted to get drunk,” he replied to the interviewer’s question: “No. How should I put it? We wanted to forget what was on our minds.”\(^5^9\) On Silberberg’s first night, filled with thoughts of suicide and unsure of how he could possibly carry out the work assigned to him, his *Kapo* took him aside:

> [The *Kapo*] gave me some-thing strong to drink, some whiskey or alcohol, one drink, then another. “Listen,” he said. “When I first got here, I spoke just like you and I got used to it. And I’m still working. I think that you’ll also be one of those who gets used to it and who works.” After I drank, I slept all night long. When I woke up, I began to think in a totally different way.\(^6^0\)

Instances such as this suggest that alcohol may have allowed some prisoners to push through moments which to them felt completely impossible to endure—and played a role for some of those who existed in the aforementioned grey zone.

Some prisoners recognized alcohol’s worth and attempted to exchange it for often-essential food to supplement the starvation rations or to find favor with SS guards, *Kapos*, or privileged prisoners in positions of power.\(^6^1\) Similar to cigarettes,\(^6^2\)

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\(^{56}\) Kielar, *Anus Mundi*, 43.

\(^{57}\) Nyiszli, *Auschwitz*, 37.

\(^{58}\) As described by Primo Levi, the Sonderkommando were “the group of prisoners entrusted with running the crematoria. It was their task to maintain order among the new arrivals … who were to be sent into the gas chambers, to extract the corpses from the chambers, to pull gold teeth from jaws, to cut women’s hair, to sort and classify clothes, shoes, and the contents of the luggage, to transport the bodies to the crematoria and oversee the operation of the ovens, to extract and eliminate the ashes.”; Levi, 50.

\(^{59}\) Gideon Greif, *We Wept Without Tears* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2005), 327, JSTOR.

\(^{60}\) Greif, *We Wept Without Tears*, 317.

\(^{61}\) Kielar, *Anus Mundi*, 182-83, 192; Setkiewicz, *Voices of Memory* 13, 76, 150.
alcohol functioned at times as a form of currency and barter good on the camp black market. 62 Indeed, the aforementioned Ya’akov Silberberg even speaks of “schnapps” as the most sought-after commodity, referencing the desire to “forget what was on our minds” by means of its consumption. 63 Lastly, despite—or perhaps in part because of—the harshness of camp life, for some prisoners alcohol still managed to play a social role, however rarely, with it being given as a gift between friends, or to reconcile disagreements. 64 Wieslaw Kielar recounts in Anus Mundi how alcohol’s usage for the latter quickly led to an entire prisoner barrack engaging in a drinking bout together; following a fight with one of the Russian POWs, his former opponent: pulled a bottle [from under his blanket], knocked out the cork with a deft movement and indicated with his finger the level down to which [Kielar] was allowed to drink. Handing [Kielar] the bottle, he said: ‘Drink … to our reconciliation…’ With difficulty [Kielar] reached the level indicated … otherwise, the drink “to our reconciliation” would not have been valid … Once more [they] shook hands, and only then did the others join [them]. A drinking bout began. Somebody was always bringing more liquor … After this incident there were no more misunderstandings between the Russians and [Kielar]. After that time they trusted [him]. 65

Sources and Privilege
From the sources consulted, it is clear that alcohol found its way into many aspects of camp life—sometimes in surprising ways. It was not necessarily restricted solely to the garrison or privileged prisoners. However, although there is insufficient research to determine what percentage of prisoners might have had ready access to alcohol, it is clear—given the nature of camp life alone—that access to alcohol among prisoners was likely a very rare exception and far from the norm. It is important to note that while it may have been an everyday commodity for a limited few, the reality of the camp for the vast majority of prisoners would suggest that alcohol was effectively completely beyond their reach. The basis for the exceptions to this general rule and how they came to be is an important question and one that must be answered in order to obtain a fuller understanding of camp life—therefore warranting further research.

Various factors affected whether a prisoner had access to alcohol or would have been able to consume it—especially with any degree of regularity. Certain work Kommandos did grant increased access to alcohol, for example. 66 Those working in the Kanada Kommando, tasked with sorting the personal possessions of those who had been murdered by the SS, were one such group. 67 Describing the female prisoners assigned to Kanada, Halina Birenbaum recounts that “they were always well fed and well dressed; they did not want for cigarettes or even vodka.” 68 Work dismantling downed and damaged aircraft in the Mexico Kommando was also purportedly sought after by Russian POWs, with the “main attraction [being] alcohol, which could be found in various parts of the airplane and which was smuggled into the camp in large quantities inside … water bottles.” 69 Work which enabled contact with civilian workers, who were at times willing to trade or wished to help the prisoners, also provided increased chances of sourcing alcohol; SS man Wladimir Bilan characterized the situation as “true black market trading with the civilians working in the camp.

62 Setkiewicz, Voices of Memory 13, 65.
63 Greif, We Wept Without Tears, 327.
64 Kielar, Anus Mundi, 171, 194.
65 Kielar, Anus Mundi,195-6.
66 Kommando, roughly translatable to “work detail”, was the German term for the primary unit for the organization of prisoner forced labor detachments within Auschwitz-Birkenau.
67 Langbein, People in Auschwitz, 139, 141.
68 Birenbaum, Hope Is the Last to Die, 99.
69 Kielar, Anus Mundi, 192.
area,” and that “various brands of … vodka … could be seen in every section of the camp.” SS men also added to the supply of alcohol on the black market within the camp as part of the trading between the guards and those with access to prisoners’ belongings: “bought with vodka … [SS men] sent their families hundreds of thousands of marks and foreign currency, scores of watches, kilos of gold, and dozens of diamonds … [stolen from] people who had been gassed.” One account even recorded an instance of prisoners assigned to a work commando in a lab producing their own alcohol, a “brew … disgusting, tepid but strong.”

Opportunities to consume any alcohol that was acquired, however, were likely extremely limited, and apart from instances in which prisoners managed to find some private and secluded place or ensure the compliance of a guard or Kapo, its consumption was likely primarily circumspect. While privilege did not guarantee access to alcohol, it is important to note that in the sources consulted, the presence of alcohol was most often correlated with other instances of privilege—however relative or miniscule—and that regular alcohol consumption without repercussions would have only been possible for a very select few. An example of such an exception and how those with certain privileges were not always in an enviable position in every regard, Sonderkommando survivor Ya’akov Gabai speaks in his testimony of the “permission to drink alcoholic beverages, anything [Sonderkommando members] wanted.” In return for “lots of cash and gold … found in the undressing room [of the gas chambers].” members of the Sonderkommando were given “sausage and drinks for dinner.” Furthermore, Gabai relates, that “at night they let us sing … We sang along with the Germans. We ate and drank together … We didn’t have political discussions … It must sound terrible and it’s hard to understand how we lived together with our murderers. But anything was possible in Auschwitz.” While this was likely far from the norm, it is worth noting that such things do seem to have taken place—with alcohol likely playing a role. However, this state of affairs may not have been uniform within the Sonderkommando; when interviewed, Henryk Mandelbaum—another survivor of the Sonderkommando—spoke unequivocally of how he “never” drank in the camp and that only “a block boss or a Kapo could do that. In any case, no would have risked getting drunk while working.” In the words of historian and Sonderkommando expert Igor Bartosik, “generalization is impossible” in the context of alcohol’s role in the Sonderkommando.

Alcohol and Gender

In the sources consulted, the consumption of alcohol is portrayed as primarily a masculine endeavor, with only a relatively small number of instances recorded involving female prisoners. However, this should not be seen as representative or reflective of the reality for female prisoners within the camp—first and foremost because of the very limited nature of said source base. A more representative sample of survivor’s memoirs and other available documentation would have to be consulted before any conclusions could begin to be drawn about the role of alcohol for women.

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70 Setkiewicz, Voices of Memory 13, 65.
71 Greif, We Wept Without Tears, 198, 302, 374.
72 Kielar, Anus Mundi, 43.
73 Greif, We Wept Without Tears, 199.
74 Greif, We Wept Without Tears, 198.
75 Greif, We Wept Without Tears, 205.
76 Mandelbaum, Bartosik, and Willma, I Was at the Auschwitz Crematorium, 64.
77 Mandelbaum, Bartosik, and Willma, I Was at the Auschwitz Crematorium, 64.
78 Birenbaum, Hope Is the Last to Die, 101, 103.
within the camp. Exploring thus-far underutilized memoirs could valuably center women’s experiences within the camp and the role of alcohol in that context.

Research in this vein is especially important given the historical lack of gendered approaches to the history of the Holocaust in mainstream scholarship. Historian Marion Kaplan argues that recent “social and women’s histories include women but are not consciously about gender,” posing the question: “if we approached topics in a gendered way, might it change our narratives?”; she also observes that “historians—especially male historians—rarely ask how women experienced aspects of the Holocaust differently from men or how this might change our understandings.”\(^\text{79}\) As she points out, it was not until 1983 that “the first large-scale research impetus” to look at the experience of Jewish women of the Holocaust using the lens of gender occurred—providing Jewish women with “a voice long denied them and ... a perspective long denied.”\(^\text{80}\) Indeed, historian Zoë Waxman argues that “the continued failure of most mainstream scholars to account for gender in their studies of the Nazi destruction of European Jewry has impoverished our understanding, silencing women, and also distorting the lived experience of victims.”\(^\text{81}\) In order to avoid perpetuating this issue, a gendered approach to the role of alcohol in the camp is therefore essential to obtaining a full understanding of conditions there.

While further research is needed to determine whether male prisoners were also targets, the source base consulted records the additional danger to female prisoners of the perpetration of sexual violence by the SS—acts which were, at times, accompanied by intoxication on the part of the perpetrators. Edward B. Westermann describes “the consumption of alcohol” by SS men as a “key ingredient in acts of ‘performative masculinity,’ a type of masculinity expressly linked to acts of physical and sexual violence,” providing one frame for understanding the possible relationship between SS men perpetrating sexual violence in conjunction with the consumption of alcohol.\(^\text{82}\) Recounting her time working in Kanada, Halina Birenbaum describes the “Storm Troopers [SS guards] prowling around the warehouses, gorged with food and mostly drunk [and who] drunkenly importuned women prisoners.”\(^\text{83}\) Said prisoners faced sexual humiliation even during their dinner break, as she and her fellow prisoners were “very often forced … into the shower baths in ‘Canada’ [sic]; [the SS guards] enjoyed themselves and laughed uproariously.”\(^\text{84}\) Another instance of drunken SS men inflicting sexual humiliation on female prisoners is described by a Jewish physician imprisoned in Auschwitz-Birkenau, Olga Lengyel; forced to undergo a “thorough examination in the Nazi manner”—involving internal cavity searches—she speaks of the “presence of drunken soldiers who sat around the table [upon which the women were forced to lie], chuckling obscenely.”\(^\text{85}\)

Alcohol is also mentioned during instances of rape of female prisoners by SS guards.\(^\text{86}\) Wiesław Kielar describes how a friend—a female prisoner named Sylvia, seventeen years of age—“had been ordered to the outpatients’ department” along with

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\(^{80}\) Kaplan, “Did Gender Matter during the Holocaust?,” 38-39.


\(^{82}\) Westermann, “Drinking Rituals, Masculinity, and Mass Murder in Nazi Germany,” 368.

\(^{83}\) Birenbaum, *Hope Is the Last to Die*, 142.

\(^{84}\) Birenbaum, Hope Is the Last to Die, 142.


\(^{86}\) Waxman, Women in the Holocaust, 92-93.
“many other young, healthy, pretty girls” where “some drunken SS men had arranged an orgy.” Survivor Ruth Elias describes similar acts of perpetration:

Drunken SS men sometimes made unexpected appearances in our blocks; the door would suddenly be flung open, and they would roar in on their motorcycles. Then the orchestra was ordered to play, and the SS men would sing along while they continued to drink, their mood getting ever more boisterous. Young Jewish women would be pulled from their bunks, taken away somewhere, and raped. Raping Jewish women wasn’t considered Rassenschande (race defilement) therefore it was allowed … I cannot describe the pitiable state of these poor women when they came back to the barracks.\textsuperscript{88}

\textbf{Conclusion}

It is clear that alcohol was present in \textit{Konzentrationslager} Auschwitz-Birkenau and that its usage played varying roles among different segments of the camp’s population. Documentation exists which elucidates the usage of alcohol as a coping mechanism, as a bartering tool, and as a factor in the perpetration of violence. The nature of the presence of alcohol in this initial small sample of sources consulted suggests that a thorough and detailed analysis of a broader and more representative selection of sources is warranted so as to help better understand the different roles and functions of alcohol in Auschwitz-Birkenau. Such an analysis would help provide new insight into the history of the camp and the lived experiences of those who composed its population.

Areas for potential future research are numerous, especially concerning the usage of alcohol by female prisoners and alcohol’s role in the perpetration of violence within the camp. It would be worthwhile to determine, however imprecisely, what the rates of alcohol consumption may have been amongst the various segments of the camp population, how these fluctuated over the course of the camp’s operation, and how various forms of privilege factored into alcohol’s availability and consumption. It would also be of interest to determine how factors such as malnutrition and starvation affected prisoner’s usage of alcohol—including whether it was ever seen as an additional source of calories.

The actualities of alcohol in the camp also raise questions concerning individual, systematic, and institutional culpability; while not erasing individual accountability, the systematic manner in which camp authorities introduced alcohol into the population of Auschwitz-Birkenau may have led to or exacerbated the violence perpetrated by both the SS and Kapos. Further exploration of the relationship between said introduction and the perpetration of violence could help to address questions surrounding the culpability of those potentially complicit in the violence perpetrated within the camp given their administrative duties. Drawing from existing scholarship in related contexts of violence perpetrated in conjunction with the consumption of alcohol could help foster the development of a body of scholarship addressing questions related to said culpability.

\textsuperscript{87} Kielar, \textit{Anus Mundi}, 140.
\textsuperscript{88} Waxman, \textit{Women in the Holocaust}, 93.
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THE NAZI WEAPONIZATION OF JEWISH VICTIMS:
Jewish Complicity and “Privilege” during the Nazi Occupation of Greek Salonica
Maya C. Gonzalez

Although generally neglected within Holocaust historiography, Greek Salonica (today’s Thessaloniki) was home to about fifty thousand Jews before it fell victim to Nazi occupation in 1941. Nazi perpetrators and their Greek collaborators destroyed the Jewish community, while manipulating Jewish individuals through positions of “privilege” to facilitate certain aspects of ghettoization, deportation, and annihilation. This essay compares the exceptional experiences of “privileged” Jews to those of the general Jewish community of Salonica, in order to determine the significant factors in judging Jewish culpability in crimes against their own community.

Introduction

Holocaust memory, formed by a combination of historiographical work and collective memory, molds how future generations will learn about genocide. The perceived line between perpetrator and victim poses a dilemma for those studying Holocaust memory, which is frequently imagined as a simple binary with only two actors: German Nazis and Ashkenazi Jews. Within recent memory work, however, the acknowledgement of Russian prisoners of war, queer people, Sinti and Roma people, disabled people and those labeled “criminals” by the Nazi regime as victims of the Holocaust has complicated this oversimplification. Furthermore, scholarship regarding international collaborationist governments, such as the Vichy regime in France, Mussolini’s Italy, and fascist Romania, expands the group of perpetrators beyond German forces. Here, it is evident that both the persecuted peoples and wartime government authorities involved in the mass genocide were not diametrically opposed. Ignorance of the varying levels of involvement in genocide lead to inadequate systems of criminal and restorative justice and weaken the collective memory of how such tragedies occur. Relying on written testimony by Holocaust survivors of Greek Salonica, this essay seeks to disprove the binary understanding of the Holocaust by emphasizing the spectrum of victims, collaborators, and perpetrators. Depending on the source, certain individuals could be labelled as both perpetrators and victims—they exist between the binary.

The unique history of German-occupied Salonica, today’s Thessaloniki in Greece, reflects the varying degrees of this middle space, deemed “the grey zone” by Italian Holocaust survivor Primo Levi (1919-1987). As Levi noted, “Only a schematic rhetoric can claim that [the middle] space is empty: it never is, it is studded with obscene or pathetic figures whom it is indispensable to know if we want to know the human species.”¹ The terms “obscene” and “pathetic” invoke a dismissiveness towards those individuals defined as both perpetrators and victims—yet their experiences merit further consideration. Until relatively recently, Holocaust

historiography has focused predominantly on Ashkenazi Jews without including the stories of Sephardim who suffered a similar fate. Historians have particularly overlooked the experiences Greek Salonica, an exceptional Sephardi population.

As a symptom of Ashkenazi-centered Holocaust memory, historians have, until relatively recently, ignored Greece’s role in Holocaust studies. The lack of attention given to Salonica is likely due to two factors: its Sephardi majority population, and the atypical experiences of Greek Jews living there during Nazi occupation. The only Jewish war criminal in Europe to be tried for the deaths of his own community members came from Salonica, where 50,000 Jews lived before German occupation in 1941. Similarly exceptional, the postwar Greek narrative of the Holocaust labeled the Chief Rabbi of Salonica as a main persecutor. Historians remember these two figures as “privileged”; however, their experiences were distinct even within that category. “Privileged” Jews are defined by Holocaust historian Adam Brown as “victims who, in order to prolong their lives, were forced to behave in ways that have often been interpreted as contributing in some way to the killing process.”

By comparing the exceptional experiences of “privileged” Jews to those of the general Jewish community of Salonica, I will illustrate how German authorities weaponized Jewish victims against one another during occupation.

Salonica’s most infamous individual, Vital Hasson (d. 1948), intentionally played a prominent role in the destruction of the Jewish community. Chief Rabbi Tzevi Hirsch Koretz (1894-1945), although portrayed as a persecutor of Salonican Jews, was an unintentional collaborator with Nazi occupiers. Those like Koretz, members of the Jewish Community Council and the Sonderkommando (“Special Squads” of Jewish prisoners maintaining the Auschwitz-Birkenau gas chambers and crematoria), can be categorized as “privileged” Jews who were acting not of their own volition or with malice but, instead, out of a desire to prolong their lives. The differences between these two individuals’ collaborations with German forces reveal the variety of experiences of “privileged” Jews. To expand upon the historical understanding of “privilege,” I will discuss Levi’s concept of the “grey zone” further.

The Grey Zone: A Brief Historiography

Primo Levi was an Italian Holocaust survivor who was interned in the Auschwitz concentration camp in Poland. In his first work on the Holocaust, If This Is a Man (1947), Levi provided an objective record of his suffering and resilience for future generations. After its publication, Levi distanced himself from writing about Auschwitz, instead publishing poetry and short stories for many years. One of his later works, The Drowned and the Saved (1988), returned to the topic of Auschwitz and contextualized questions of morality within his own experiences. It is in this latter text that he first introduced the concept of the grey zone. He claimed that “the time [had] come to explore the space which separates (and not only in Nazi Lagers) the victims from the persecutors, and to do so with a lighter hand, and with a less turbid spirit than has been done.”

Levi extended his examination of the issue of power within the German war machine beyond the typical soldiers and military leaders, instead focusing on those who were manipulated by Nazi forces into working as “external auxiliaries,” such as the Judenrat (Jewish Council) of Warsaw and the

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4 Levi, Drowned, 42.
Sonderkommandos of Auschwitz. These groups were comprised of Jewish individuals coerced by Nazi-occupiers to assist in carrying out the Final Solution. Levi recalled Chaim Rumkowski, a man who served as the president of a ghetto in Poland, and how he became integrated into the Nazi system:

He enjoyed a certain esteem and was known as the director of Jewish charities and as an energetic, uncultivated, and authoritarian man … He soon came to see himself in the role of absolute but enlightened monarch, and he was certainly encouraged along this path by his German masters, who, true enough, toyed with him, but appreciated his talents as a good administrator.

Levi used Rumkowski to exemplify the effects of political coercion on those seeking compromise in an unpredictable situation. By putting those in peril in semi-powerful positions, Nazi propagators also pressured the rest of the community to conform. Levi regarded these individuals, who assumed positions of power over their peers, as powerless nonetheless: “We come to terms with power, forgetting that we are all in the ghetto, that the ghetto is walled in, that outside the ghetto reign the lords of death, and that close by the train is waiting.”

Writing on The Drowned and the Saved, Adam Brown broke down Levi’s assessment of “privileged” Jews in his comparative historiography, Judging “Privileged” Jews (2013). For Brown, when considering the history of Holocaust memory, it was this group who poses the most difficult ethical dilemma. Brown examined the historiography on “privileged” Jews through other illustrations of Levi’s grey zone, including the monumental documentary Shoah (1985), Raul Hilberg’s staple Holocaust historical work The Destruction of the European Jews (1961), and Steven Spielberg’s Hollywood hit Schindler’s List (1993). Levi wrote on the grey zone in a way that acknowledged its precarity, while also emphasizing its importance in Holocaust remembrance. And Brown’s most poignant argument placed value on the destabilization of “clear-cut moral distinctions” when discussing the zone. The question of applying moral judgement to complicit Jews arose again for Brown when recalling scholar Hannah Arendt’s personalized assessment on the trial of Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann.

Arendt (1906-1975), a German-American political philosopher, produced the most contentious work to come out of the Eichmann Trials due to her treatment of the Jewish response to German persecution. Postwar political, historical, and philosophical thinkers heavily criticized Arendt’s tone toward the victims of the Holocaust. She marked a clear distinction between the masses who went “with submissive meekness” to their death and the minority of resistance groups who she believed did not represent the general Jewish population. Her discussion of the Judenrat (Jewish Civil Council) system and Jewish police carried this same tone of harsh condemnation. She believed that the “otherwise inexplicable readiness” of German Jews to cooperate with the Nazi regime could be explained by centuries-long pervasive anti-Semitism; however, Arendt claimed that anti-Semitism did not sufficiently explain why Jewish Councils contributed to violence against their own communities during the Holocaust. Arendt also wrote on the morality of accepting testimony as truth from Eichmann in her 1964 book Eichmann in Jerusalem.

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5 Levi, Drowned, 43.
7 Levi, Drowned, 38.
8 Levi, Drowned, 69.
12 Arendt, Eichmann on Trial, 10.
Eichmann’s description of the Jewish Councils’ formation and functioning as “left to the discretion of the Council” revealed to Arendt the unfortunate level of cooperation by European Jews in the application of the Final Solution. Unlike Levi, Arendt failed to acknowledge the effects of coercion and anti-Semitic intimidation in the actions of Jewish Councils.

Arendt and Levi paved the way for future Holocaust historians and preservers of popular memory (authors, filmmakers, etc.) to discuss Jewish involvement outside of victimhood. While Levi seemed hesitant to pass judgement on those in the grey zone, Arendt challenged his method by removing the morality of the victim/persecutor dichotomy and pointing blame where she saw fit. For this reason, her analysis was incredibly lacking.

In her discussion of Greek Jews, who have historically been ignored by European Holocaust historians as victims, Arendt detailed the liquidation of the Salonican ghetto briefly. She identified Jews with foreign passports and members of the Jewish Council as the only “privileged” groups in Salonica. She mentions Chief Rabbi Koretz, who was labeled a persecutor by the Greek government and surviving Jews in the years after the war. Whether due to the lack of available sources at the time or the overwhelming devastation felt by the European Ashkenazi population, Arendt failed to mention the largest Jewish perpetrator in Greek Salonica, Vital Hasson. As a major contributor in Holocaust history and discussions of what Levi would eventually call the grey zone, this oversight on the part of Arendt is noteworthy. The experiences of “privileged” Jews varied, and the unusual experiences within Greek Salonica need to be addressed.

**The Jewish Community and Nazi Occupiers**

The German occupation of Salonica began on April 9, 1941. At the time, there were roughly 50,000 Jews living within the city. Almost immediately, Nazi Germans infringed upon the rights and freedoms of the Jewish community by closing Jewish community offices, shutting down the Jewish press, and imprisoning community leaders. They captured the Chief Rabbi of Salonica, Tzevi Hirsch Koretz, in Athens and imprisoned him in Vienna until February 1942. Nazi Germans began implementing the Final Solution in Salonica in July of that same year; all Jewish men between the ages of eighteen and forty-five, except those with Italian or Spanish passports, were ordered to meet in Plateia Eleftherias (Freedom Square). German authorities humiliated these men with physical exercise, beatings, and attacks from their guard dogs. By the end of September, the occupiers sentenced between two and three thousand Jewish males to build military roads under the German Müller construction firm.

In February 1943, Eichmann’s specialists in Greece began their preparations for the liquidation of Jews from Salonica. Dr. Max Merten, the German military representative for the area, organized the Jewish Council and the Baron Hirsch ghetto. The ghetto fenced in Salonica’s western Baron Hirsch neighborhood, which was originally built to house Russian Jewish refugees and included an infirmary funded by the Jewish philanthropist who was its namesake. The ghetto maintained his name for the duration of the war. Chief Rabbi Koretz was named the leader of the

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13 Arendt, *Eichmann on Trial*, 60.
14 Arendt, *Eichmann on Trial*, 89.
15 “German-Occupied Greece,” 1844.
16 “German-Occupied Greece,” 1844.
17 “German-Occupied Greece,” 1844.
18 Arendt, *Eichmann on Trial*, 89.
ghetto’s Jewish Council; to Koretz, the other “privileged” Jews within the ghetto were
those with foreign passports and his fellow Jewish Council members.\textsuperscript{20} The majority
of the Jewish community suffered greatly from hunger, with food supplies being
irregular and unreliable throughout Greece.\textsuperscript{21}

The entire community of Salonica was deported via freight cars within a two-
month period.\textsuperscript{22} Most Jews were sent to Auschwitz II-Birkenau in Poland, and the
Baron Hirsch ghetto’s location next to the train station meant that its captives were
among the first deported to Auschwitz, which likely explains why a great number of
Sonderkommando (Special Squad) prisoners were Salonicans.\textsuperscript{23} Seventy-four Jewish
communal leaders, including Chief Rabbi Koretz, along with 367 Jews with Spanish
papers, were sent to Bergen-Belsen in Germany at the end of deportations in August
1943.\textsuperscript{24} Many of those who were not deported to camps survived by hiding in nearby
mountain passes.\textsuperscript{25} As these individuals—and an estimated two thousand others—
returned to Greece following the close of the war, they found that much of their
property had been confiscated or bought by Greek collaborationists.\textsuperscript{26} Salonica was
no longer home to its pre-war population of 50,000 Jews, and the memory of those
lost would be skewed by the Greek government in the coming years.

For those who remained in the Baron Hirsch ghetto during the war, daily life
was permeated by Nazi interactions. German occupiers seized Jewish homes as their
own shelters, sometimes allowing the Jews to remain within them. As told by Shlomo
Venezia, a Salonican Holocaust survivor, “The Germans easily persuaded [the Jewish
Council] that the occupation forces were going to allocate lodgings to them depending
on the size of each family … We were na"ıve and didn’t know what was happening
politically."\textsuperscript{27} In a 2005 interview with \textit{Centropa}, Eugenia Abravanel recounted her
more positive experience of having a Gestapo man live in her home: “He was a
painter, may have painted my house close to ten times, and he also gave me as a gift
a painting with a boat in the sea. The carpenter fixed and mended whatever was
broken.”\textsuperscript{28} As a collective force, the Nazi-occupiers were antagonistic and destructive;
however, as individuals, they may have partially recognized the humanity of the
occupied Jews.\textsuperscript{29} Moreover, by gaining the trust of some, the Nazi weaponization of
individual Jews could occur with less resistance. Abravanel further remembers,
“Whenever [the soldiers] heard shooting outside their house by Gestapo men, they
would freeze and become different people. They were terrified of each other.”\textsuperscript{30}

While the Nazi military system relied on terror, it appears that before the
humiliation in Freedom Square, not all Salonican Jews greatly feared for their own
lives. While living conditions were increasingly degraded, Jews held the belief that
the Germans would not destroy their community if they remained compliant. Survivor

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{20} Arendt, \textit{Eichmann on Trial}, 89.
\bibitem{22} Arendt, \textit{Eichmann on Trial}, 89.
\bibitem{23} “German-Occupied Greece,” 1846.
\bibitem{24} “German-Occupied Greece,” 1847.
\bibitem{25} “First List of 3,300 Greek Jews Received by J.D.C.,” \textit{The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee}, May 31, 1945.
\bibitem{29} For further reading on Nazi soldier psychology, I recommend Christopher Browning’s \textit{Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland} (1998).
\end{thebibliography}
Mico Alvo recalled his father’s wishful thinking for the German occupation, “[My father] thought that by having a good behavior towards the Germans, their luck might be different from the others. I think that if they had known that they were going for certain death, at least half of them would have left.” Alvo’s father appreciated the scientific work produced in Germany and thought highly of their industry, and others echoed this sentiment. When writing on the Salonican relationship to occupiers, Venezia shared that “people thought the Germans were precise, decent people. When you bought something ‘made in Germany’ it worked properly. It was precision-made.” These accounts reveal how German forces invaded the lives of Salonicans both physically and mentally. As noted earlier, almost the entire Salonian Jewish population would be transported to concentration camps within two months. Jews’ misplaced hope in German individuals is worth noting as a precursor to their weaponization; however, it is not entirely indicative of how the German liquidation of the Salonian Jewish community was carried out.

“Privileged” Jews In and Out of the Ghetto

Under Nazi occupation, all European cities with Jewish populations were ordered to have a Jewish Civil Council. These councils, consisting of up to twenty-four men, were responsible for overseeing ghetto operations and implementing Nazi policies. Arendt claimed in *Eichmann in Jerusalem*,

> If the Jewish people had really been unorganized and leaderless, there would have been chaos and plenty of misery but the total number of victims would hardly have been between four and a half and six million people. (According to Freudiger’s calculations about half of them could have saved themselves if they had not followed the instructions of the Jewish Councils.)

The Council’s work was not simply following Nazi extermination protocol; instead, it was their job to entirely maintain the Jewish Community during occupation. Jewish leaders organized the ghetto in its early stages, distributed work permits (for those in danger of Nazi liquidation), maintained community health and sanitation, distributed food rations, and provided Jews to meet forced labor quotas. With the multitude of responsibilities placed on the Council during occupation, their small mistakes often yielded grave consequences. When Nazi forces demanded the destruction of Salonica’s Jewish Cemetery, the Council hesitated to act—apart from Rabbi Koretz’ denied request to have the demolition delayed. The cemetery was quickly looted and destroyed, with only a few hundred Jewish families having time to move the bones of their dead relatives.

The hostage system was another Nazi method utilized to control the Jewish population. The Germans acquired a list of between fifty and one hundred distinguished Jewish community members and declared them “hostages.” If any of these people attempted to leave, the Nazi forces threatened to kill other innocent Jews. Survivor Mico Alvo, whose father was a hostage, recalled that “their mentality was threatening. And my father thought, ‘Twenty young people to be killed because of me?’” This position was not considered “privileged”; however, the

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34 Arendt, *Eichmann on Trial*, 61.
37 Alvo, interview.
acknowledgement of how the elite within the community were treated is worth consideration. German authorities understood the chain of command within the community and how to manipulate individuals into weapons to be used against one another.

Levi argued that the Nazi institution of genocide attempted to shift the burden of guilt onto the victims so “they were deprived of even the solace of innocence.” In exceptional situations, Jews within concentration camps also found themselves in “privileged” positions, such as that of the Sonderkommando. As has been previously mentioned, the Jews of Salonica were some of the first to arrive at Auschwitz, where Sonderkommando members were selected from the male Jewish population to operate the gas chambers and crematoria. Sonderkommando members organized new arrivals, kept them calm, cut their hair, transported bodies, and removed gold from the teeth of the dead. They were ensured meals for the duration of their service but every few months, all Sonderkommando members were “selected for transfer”—a euphemism for extermination. For those in this nightmare reality, a more accurate descriptor than “privileged” would have been imprisoned. Shlomo Venezia, a Sonderkommando survivor, emphasized this in his interview-style memoir: “We were forced, whereas collaborators, in general, are volunteers. It’s important to write that we had no choice.” These men did the work Nazi soldiers refused to do but, if given the choice, they would have refused as well.

Reassessing Known Collaborationists

Apart from one individual to be discussed later in this paper, Jewish Salonicans took part in German extermination efforts under incredible duress. As evidenced by the hostage and Sonderkommando systems, Nazi authorities weaponized victims against other victims. In this way, “privilege” was defined as an increase in responsibility paired with the potential to prolong one’s life. The primary case of “privilege” in Greek Salonica was Chief Rabbi Tzevi Koretz. Koretz was born in Galici, and arrived in Athens as a graduate of the Berlin Rabbinical Seminary and Ph.D. laureate of the University of Vienna. Koretz became the Chief Rabbi of Salonica in 1932 and was forced to lead the Jewish Council by Nazi authorities. He met with German representatives twice a week, serving as a medium through which Nazis inflicted their policy onto the community. In postwar accounts by survivors and historians, Koretz is largely portrayed as the primary Jewish collaborator with Nazi authorities; however, recent historical accounts instead view his role as one conducted under duress and with the intention of prolonging one’s own life.

Koretz was first implicated as a collaborator during the Freedom Square incident. Survivor Moshe Burla described his experience with Koretz in a 2005 interview:

We were hiding at home. We urged others not to go [to Freedom Square] either, but the Jews were following Koretz, who was telling them, ‘We are Jewish, and we should go.’ … I had a great problem with the rabbi, who had a gathering at the synagogue and was urging people to go, and was saying to people that they were going to live in a different country, get money, new clothes, tools to work, and he was

38 Levi, Drowned, 53.
39 Venezia, Inside the Gas Chambers, 54.
40 Venezia, Inside the Gas Chambers, 54..
41 Venezia, Inside the Gas Chambers, 102.
42 Venezia, Inside the Gas Chambers, 103.
44 “German-Occupied Greece,” 1845.
deceiving people to go there … The ten of us went to the rabbi’s office on another
day and asked him to go and be in charge of the people and leave with them to save
them from the Germans and not to chain them down. He treated us really cruelly,
telling us, ‘If you don’t get out of here now and leave I’m calling the Gestapo.’

The rabbi pressured Salonian Jews to follow the orders of the occupiers, which, in
the eyes of many, implicated him in their crimes. This behavior was not unique to
Koretz, however, as Nazi authorities mandated all leaders of the Jewish Councils to
act accordingly. Koretz had no choice but to enforce Nazi policies within Salonica—
possibly because he believed the Germans were truthful in their promises of better
living conditions, or because he feared what might happen if his community members
disobeyed. Koretz was also criticized over the Jewish Council’s lax attitude towards

As has been previously mentioned, newly available archives and a
reassessment of Koretz have interpreted him as a less malicious character than
originally depicted. His characterization was a product of the Jewish community’s
need to attribute culpability for its trauma, the Israeli government’s desire to create a
uniting anti-diasporic sentiment, and the Greek government’s need to assuage its own
guilt. Koretz was molded into an Ashkenazi outsider to fit the collaborationist
model, and his policy of conciliation toward the German authorities further painted
him as a collaborator. The German forces of Salonica selected Koretz as the leader of
the Jewish Council, implicating him as their mole, so it is understandable that he
became falsely associated with German malice. Following the war, Koretz was
assumed to be a collaborator by Israeli authorities. He “had to be found guilty in order
to enable Israeli society to dissociate itself from the diasporic experience he stood for,
… [and] to vindicate the Greek collective consciousness for not having done enough
to prevent the deportations.” While Koretz’ actions were less than admirable, he
ultimately was not a collaborator; however, powerful governments manipulated his
character in an attempt to rebalance the post-traumatic world.

In contrast, Vital Hasson, the antithesis of the Jewish victim, was truly
malicious in his violence against his Jewish community. While accounts are unable to
agree upon whether he received his “privileged” position after being chosen by Rabbi
Koretz, being employed by German authorities, or simply volunteering, it is certain
Hasson served as the chief of the Jewish police in Salonica under German
occupation. He was granted powers within the Baron Hirsch ghetto to fulfill Nazi
orders, specifically “plans to isolate, deport, and annihilate Salonican Jewry.”

Hasson became infamous for his treatment of women. He was known to have
sexually humiliated and raped hundreds of Jewish women and “killed children in front

46 “Greek Authorities Collude,” 284.
47 “German-Occupied Greece,” 1847.
51 Stein, Family Papers, 171.
52 Stein, Family Papers, 171-73.
of mothers and mothers in front of children.” During the International Military Tribunal of 1945 and 1946, a witness said the following of Hasson: “I warned my wife to keep away from Hasson and not to pay any attention to what he was saying … [Hasson and his organs] would enter the camp and get any girl they liked and do with her anything they wanted … Finally, one day, as I insisted, she told me that Hasson had handed her over to the Germans, together with her sisters.” Hasson was a weapon of his own making, enabled by his circumstances. He chose to serve the Nazi antagonists and, whether for life-prolonging reasons or otherwise, caused suffering. Hasson not only targeted women but also those in vulnerable positions.

After hunting down Jews in hiding, Hasson would seize their possessions and sell them. He forced those within the ghetto to give up whatever wealth they had. He also imprisoned Jews who had attempted to escape alongside the wealthy, using an old Jewish mental asylum to torture them into surrendering their wealth. Hasson was arguably the most “privileged” Jew within Salonica, yet he was still sent to Bergen-Belsen with the Chief Rabbi and Jewish leaders in August of 1943. He survived the camp and fled Germany after liberation in April 1945, dodging multiple governments in their attempts to arrest him in the immediate postwar period. Yet, his return to Salonica ultimately marked the end of his exploits. He was quickly recognized by a group of Jews who had survived deportation to Auschwitz, who then beat him and handed him over to the Greek police. During his subsequent trial conducted in a Greek court ordered by the Jewish Community of Salonica, Hasson was found responsible for facilitating the German execution of Jews, raping Jewish women, arresting and assaulting Greeks who hid Jews, and carrying out the search, arrest, and deportation of Jews and non-Jews alike. As witnesses gave testimony against him, Hasson laughed and challenged their stories. Hasson was the only Jew tried as a war criminal for actions against his own Jewish community. He was sentenced to death and executed in 1946.

Hasson’s place within “privileged” European Jewry is exceptional. His example stands in contrast with the Jews previously mentioned within this paper—in most cases, privilege was not typically a symptom of malice, intentional collaboration, or a drive to kill. Other “privileged” Jews or accused collaborators were weaponized by the Nazi authorities against their own community, but there is little doubt Hasson worked of his own volition.

Conclusion

Historians of Holocaust Studies use the term “privilege” to illustrate how individual Jews became cogs in the Nazi extermination machine. Occupiers intended to shift the guilt of their crimes during the war onto their Jewish victims, but this shifting did not stop when the war ended. While official war tribunals did not try “privileged” Jews, individual nations used the narrative of “privilege” to place guilt as they needed. In the case of Greece, the government’s lingering guilt from the lack of resistance by the non-Jewish Greek population led to a victim-blaming narrative, which strongly

55 “The Trial of a Nazi Collaborator,” 315.
57 Stein, *Family Papers*, 177.
59 “German-Occupied Greece,” 1846.
implicated the Jews in their own destruction.® The Greek national archives are still limited in access and manipulated by the state; therefore, without access to archival materials, insight into the Greek government’s treatment of Holocaust memory must instead be garnered from public information. In a 2013 speech, Greek Prime Minister Antonis Amaras implied that the Jewish deportations from Salonica occurred by accident and, with the lack of official comments from the state, these words are that much more impactful.® This rhetoric is not just limited to Greece, but persists in other European countries.

By exploring the definitions used by historians and popular memory-shapers to discuss victims, collaborators, and persecutors, I aim to contribute to the body of knowledge that refutes Holocaust denial and victim-blaming. The weaponization of Jews against their community members cannot be considered collaboration. By illustrating the differences between presumed collaboration by those under duress and those intentionally executing the Nazi genocide program, I argue that manipulation by German authorities and intent are the differentiating factors. Furthermore, the way in which presumed collaborators and “privileged” Jews have been discussed in the postwar era contributes to the misunderstanding of this contrast. The acknowledgement of Nazi atrocities cannot be limited to Ashkenazi or Eastern European victims, as the geographic presence of Holocaust trauma is much broader. By discovering the trauma of the misunderstood “privileged” Jews within the ignored Jewish Salonican community, Holocaust memory is made fuller and truer.

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‘OFF THE PIGS?’:
The Black Panther Party and Masculinity
Chandani Desai

Male members of the Black Panther Party have a reputation for being unjustly and unrestrainedly violent out of rampant hate for white people. However, the racialized, hyper-masculine reputation of the Panthers was largely constructed by the white media of the 60s and 70s, who feared the image of black men with guns. Instead, this article argues that the masculinity of the Black Panther Party was based in the empowerment of the black community, especially among the lower classes. To demonstrate this, this article analyzes the role of violence, grassroots organization, and women within the Party’s ideology and history. Ultimately, the legacies of the Party’s activities can be seen in the present day among groups such as #BlackLivesMatter.

Dominant perceptions of the Black Panther Party (BPP) are largely defined by how its masculinity was presented in white media of the 1960s and 70s. Scholar Jane Rhodes describes this representation colorfully: they fulfilled stereotypes of blackness “along a continuum ranging from menace on one end to immorality on the other, with irresponsibility somewhere in the middle.” Overall, the Party was framed as a racialized ‘other’ such that it “tapped into white Americans’ primal fears of black male sexuality, black American violence, and the potential of an all-out race war.” While this perception has dulled somewhat in the modern age, it persists nevertheless through stereotypes of the Panthers as unjustly violent.

To be sure, this reputation is not one which was completely unearned. The Panthers did, to an extent, utilize white fears in attracting publicity. However, the racially biased view of the BPP’s masculinity, such as that described by Rhodes, obscures the foundational masculine model that Panther men sought to embody. This article attempts to uncover that foundational model by analyzing the history, ideology, and actions of the Party.

For the purposes of this article, the BPP formed from three major contexts. First was the burgeoning Black Power movement. Jeffrey O.G. Ogbar, author of Black Power: Radical Politics and African-American Identity, characterizes Black Power as “many things to many people and an enigma to most.” However, he also identifies the phenomenon as having two unifying themes: black pride and black self-determination. This movement sprung forth in opposition to the mainstream Civil Rights Movement, whose politics of respectability and legal successes did little to

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1 This article is dedicated to Amy-Elizabeth Manlapas, MA, who showed me that a future in the humanities was possible for me. Thank you for sticking with me through everything. I wouldn’t have been able to do it without you.
2 Jane Rhodes, Framing the Black Panthers: The Spectacular Rise of a Black Power Icon (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2017), 64, 70.
3 Rhodes, Framing the Black Panthers, 68-69.
address the plight of the lumpenproletariat, or the lower class, of black Americans. This is exemplified by the riots during the long, hot summer of 1967. According to the Kerner Commission, which was formed to identify the causes of the riots, chronic (un)employment, low wages, and police brutality remained standard to lower-class black Americans.5

The Party was especially influenced by Malcolm X, one of most iconic Black Power figures. In fact, the Party was formed in the spirit of X after he was assassinated in 1965.6 X argued that black people had to learn to love themselves by identifying with their African roots. Otherwise, black people would not have the self-worth to overthrow the oppressive system that taught them to hate who they were.7

Secondly, the BPP was formed in the context of international decolonization movements. They were especially influenced by renowned psychologist and philosopher Frantz Fanon. Fanon argued that, for colonized peoples, violence against the colonizers is cathartic, and is key to restoring the self-respect of the colonized.8 The BPP identified with this philosophy because they saw the black community as an internal colony of the United States, with law enforcement as its occupying army.9

Lastly, the Party sprung from the experiences of the founders themselves, Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale, who grew up as impoverished black men in the post-WWII era. For Newton, the pain of racial and economic oppression was deflected by the love and support of his parents and many siblings.10 For Seale, he had a broken family trapped in a cycle of poverty that he had never seen any black American break.11 In both cases, the founders wanted to change the reality of the black community; for Newton, it was to match that familial comfort, and for Seale, it was to oppose his fractured home and impoverishment. These experiences, along with the influence of Malcolm X and Frantz Fanon, had significant implications for the ideology and activities of the BPP.

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8 Austin, Up Against the Wall, 90.
10 Newton, Revolutionary Suicide, 14-15.
This article attempts to demonstrate that the BPP’s masculine ideals did not hinge upon their ability to intimidate the American establishment, whom they sometimes referred to as ‘the man’. I argue that the masculine model that the Black Panther Party sought to embody was based in their ability to protect and empower their community. This model will henceforth be referred to as the “Family Protector.” I demonstrate this by analyzing the role of violence, community organization, and women within the Party’s history, actions, and ideology.

Before proceeding, a disclaimer: this article has done its best to portray the Black Panther Party in the best light possible without dismissing the pain of those who may have suffered from their actions. This is justified because, at the moment, a new wave of activists has taken to the streets in service of black protection and empowerment. The mass protests of summer 2020 in response to George Floyd’s murder only serve as one example of this, among many others. Because of these calls for change, it is critical that we bolster success stories from the past in moving forward with this movement. Despite the group’s many flaws, I do my best to demonstrate that the Black Panther Party at its best was one of those success stories.

**Off the Pigs!**

On the surface, violence seemed to play a flagrant and dominant role in the Black Panther Party’s masculinity. However, a closer look at their ideology and actions regarding violence prove otherwise. Instead, they sought to empower the black lumpenproletariat through displays which they could relate to and learn from. The reputation which they have today for unrestrained violence stems from these displays. But these actions fall in line with the ideals foundational to the Family Protector model.

In analyzing the BPP’s views on violence, a critical source is co-founder Huey P. Newton’s “In Defense of Self-Defense,” which was printed in nearly every copy of The Black Panther newspaper during its first year. In a nutshell, it advocates for armed self-defense by the black community against American structural oppression—not unrestrained violence against ‘the man.’ Furthermore, it demonstrates the focus of the BPP on community empowerment. To this end, two main aspects of the document are relevant.

First, “In Defense of Self-Defense” incorporates various ideological strains to justify its position. This intrinsically refutes the conception of the BPP as pursuing simple retaliation, given that its position was deliberately thought out. One ideological strain is that of Malcolm X. In describing the plight of black people and how to subvert it, Newton refers to black people having been “brainwashed to believe that [they] are powerless” and needing to “unite and rise up in all their splendid millions” to “smash injustice.”12 This refers to the very foundation of X’s ideology: unlearn hatred of blackness as taught by white racism, join in political and communal solidarity with each other, and empower each other to reclaim their humanity.

Another example is the ideological strain of Frantz Fanon. Later in the document, Newton refers to Panther members as “the wretched of the earth,”13 a direct reference to a book of Fanon’s by the same name. In The Wretched of the Earth, Fanon describes self-defense as “a cleansing force. It frees the native from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction; it makes him fearless and restores his self-respect.”14 This, along with Malcolm X’s influence, points to the role of violence in

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13 Newton, “In Defense of Self-Defense.”
14 Qtd. in Austin, *Up Against the Wall*, 90.
the BPP as oriented around reclaiming the black community’s dignity by invoking their right to resist injustice.

The second relevant aspect of “In Defense of Self-Defense” is its multifaceted definition of self-defense. Take the following quote, for example:

Black people must now move, from the grass roots up through the perfumed circles of the Black bourgeoisie, to seize by any means necessary a proportionate share of power vested and collected in the structure of America. … The racist dog oppressors … fear most of all Black People armed with weapons and the ideology of the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense.

By using assertive rhetoric to argue for the enfranchisement of the black lumpenproletariat, Newton conveys that empowerment is not only found in the physical act of fighting back; it is also found, perhaps more powerfully, in political empowerment.

In enacting their idea of self-defense, the fledgling BPP started with police patrols. These were the focus of the Party’s program during the first year of its life. A typical police patrol occurred like this. Panther men would dress in their signature uniform and arm themselves to the teeth. They would then drive around the neighborhood, on the prowl for cops interacting with black community members. Upon finding such a situation, they would exit the car and monitor it. These patrols marked the beginning of a long and contentious relationship with law enforcement.

But Newton and other co-founder Bobby Seale did not choose this activity out of a desire to intimidate or harass the cops. Instead, they chose police patrols for four main strategic purposes. First is about publicity. Newton and Seale understood that the image of black men with guns would attract media attention, and that police brutality united black experiences across the country, and. So, choosing first to address this incarnation of systemic oppression effectively advertised the BPP and built their membership.

Second, Newton and Seale wanted to be role models for the young, impoverished black men in their community. Coming from the same background, Newton and Seale understood how the mainstream Civil Rights Movement alienated those deemed unworthy of the politics of respectability: the black lumpenproletariat. Working-class black men also felt powerless due to their lack of technical skills and education in conjunction with chronic unemployment. The many instances of nonviolent Civil Rights marchers being brutalized by law enforcement in the national media likely drove home working black men’s hyperawareness of their own weakness. To counter this, Newton and Seale wanted to provide a “positive image of strong and unafraid Black men in the community” by standing up to the cops.

The third reason Newton and Seale inaugurated the Party with police patrols is about protection. With so many witnesses to their behavior, cops were less likely to brutalize their subjects, thereby preventing racist violence. Further, as an extra measure to prevent altercations with the police, patrollers stayed a safe distance away from police as they were working. Not once did they interfere with their duties. If cops arrested a community member, Panthers would not resist, instead opting to bail the person out of jail as soon as humanly possible. According to Newton’s autobiography,

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15 Qtd. in Austin, Up Against the Wall, 90.
16 Newton, Revolutionary Suicide, 120-121.
17 Steve Estes, I Am a Man!: Race, Manhood, and the Civil Rights Movement (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 156.
18 Estes, I Am a Man!, 156.
19 Newton, Revolutionary Suicide, 355.
this significantly reduced the rates of police brutality in their neighborhood and increased community confidence in the BPP.  

Finally, Panther patrollers used their vantage point to educate and raise the political consciousness of the community. It was standard procedure for Panthers to inform community members who were stopped by cops of their rights, so that their ignorance could no longer be used against them by law enforcement. Additionally, these police patrols were such a novel sight that they attracted spectators from the surrounding buildings. So, when Panthers informed a suspect of their rights, they were often informing swaths of the community, as well.

This focus on rights is further evidenced by how Panther leadership required patrollers to keep the state and federal legal codes in their cars with them. This was a requirement so that patrollers could show the legality of their actions if needed, in addition to educating the community. The BPP’s emphasis on empowerment and education demonstrates that, according to historian Bridgette Baldwin, “protecting the right to self-defense and the right to bear arms … was as important as the actual use of arms,” if not more so.

Despite the tangible benefits of police patrols, they led to severe consequences. In essence, the presence of black men with guns intimidated the cops, and gave the Party a masculinist, militant reputation that obscured their actual goals of community protection, empowerment, and education. For example, the BPP’s use of ebonics confounded law enforcement and others, who were not equipped to understand that ebonics often makes use of hyperbole. So, what may have been a figure of speech to Panthers was perceived as a tangible threat by the establishment. This exacerbated antagonism between police and black Americans, especially as incidents of civilian-on-police violence (by non-Panthers) increased significantly. In 1969, such assaults had increased by 41% since 1967. This pattern was reproduced in nearly every place a BPP chapter existed.

Law enforcement’s fear of Panther men was reinforced by the artwork of Emory Douglas in *The Black Panther*. According to Douglas, he used his art to make

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20 Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide*, 120-121.
22 Austin, *Up Against the Wall*, 95.
23 Austin, *Up Against the Wall*, 90.
BPP ideology accessible to lower-income black people, who did not have the literacy to comprehend texts as complicated as, for example, Newton’s “In Defense of Self-Defense.” While accessibility is a noble cause, his art was not always nuanced enough to distinguish between unrestrained violence and armed self-defense. For example, one of his early comics shows a pig—used by the BPP to signify oppressors, especially cops—being dismembered by bullets. This implies simply that the BPP sought to kill cops. However, as demonstrated, this is not what they were advocating for.

The cops’ feeling of persecution culminated in unrestrained state repression of the Panthers. This is best exemplified by the attempted assassination of Huey Newton by Oakland police in 1967, when police shot Newton unprovoked. Then, when he survived, they framed him for the murder of officer John Frey, who had been shot while Newton was unconscious. Newton was then convicted and incarcerated until 1970. These efforts extended to Panther leadership nationwide, resulting in the assassination of Fred Hampton and the framing of Bobby Seale and Ericka Huggins, among others.

To make matters worse, as interactions with police became increasingly dangerous, Panther leadership did not immediately cease their police patrols. In fact, just prior to Newton’s incarceration, the Party was losing its way. Its actions were based primarily in standing up to ‘the man,’ even as its masculinist reputation was becoming a liability for them and the community they set out to protect. This implies that Panther men did, to an extent, relish the masculine power associated with standing up to law enforcement.

But this reputation and militant masculinity is largely a result of the leadership of Eldridge Cleaver, who took the helm of the Party when Seale and Newton were incarcerated. Cleaver’s ideology diverged sharply from the foundation of the Party. According to Newton,

> Eldridge Cleaver identified with other negative aspects of the Party. … What appealed to him were force, firepower, and the intense moment when combatants stood at the brink of death. For him this was the revolution.

This characterization is supported by Cleaver’s memoirs, Soul on Ice, which emphasizes retaliation rather than justice for the black community. Consequently, Cleaver fostered the Party’s truly criminal element, who took advantage of its

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24 Austin, Up Against the Wall, 38-39.
25 Seale, Seize the Time, 404.
26 Austin, Up Against the Wall, 95.
27 Newton, Revolutionary Suicide, 286-300.
28 Rhodes, Framing the Black Panthers, 7-8.
29 Austin, Up Against the Wall, 330-331.
openness for their own purposes, sometimes relating “only to the gun.” In the words of historian Simon Wendt, “armed resistance became mainly a symbolic form of defiance that served to affirm and nurture militant black manhood.” The fostering of such “do-nothing terrorists” justified repression to the government, leaving the Party in shambles by the time of Newton and Seale’s release.

Ultimately, the Party’s conception of self-defense and their police patrols exemplify that unrestrained, retaliatory violence is not the foundation of the masculinity they sought to embody. These aspects of the Party focused on raising the black community’s self-worth and political consciousness for the sake of protection and empowerment, both of which define the Family Protector model. To be sure, the strategy was not enacted perfectly, and it did appeal to the pursuit of masculinity for some Panther men. But their focus on community empowerment remained at the foundation of their actions, and were demonstrably successful.

**Survival Pending Revolution**

As the BPP crumbled under the weight of state repression in response to their masculinist reputation, leadership realized they were no longer in tune with the needs of the community. Consequently, they switched gears to meet the needs of the black community beyond police brutality, resulting in the creation of survival programs. This exemplifies that Panther men sought to embody the Family Protector model.

After the BPP began to reap the consequences of its masculinist image, especially when Newton was incarcerated in 1967, leadership realized the danger of the path along which they were headed. Not only had state repression begun to dismantle their movement, but the community had come to look upon the Party as “an ad hoc military group, acting outside the community fabric and too radical to be a part of.” Newton himself admitted that before this point, the Party “did not fully understand then that only the people can create the revolution.” So the Party switched gears. While Newton was in jail, Seale began purging their ranks of do-nothing terrorists who sought hollow glory over the realization of BPP political ideology, also moving to expel Eldridge Cleaver in 1971. They also became more exclusive about who they allowed in. Doing so gave them another chance to prove to the black community that they existed to serve the people, not to inflate militant black manhood.

The reformed BPP took the chance and ran with it. They de-emphasized police brutality as the centerpiece of their platform and moved to fulfill the rest of their Ten-Point Program, which called for healthcare, education, and more. Seale, alongside David Hilliard, acted against these issues by creating survival programs, which fought to remedy the long-term effects of systemic oppression in the BPP’s community. The Party instituted over 20 different survival programs over the course of its life.

The most well-known survival program is the Free Breakfast for Children Program. At its height between 1969 and 1971, at least 36 programs were being run

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32 Simon Wendt, “‘They Finally Found Out that We Really Are Men’: Violence, Non-Violence and Black Manhood in the Civil Rights Era.” *Gender & History* 19, no. 3 (2007): 553.
34 Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide*, 355.
38 “Survival Programs.” *It’s About Time*. 

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nationwide, with larger chapters running multiple sites. The Party also claimed that they had served about 20,000 breakfasts a day at the program’s most popular. It was so successful that it even served to undo some of the negative reputation which the Party had inadvertently incurred. For example, an article in the *San Francisco Chronicle* reported that the Free Breakfast Program would teach children an “unspoken lesson”: that “power in a community begins with people who care.” Finally, in its most striking achievement, this program became the foundation for the federal School Breakfast Program in 1975.

Many rank-and-file Panther men found feeding the children satisfying in ways that armed struggle was not. One member, Jamal Joseph, said that the program was so important because black children could not learn if their stomachs were growling. But nobody else at the schools took the time to understand that, and simply labeled them disruptive. Another member, Jerry “Odinka” Dunnigan, said, “It was extremely exhilarating to feed the children. You saw the future in their faces, and you wanted to be right for them.” This idea of children being the revolution was at the heart of many survival programs as part of Newton’s ideological vision.

Another example of such survival programs was their People’s Free Health Clinics. At the time, many lower-income black people had severely insufficient access to healthcare, some of which had never even seen a doctor. Private healthcare was too expensive, and while public options existed as a part of Lyndon B. Johnson’s Great Society, they were often overcrowded and underfunded. To provide an alternative, the Chicago, Kansas City, and Seattle chapters established the first People’s Free Health Clinics in 1968. These clinics provided quality healthcare to the community without charging them a single dime. They became so successful that in 1970, central leadership required every chapter to have their own clinic, leading to the opening of 10 more. Dr. Tolbert Small, who worked at the Berkeley clinic, describes his time there:

We were open five days a week. I would sometimes be there until one o’clock in the morning seeing patients. We were busy. We provided quality treatment. I did house calls on some of those people. … A man we called Smitty—I think his name was Henry Smith—we trained him to do hemoglobin electrophoresis, which is used for sickle-cell screening. I had a tech from the Oakland Health Center come over and

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39 Bloom and Martin Jr., *Black Against Empire*, 182.
40 Austin, *Up Against the Wall*, 262.
41 Qtd. in Bloom and Martin Jr., *Black Against Empire*, 182.
show him how to do it. You know, it’s amazing: If someone wants to learn something and you are willing to teach them, people can be trained.49 Evidently, Dr. Small is proud of his work in serving the community, and was even able to provide training to those volunteers who wanted to help.

These health clinics especially focused on sickle-cell anemia, a disease which primarily affects people of African descent. Despite having been discovered in 1910, little funding and research had been spent on it due to its infrequency among the white population.50 Consequently, the BPP set up a national screening program for the disease to spread awareness of the disease in 1971.51 They even founded the Sickle Cell Anemia Research Foundation, which helped to move towards effective treatments. There is no doubt that their work contributed to President Richard Nixon’s signing of the National Sickle Cell Anemia Control Act (1972), which allocated $10 million to counseling, screening, education, and research for the disease.52 Ultimately, the Black Panthers are largely responsible for awareness and treatment of sickle-cell anemia today.53

Beyond the sheer magnitude of the survival programs, the BPP’s move away from police brutality is arguably the most telling sign that Black Panther masculinity was not defined purely by armed resistance. Almost as soon as Newton and Seale realized that the Party had drifted from the community’s needs, they made a sharp left turn into community organizing. To be sure, this did not mean they put the gun down entirely. Self-defense in the face of systemic violence remained a key point of empowering the communities that the BPP served.

But their use of the gun was no longer in opposition to the power structure; it was in service of the people. For example, guns played a role in some survival programs, such as Seniors Against Fearful Environments (S.A.F.E.). Older people were significantly more likely to get mugged in their community, especially when collecting welfare checks. To address this, young, strong, Panther men armed themselves and escorted senior citizens to and from their outings.54

This shift in ideological stance is also demonstrated in The Black Panther. For example, a 1968 edition’s front page blasted the following incendiary headline: “PIGS WANT WAR / PANTHERS COOL / REAGAN ATTACKS ELDREDGE”.55 This is considerably different from a 1972 edition, also about police brutality: “THE DEATH PENALTY MUST BE OUTLAWED ON THE STREETS! RECENT SUPREME COURT DECISION WON’T TAKE GUNS FROM POLICE.”56 The difference is stark, in that the first headline is centered around confrontation with the oppressors. The second one, however, emphasizes the protection of black people from such brutality.

Moreover, survival programs were only intended to ensure ‘survival pending revolution.’ That is, they were intended to nourish oppressed people until they could find it in themselves to fight back and enact the revolution. As Newton said:

[S]urvival programs are not answers or solutions, but they will help to organize the community around a true analysis and understanding of their situation. When

49 Seale and Shames, Power to the People, 189.
52 McCormack, “World Sickle Cell Day.”
53 Bloom and Martin, Black Against Empire, 188.
56 The Black Panther 8, no. 16 (1972): 1.
consciousness and understanding is raised to a high level then the community will seize the time and deliver themselves from the boot of their oppressors.\textsuperscript{57} Clearly, the Party sought to empower the black community to fight for themselves.

Ultimately, the BPP’s move away from armed resistance and into community service demonstrates first and foremost that their masculinity was based in providing what the black community needed to thrive. As soon as the Party veered off-course, they made the changes necessary to reintegrate with the black community according to what they needed. This decision precisely embodies that the Panther men did not foundationally pursue black militant manhood. Instead, they sought to enact the ideals of the Family Protector model. And, according to their victories in community organizing, it is plausible to say that Panther men were successful at embodying this model in this chapter of the Party’s life.

\textbf{Panther-ettes}

The BPP is widely reputed for upholding misogyny and patriarchy. However, the BPP’s gender relations were more complicated than this reputation allows. While the Party was patriarchal in some ways, it was not explicit. Instead, the Party’s gender relations largely reflected the context in which it was formed. But as more Panther women protested their treatment, the Party did the work to become better. This narrative demonstrates Panther men’s adherence to the Family Protector model.

Officially, Panther women were treated equally with Panther men. They took the same political education classes, memorized the same material, were subject to the same rules, and most notably, learned how to defend themselves and others side-by-side. As BPP alumnus Phyllis Jackson conveyed, they were taught how to use cigarettes as gas masks and “how to strip down a gun, clean it, and put it together in the dark,” among other things.\textsuperscript{58} However, informal interaction did not always uphold such equality. Elaine Brown, the Party’s final president, notably accused Panther men of treating women as “irrelevant”. She also accused them of saying that women leaders were “eroding black manhood” and allied with “counter-revolutionary, man-hating lesbian, feminist white bitches.”\textsuperscript{59} This distinct treatment of Panther women was not patriarchy for patriarchy’s sake; at least, not among those Panther men truly committed to the BPP’s cause. Instead, the differing treatment of women materialized as consequences of the Party’s context. Three aspects of this context are relevant. First, as an off-shoot of the Black Power movement, the BPP is necessarily connected to and reflective of Black Power’s gender ideology (at least somewhat). Masculinity in the Black Power movement was defined in direct opposition to the manhood espoused by the mainstream Civil Rights

\textsuperscript{57} Qtd. in Seale and Shames, \textit{Power to the People}, 152.


Movement, which they resented for its exclusionary politics of respectability. They also resented the portrayal of black men as weak and unresisting, by mainstream news coverage, which often aired photos and videos of Civil Rights marchers being brutalized by police. All of this, and the legal victories these marchers earned barely improved the lives of the black community.

Consequently, Black Power men came to see their ideal future as one defined by self-sufficiency, without having to rely on the establishment, or anyone, for survival. These men also sought to embody a masculinity that was prideful enough to stand up against violence in ways that Civil Rights marchers never did. They wanted to take freedom for themselves. Consequently, they defined Black Power manliness—real manliness—according to strength, action, empowerment, and unabashed blackness.

Black Power masculinity had significant implications for Black Power femininity. In one way, because Black Power men wanted to be the opposite of Civil Rights men, their relations with women had to be opposite as well. In another way, gender roles within the male-female binary are formed in opposition to each other. Both these principles led Black Power femininity to be opposite to that of Civil Rights women, who were often strategically filmed being abused by the police to attract public sympathy. So, in the minds of Black Power men, women had to be stashed away from the limelight in roles where they would be safe.

These Black Power gender roles were endorsed by Malcolm X. Today, he is known for the following quote: “The most disrespected person in America is the black woman.” It has become so popular that it was included in Beyoncé’s iconic album and short film Lemonade (2016). But in saying that, X was not advocating for equal opportunity. He meant that women, such as those of the Civil Rights Movement, should be kept off the streets and out of dangerous situations.

Because the BPP formed in the spirit of X, and because both Newton and Seale revered him, it is likely that the Party inherited his gender views. So, by inheriting Black Power gender ideals, the Party implicitly relegated women to supporting roles for the sake of their safety. Evidence of this can be found in how it framed women in The Black Panther. Take this article from 1967:

The Black Panther Party is where the BLACK MEN are. I know every black woman has to feel proud of black men who finally decided to announce to the world that they were police brutality and black genocide. … The reason they were arrested, Sisters, is the white power structure doesn’t want any brave men with guts enough to say, ‘Hell no,’ to the police force in self-defense of their women, themselves and all of our children. That’s really telling the power structure ‘Like it is.’

This framing of Panther women can also be found in illustrations done by Emory Douglas. For example, in advertising some prints he had for sale, he revealed the place of women in the organization: as Revolutionary Mothers, whose role is to conceive to keep the revolution going. While there is nothing wrong with this role, that was the only representation of women in his posters, thereby limiting their functions within the Party.

The second reason why the BPP’s treatment of women is connected to its context has to do with acceptance. As much as the BPP advocated for black self-
determination, their early actions demonstrate that they wanted to be accepted as men by society at large; not just by other members of the black community. One prevalent example of this is how they continued to clash with the police during patrols, despite that such interactions had become increasingly violent at no tangible benefit to the Party. Their persistently inflammatory use of the media beyond their need for recruitment and visibility also shows how they were looking for public validation. By trying to prove that they had equal worth with white men, the men of the BPP necessarily had to buy into patriarchal white gender norms. So, once more, black women were implicitly relegated to supporting roles within the Party. This had the ironic effect of reproducing white hegemony, rather than shirking it. As scholar Simon Wendt said, “the BPP’s powerful image of masculinity countered traditional stereotypes of the powerless of African American men” and “communicated defiance to white America.”

Finally, the BPP was formed in the context of Newton and Seale’s unique, gendered perspectives. They sought to make life for the black community better in accordance with their own experiences as men. So, at the beginning of the Party’s life, they focused on empowering men, at the unintended expense of women. This focus on empowering themselves is made clear by an anecdote from Seale. Apparently, the first woman to inquire about female membership in the Party surprised him and Newton. They hadn’t actually thought about women’s place within the organization, and had not established a clear policy about their ability to be members. However, upon being asked about it, they officialized that both black men and women were welcome in the Party. It is evident, then, that the relegation of women to supporting roles of the BPP was not necessarily direct, nor intended. It was more an emphasis on young black men, whom Newton and Seale wanted to empower due to the personal experience they had in feeling less than.

Despite that BPP women were relegated to supporting roles, their contributions factored significantly in the Party’s success. From the beginning, they had a hand in formulating policy and ideology, implementing new ideas, and running day-to-day functions. Curiously, they also controlled what it meant to be a revolutionary black woman from their entry into the Party. While this is a curious fact, it can be accounted for in two ways.

First, Panther women did not always have “a full grasp on their identity as women.” This was a time when sexism was not yet understood as part of the fabric of American society; at least, not as prevalently as it is understood in modern times. For example, one female member, Malika Adams, said, “We didn’t see ourselves as

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66 Estes, I Am a Man!, 177.
67 Wendt, “‘They Finally Found Out We Really Are Men,’” 557.
69 Austin, Up Against the Wall, 343.
separate from the brothers. … I don’t know that we really saw ourselves as women. … I think we saw ourselves in the eyes of men. The men pretty much defined what we were.”[^71] So, in defining revolutionary motherhood, they may not have understood the role that sexism and gender relations played in their Party activities, rendering them unaware of their distinctive treatment by Panther men.

Second, the treatment of Panther women, and how they felt about such treatment, varied regionally.[^72] This is because, as much as the black community was subjected to similar treatment across the country, how they understood their daily life depended on events which were happening in a chapter’s immediate vicinity. For example, the women of the Berkeley BPP chapter may have been more aware of how patriarchy defined their relationships with male members, because it was in the same town as University at California-Berkeley, which was known for their feminist action in the 60s and 70s. This may have been different in the BPP chapter in Atlanta, given that it was not a major center for feminist thought at the time.

To be sure, there were instances when sexism reared its head in ways that could not have been interpreted in any way except as misogynistic. For example, there were instances where female members had alleged that they had been raped by male members.[^73] But this egregious behavior can largely be traced to the influence of Cleaver, and his fostering of the do-nothing terrorists referred to by Seale. In his memoir *Soul on Ice*, Cleaver writes about his troubled past:

> I became a rapist. To refine my technique and *modus operandi*, I started out by practicing on black girls in the ghetto … and when I considered myself smooth enough, I crossed the tracks and sought out white prey. … Rape was an insurrectionary act. It delighted me that I was defying and trampling upon white man’s law, upon his system and values, and that I was defiling his women.[^74]

Regardless of whether he was simply engaging in masculine posturing, this indicates the lengths he was willing to go in reclaiming the power of which society had stripped him. Since that point, Cleaver had undergone significant reform. On the surface, he seemed to have completely overcome his internalized misogyny, which was exemplified by his being on-board with the sexual equality aspect of the BPP’s platform. Yet, other instances indicate that he had not. For example, he continued to be opposed to survival programs, even going so far as to call the Free Breakfast Program “sissy.”[^75]

By contrast, Seale and Newton maintained relatively good track records in gender relations. While they each had their own progress to make in unlearning patriarchal ideals, they worked actively to cultivate women’s roles and experiences in

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[^73]: Seale, *Seize the Time*, 401.
[^74]: Cleaver, *Soul on Ice*, 33.
[^75]: Seale and Shames, *Power to the People*, 155.
the Party—both publicly and privately. Not only did they take initiative in factoring women’s experiences into their program, they also listened to the women of the Party when they had problems. BPP leader Kathleen Cleaver said that if she saw a woman being disrespected, she “spoke up, and many of us did. Where did we take all that information, to Huey Newton … I saw him as a person that loved and respected women and that’s why I went to him.”

Seale even imposed an additional rule on members in 1969: “do not take liberties with women.” In doing so, he demonstrated his belief that absolute equality “must be established on the principle of from each and every person, both male and female, according to their ability, and to each and every person, both male and female, according to their needs.”

In summary: the role of patriarchy within the BPP is apparent as an extension of the masculinity which the men sought to embody. It may even have been present in some members who struggled to unlearn, or simply didn’t want to unlearn, misogyny altogether. However, as female members spoke their minds and called for better treatment, the men of the party got better. This betterment of gender relations is also evident in their later newspapers, which more heavily and openly featured the voices of women.

It also important to emphasize that, while this article is dedicated to analyzing the masculinity of the BPP, women were fundamental to the enactment of the Family Protector model. First, it is plausible that the Party would not have made as much progress in gender relations without Panther women speaking up and holding men accountable for their actions. Second and more importantly, Panther women were largely the ones that realized the Party’s survival programs on the ground. A quick glance at photos from cafeterias, clinics, and more from chapters across the country reveal that the Party quite literally depended on its women for success. Had it not been for them, it is unclear that the BPP would have loomed as large as it did.

Further, when all the male leaders had been chased out, arrested, incarcerated, or killed, women were the ones that took the reins and kept the Party from falling into disrepair. The most notable instance of this was when Newton fled to Cuba, and Elaine Brown assumed the position of chairman of the Party. Together with Ericka Huggins, Brown opened one of the most successful survival programs in BPP history: the Oakland Community School, which lasted from 1973 to 1982.

Claudia Chesson-Williams, an ex-member of the Queens chapter, echoed a similar experience:

There were times that our cadre consisted of almost nothing but women, and that was when the brothers were locked up or had to go underground. I remember being on a front line against a policeman on horseback and being six months pregnant. What we wanted was a simple streetlight, and we got the community out there, and we blocked traffic.

In sum, the Party did exhibit some patriarchal tendencies that were connected to the Black Power movement and leadership’s personal experiences as lumpen black men. From their gendered perspectives, keeping women safe out of the limelight qualified as protecting and empowering them. But as more Panther women spoke out, the men once again altered their behavior to fit what the black community and women needed. This is more than a lot of political organizations can say. By the end of the Party’s short life, it is not clear that absolute sexual equality had been achieved. But,

76 Qtd. in Alameen-Shavers, “The Woman Question,” 54.
78 Seale, Seize the Time, 394.
79 Austin, Up Against the Wall, 262.
if it had survived, it is plausible that Panther men and women would have continued working in that direction together.

**Conclusion: Reclaiming One’s Humanity**

Clearly, the men of the Black Panther Party enacted their masculinity according to the Family Protector model; that is to say, empowering the community directly, rather than simply attacking their oppressors to empower themselves. This is exemplified by their emphasis on self-defense, community empowerment, and commitment to the betterment of all black people—not just black men.

The legacies of their work also echo into the present day. One can see them in the Black Lives Matter movement, which also seeks to empower all black people—not just those who conform to a specific model. To them, it doesn’t matter who a black person is—they are human, and they have worth, and they do not deserve to be tortured and killed simply because of the color of their skin. It can also be seen in how the right to self-defense, armed or otherwise, in responding to state oppression as a means of reclaiming their humanity has become a standard topic in the national discourse.

But one thing remains unclear: the right to self-defense and the overcoming of trauma and internalized self-hatred are not exclusive to males. In fact, the onset of trauma is universally caused by one’s inability to fight back and stop what awful thing is happening to them. Resulting psychological problems can then only be solved by showing oneself that, despite that event, they still have the power, the agency, and the humanity to fight for themselves.

So, even in times when the men of the Black Panther Party employed masculinist rhetoric and posturing, it can’t be said that they were purely acting from a place of gender, as opposed to a place of humanity. As Frantz Fanon so often said, self-defense is key to reclaiming one’s humanity in the face of violence by others. And it seems that, at least in some cases, he was right. Take the testimony of Black Panther leader Ericka Huggins:

> In those days [we fought to] get rid of racism so we could stay alive. We didn’t even think about sexism except when it reared its head. We didn’t spend our time looking at what men and women did or didn’t do because we didn’t have time to think about it. We were too busy living so we didn’t die. … A lot of people don’t understand what that means in a day-to-day interaction. We were constantly looking over our shoulders. All I wanted to know about the person next to me, be it a man or woman, was would they back me up. If I needed to put my life in this person’s hands, would it be all right. I didn’t care whether they were man or woman, gay or straight, or any of that.

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81 “About.” *Black Lives Matter.*
83 Qtd. in Bloom and Martin, *Black Against Empire*, 308.
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EXPLOITATION AND RESISTANCE:
Enslaved Motherhood at the University of Alabama
Katie Marks

From the time it was first opened to students in 1831 up until the outbreak of the Civil War, the University of Alabama (UA), as well as its faculty and students, depended on the labor of enslaved men, women, and children. While the available sources detailing the lives of these enslaved people are limited, information about the enslaved women who lived and labored at UA is particularly scarce. However, the collection of diaries kept by Basil Manly Sr., the president of UA from 1837 to 1855, offers a small yet noteworthy glimpse into the lives of some enslaved women who labored on campus inside the President’s Mansion. By carefully analyzing excerpts from these diaries, this paper demonstrates how this group of enslaved women found ways to resist the exploitation of their bodies so as to maintain the integrity of their motherhood.

In writing about enslaved women, historians are often hard-pressed to find source material that provides insight into the bondwoman’s unique experience under slavery. Deborah Gray White said it best: “Slave women were everywhere, yet nowhere.” It is therefore incumbent on historians to navigate the limited written records about enslaved women in order to figure out who these women were, what they did, what they valued, and how they responded to slavery’s confinements. Nowhere does this seem more true than at the University of Alabama (UA) where published accounts about enslaved people on campus have focused on enslaved men. This is despite the fact that enslaved women were just as present and vital to the institution’s success. Some of the difficulty in learning about enslaved women’s contributions to the early history of UA is due to the fact that information about them predominately comes from the collection of diaries kept by Basil Manly, Sr., who served as the university’s second president from 1837 to 1855. While Manly’s diaries provide some insight into the lives of enslaved women at UA, these women’s stories are being told by a White slaveholding male living in the antebellum United States South. As a result, what Manly writes about his enslaved women comes from the perspective of a slaveholder concerned with the labor his enslaved women performed, the children these women

1 Deborah Grey White, Ar’n’t I a Woman?: Female Slaves in the Plantation South (New York: W. W. Norton, 1999), 23.
2 See, for example: James A. Fuller, “‘I Whipped Him a Second Time, Very Severely’: Basil Manly, Honor, and Slavery at the University of Alabama,” in Slavery and the University, eds. Leslie M. Harris, James T. Campbell, and Alfred L. Brophy (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2019), 114-30. As the other essays in Slavery and the University demonstrate, interactions between enslaved men and students or faculty have been the focus of most work on the subject to enslaved people at institutions of higher learning.
3 Dr. Hilary Green’s work for the Hallowed Grounds Project has begun the process of acknowledging the roles enslaved women played at UA: Hilary Green, “Enslaved Women at the University of Alabama,” accessed April 12, 2021. Additionally, some institutions have begun paying more attention to the roles of enslaved women, such as at Davidson College: Mary Elizabeth DeAngelis, “Here All Along: Enslaved Women and Domestic Workers Shaped Life at Davidson,” Davidson Journal, April 1, 2021.
EXPLOITATION AND RESISTANCE

gave birth to, and the selling and hiring out of these women and their children for his own financial gain. Therefore, by investigating the experiences of enslaved women who lived and labored on UA’s campus, I have attempted to write the first account centered explicitly around their lives.

With this in mind, how can we read Manly’s entries in a way that informs us about these enslaved women’s lives—given that his diaries are primarily concerned with the objectification and exploitation of these women’s bodies? One particular approach that many historians have taken is looking at the enslaved woman’s experience with childbirth and motherhood; the emphasis that slaveholders put on enslaved women’s dual responsibility as both producers and reproducers meant that childbirth and motherhood played a significant role in shaping the lives of enslaved women.4 Besides studying what motherhood meant for enslaved women, another approach historians have taken to learn about enslaved women is by focusing on the unique exploitation that they faced. Enslaved women were vulnerable to sexual attacks due to the contemporary perception of enslaved women as hypersexual beings.5 The attention historians have paid to childbirth, motherhood, and sexual exploitation is owed to the fact that slaveholders typically focused on these subjects when writing about enslaved women, and Manly is no different. However, historians are increasingly looking at patterns of resistance among enslaved women, especially when this resistance relates back to their motherhood.6

While my project ultimately coincides with all three of these approaches in engaging the experiences of enslaved women, I am specifically focused on the motherhood, exploitation, and resistance of those enslaved women who largely labored in domestic roles within the Manly household. To better understand how this group of women navigated enslaved motherhood as well as how they responded to the control and exploitation of their bodies, I have applied the work historians have already written concerning enslaved motherhood and resistance to my own work analyzing the diary entries that Manly dedicates to enslaved women at UA. Additionally, my work is influenced by scholars like Saidiya Hartman and Marisa Fuentes who have both put forth methodologies that allow historians to read beyond White, slaveholding narratives by piecing together and reframing fragmentary primary sources on enslaved women.7 Relying on these methodologies and the work historians have already written about enslaved women has enabled me to circumvent Manly’s perspective so that the history I am telling focuses on the enslaved women, not the White man who wrote about them. A small number of the diary entries that I analyzed deal with enslaved women who did not belong to Manly, but who were still connected to UA. However, I mainly focus on those diary entries that record the


5 White, Ar’n’t I a Woman?, 30.


existence of Sabra, Mary, Lydia, “Little Mary,” Nancy, and Molly—the women Manly enslaved as his property.

By reading Manly’s entries about these enslaved women carefully and creatively, we can gain a sense of how they may have responded to slavery’s inherent objectification and exploitation of their motherhood. In my first section, I explain how slaveholders like Manly tried to control the enslaved woman’s reproductive experience as well as the measures enslaved women at UA might have taken to resist this control. In my second section, I point out the emphasis slaveholders placed on an enslaved woman’s role as a domestic laborer and how that might have conflicted with her responsibility as a mother. Further, I propose methods that the enslaved women at UA may have used to balance this dual responsibility. Lastly, my third section demonstrates that while Manly sought to profit off of his enslaved women and children by selling them or hiring them out, some of these women may have resisted such actions, especially if a sale or hire meant separating them from their family. If we use existing historical scholarship written about enslaved motherhood and resistance to make sense of what is written in the Manly diaries, we are able to see beyond the emphasis Manly placed on his enslaved women’s fecundity and their value to him as enslaved property. What we learn from Manly’s diary entries indicates that the women he enslaved not only found ways to regain authority over their reproductive experiences and to resist his fundamental exploitation of their motherhood, but that they also played essential roles in the President’s Mansion and were an important presence on campus in the first decades of UA’s history.

Control of Conception and Childbirth

For enslaved women, motherhood often provided a place of refuge from the burdens of slavery. It also provided a sense of familial belonging and an identity outside of being a slave. From the slaveholder’s perspective, however, the viability of the American slave regime depended on the enslaved woman’s fecundity. Slaveholders desired authority over all aspects of the enslaved woman’s reproductive experience: conception, pregnancy, and childbirth. Despite this, enslaved women sought control over their own reproduction, and they often found ways to resist the slaveholder’s exploitation of their reproductive systems. Though Manly does not document much relating to the lives of his enslaved women, he does record when his enslaved women give birth. In these particular entries, there is evidence that points to Manly’s enslaved women resisting his control of their reproductive experience.

One way that slaveholders like Manly pushed enslaved women into conceiving children was by encouraging enslaved women to enter into relationships with other enslaved men. In many cases, slaveholders would encourage their enslaved women to find a suitable partner or husband for themselves. Some slaveholders took matters into their own hands, however, and paired enslaved men and women together with the intent that they would procreate. On one hand, Manly mentions two of his female slaves as having husbands: Mary, who is married to Larrey; and “Little Mary,” who is married to Ben. While both Mary and “Little Mary” could have chosen these

8 See, for example: Schwartz, *Birthing a Slave*; Jones, “‘My Mother Was Much of a Woman;’” White, *Ar’n’t I a Woman?:* Emily West and Erin Shearer, “Fertility control, shared nurturing, and dual exploitation: the lives of enslaved mothers in the antebellum United States,” *Women’s History Review* 27, no. 6 (2017): 1006-20.
10 Excerpt recording Mary and Larrey’s relationship: University of Alabama Libraries Special Collections (UALSC), Manly Family Papers, Diary Number 5, Basil Manly, Sr., 1847-1857, image no. 7; Excerpt recording “Little Mary” and Ben’s relationship: UALSC, Manly Family Papers, Diary Number 5, Basil Manly, Sr., 1847-1857, image no. 46.
men as husbands themselves, it is also possible that Manly chose their husbands for them. With the exception of Mary and “Little Mary,” Manly never writes about his other enslaved women having husbands, despite the fact that these women had multiple children. It could be that enslaved women like Sabra and Lydia did have husbands but that Manly simply did not record this information. Manly may have facilitated the conception of these women’s children by setting them up with some of his own enslaved men or other enslaved men who worked on campus. It is also possible that Manly fathered these enslaved women’s children himself.

Forced sexual encounters between White men and enslaved women also served as means to increase enslaved women’s reproduction. Indeed, the portrayal of Black women as overtly libidinous meant that White men perceived Black women as open to sexual encounters, and that any resistance to a White man from a Black woman was insincere.\textsuperscript{11} Enslaved women at UA lived on a campus filled with White male students, faculty, and visitors, leaving them vulnerable to sexual assault. An example of how this perception of enslaved women might have led to an increased vulnerability to sexual exploitation can be seen when Manly writes about Luna, one of Professor Barnard’s enslaved women. Manly notes that Morgan, one of Barnard’s enslaved men, “acts as a Pimp to get out Barnard’s women—especially the younger Luna; whom they use in great numbers, nightly.”\textsuperscript{12} If Manly’s account is taken at face value, one interpretation of this entry may suggest that Morgan was procuring Barnard’s female slaves for White men (whether those men were students, professors, or citizens of Tuscaloosa is unclear). If this is the case, perhaps Professor Barnard allowed this to happen, hoping that might result in his enslaved women becoming pregnant. However, it is also possible that Manly did not fully understand what was happening between Morgan and Barnard’s enslaved women or that he was misinformed about the situation.

While the accuracy of Manly’s claim about Morgan acting as a “Pimp to get out” Professor Barnard’s enslaved women is unclear, one of Manly’s later diary entries suggests another possible case of an enslaved woman being sexually assaulted. In an entry from November 1852, Manly writes of a student named Alfred S. James being in “Stafford’s back-yard cursing, on Friday night—(while the child of Moses was dying—) after a girl of Moses by whom he (or someone else) has a child.”\textsuperscript{13} This diary entry suggests that an unnamed enslaved woman, presumably Moses’s girlfriend or wife, had a child fathered by a student named Alfred S. James. Manly writing of James “cursing” at this enslaved woman suggests, at the very least, a degree of familiarity between the two, although the dynamic of their relationship remains unclear. There is a chance that their relationship was consensual. However, it is equally plausible that James sexually assaulted this enslaved woman and fathered her child. If this is the case, this entry would support the veracity of Manly’s diary entry concerning Morgan and Barnard’s enslaved women, as it reinforces the notion that enslaved women at UA experienced sexual assault.

Despite the fact that slaveholders sought control over every aspect of enslaved women’s reproductive experiences, a few of Manly’s diary entries suggest that enslaved women met this exploitation with resistance. In a diary entry dated February 22, 1843, Manly writes, “Between the hours of 12 & 1 o’clock this morning, my Servant, Lydia, was delivered of a male child. The affair was all over within 15

\textsuperscript{11} White, \textit{Ar’n’t I a Woman?}, 30. See also: Jennifer L. Morgan, “‘Some Could Suckle over Their Shoulder’: Male Travelers, Female Bodies, and the Gendering of Racial Ideology, 1500-1770,” \textit{The William and Mary Quarterly} 54, no. 1 (1997): 167-92.
\textsuperscript{12} UALSC, Manly Family Papers, Diary Number 4, Basil Manly, Sr., 1848-1855, image no. 87.
\textsuperscript{13} UALSC, Manly Family Papers, Diary Number 4, Basil Manly, Sr., 1848-1855, image no. 205.
minutes after we were first apprised of her complaints—and some time before the midwife could be procured.”

It should be noted that this was not the first time Lydia gave birth; we know that she had at least one other child because in an earlier diary entry, Manly mentions that Lydia was sent to Tuscaloosa with her daughter Hetty. Because labor often progresses more quickly for women who have already had a child, Lydia may have assumed that this labor would advance at the same rate as her labor with Hetty. If this labor progressed more quickly than she was expecting, this could explain why Lydia waited so long to inform Manly that she was in labor. However, in a later diary entry dated October 31, 1846, Manly writes, “This afternoon, about 6 o’clock, my woman, Lydia, was delivered of a son. As usual with her, the child was born before the midwife could be got to her.”

That on two separate occasions Lydia waited so long to tell Manly that she was in labor indicates that she might have intentionally waited to notify Manly at the last minute so that she could give birth the way she wanted rather than put her child’s birth in the hands of a midwife that she did not know.

In addition to regaining control of their birthing experience, there is also evidence indicating that Manly’s enslaved women might have tried to regulate how many children they had as well as the frequency with which they had them. In another diary entry, Manly records the birth of Mary’s son on March 1, 1847. However, he later adds to this entry that the “little child, just born, died on Monday night, March 8, at about midnight. Dr. Haywood thought it was overlain and crushed.”

It should be noted that while many physicians in the antebellum period attributed enslaved infants’ deaths to smothering and overlaying, modern scholars have argued that these deaths were more likely caused by Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). Because week-old babies were very unlikely to die from SIDS, however, it is possible that the death of Mary’s baby was the result of infanticide. If Mary did commit infanticide, it would be impossible to understand her motivations for doing so. Although the source material is scarce, we know that some enslaved women did take this step as a way to control their reproductive authority in defiance of slaveholders’ expectations.

Rather than commit infanticide in the case of an unwanted pregnancy, enslaved women more commonly resorted to using contraceptives and other preventative measures as a means to prevent or space out childbirth. In looking at the birth spaces for three of Manly’s enslaved women—Sabra, Mary, and Lydia—it appears as though all three women typically gave birth around every two and a half to three and a half years. There are, however, some abnormal exceptions to this pattern in regards to both Sabra and Mary. In Sabra’s case, there was a five year and two month gap between the birth of daughter Julia and her son Samuel. Similarly for Mary, there is a space of approximately six years and ten months between the birth of her daughter Binkey and the birth of a son who Manly does not name.

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14 UALSC, Manly Family Papers, Diary Number 2, Basil Manly, Sr., 1834-1846, image no. 300.
15 UALSC, Manly Family Papers, Diary Number 2, Basil Manly, Sr., 1834-1846, image no. 277.
16 UALSC, Manly Family Papers, Diary Number 2, Basil Manly, Sr., 1834-1846, image no. 410.
17 UALSC, Manly Family Papers, Diary Number 5, Basil Manly, Sr., 1847-1857, image no. 7.
20 King, “‘Mad’ Enough to Kill,” 42-44.
21 Schwartz, Birthing a Slave, 70-71, 92-96.
22 Julia’s birth: UALSC, Manly Family Papers, Diary Number 2, Basil Manly, Sr., 1834-1846, image no. 277.
23 Binkey’s birth: UALSC, Manly Family Papers, Diary Number 2, Basil Manly, Sr., 1834-1846, image no. 186. Unnamed child’s birth: UALSC, Manly Family Papers, Diary Number 5, Basil Manly, Sr., 1847-1857, image no. 7.
explanation for these unusually long gaps between births could be that Mary and Sabra suffered from miscarriages or stillbirths that went unrecorded in Manly’s diaries, but an equally possible explanation might be that Mary and Sabra used some form of contraceptive or other preventative measures to avoid getting pregnant. For example, there is evidence to suggest that enslaved women used cotton root as a contraceptive, and that this was effective in preventing pregnancy. It could also be that Mary or Sabra consciously chose to abstain from sex to avoid getting pregnant. While the reason for these long birth spaces remains unknown, it is entirely conceivable that both of these enslaved women sought to regain authority over their reproductive experience by controlling when they conceived their children.

The few entries that Manly writes about enslaved women happens to be about the birth of their children. This indicates that Manly, like the majority of slaveholders, placed importance on his enslaved women’s abilities to conceive and bear children. At the same time, these same diary entries also indicate that Manly’s enslaved women may have worked to preserve some agency over their bodies and their reproductive experiences. In some cases, enslaved women like Lydia might have been able to subvert the slaveholder’s attempt to intrude upon and control their birthing experience. While Manly and other slaveholders placed emphasis on their enslaved women’s fecundity, there is evidence in the Manly diaries demonstrating that Manly’s enslaved women may have endeavored to control their own fertility. Nevertheless, Manly’s enslaved women not only had to navigate the demands that he placed on their reproductive systems, but they also had to find ways to balance their motherhood with the demands of domestic labor.

Balancing Service and Mothering

To meet the demands that the Manly family put on their bodies, domestic enslaved mothers in the Manly household perhaps utilized more communal forms of care and mothering to make up for the exploitation of their time and energy. While Manly says very little about the labor his enslaved women performed in the Manly household, all of the women would have labored in a domestic capacity. For enslaved women like those who worked in the Manly household, their dual status as both slaves and women shaped the demands that slaveholders like Manly doled out to them. While mistresses were often responsible for running the household, the duties necessary for maintaining the welfare of the White family were often seen not as women’s work, but as Black women’s and Black children’s work. Domestic labor was often as backbreaking as plantation labor, and it was performed at a forced pace under the slaveholder’s supervision.

Enslaved women who worked in the slaveholder’s house in a domestic capacity were typically on call at every hour of every day, often before the sun rose and well after sunset. Their responsibilities as cooks, seamstresses, nurses, and waiting-maids were subject to the whims of the slaveholding family, and could very possibly lead to exhaustion or physical injury. Tasks like preparing three or more meals a day over smoky fireplaces, hauling water and timber, building fires, and washing and ironing clothes proved to be as tiring as they were time-consuming. Other than Sabra, who worked as a cook, and Nancy, who Manly hires as a nurse for

25 Jones, “‘My Mother Was Much of a Woman,’” 246.
26 Jones, “‘My Mother Was Much of a Woman,’” 248-50.
28 Jones, “‘My Mother Was Much of a Woman,’” 248.
29 Jones, “‘My Mother Was Much of a Woman,’” 248-249.
his younger children in 1845, Manly makes no mention of the roles his other enslaved women filled, or what their duties in the Manly household were. However, since all of the enslaved women in the Manly household labored in domestic capacities, their physical proximity to the Manly family could very well have positioned them to be vulnerable to the impulses of their slaveholder or their slaveholder’s children.

The physically-taxing and time-consuming labor that slaveholders expected from their domestic enslaved women often conflicted with these women’s responsibilities as mothers. Enslaved women could often be expected to care for their own children, the children of other enslaved women, and sometimes, their slaveholder’s children. Not only were they expected to balance this childcare with their domestic responsibilities in the White household, they also had to care for their children while performing domestic tasks for their own households, as well. From Manly’s diary entries, it is clear that Manly’s cook Sabra had at least eight children. It is unclear whether or not Sabra was the only enslaved person cooking for the Manly household; however, if this was the case, she might not have had the time or the energy to take care of her own children. Cooks were often responsible for preparing and cooking food for the slaveholding family as well as other enslaved men, women, and children. It should be noted that Mary, Lydia, and “Little Mary” also had multiple children, and while Manly only specifies Sabra’s duties in the Manly household, all of these women may have had the same experience that Sabra had—not having enough time to mother their children due to the exploitation of their labor.

Having to meet the slaveholder’s demands, enslaved women might have relied on a couple of different methods to ensure that their children were taken care of. Manly had at least two older enslaved women: Molly and Nancy. From one of Manly’s diary entries, it is clear that he purchased Nancy to be a nurse for his own children. With this in mind, it is possible that Molly served in a similar capacity with regard to the enslaved children. Given that an older enslaved woman’s most common occupation was watching over the enslaved children while their mothers worked, it seems likely that Molly filled this caretaker role. If Molly took care of the enslaved children so that the younger enslaved mothers could perform their assigned tasks, this meant that Sabra, Mary, Lydia, and “Little Mary,” may have had to sacrifice time they could have spent mothering their children in order to meet the demands of the Manly family.

It is also conceivable that the enslaved women who had children perhaps utilized more communal forms of mothering as well. For example, Manly records his cook Sabra as giving birth to a son named Archy on February 25, 1840. Not long after, Mary gives birth to a daughter named Binkey on March 23, 1840. It is possible that in the event that some of Manly’s enslaved women gave birth around the same time, one woman might have taken on the responsibility of breastfeeding both her baby as well as that of another enslaved woman. The practice of communal breastfeeding was not unique given that enslaved women may not have been able to

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30 Sabra as a cook: UALSC, Manly Family Papers, Diary Number 2, Basil Manly, Sr., 1834-1846, image no. 277. Manly purchases Nancy: UALSC, Manly Family Papers, Diary Number 2, Basil Manly, Sr., 1834-1846, image no. 379.
31 West and Shearer, “Fertility control, shared nurturing, and dual exploitation,” 1013-1014.
32 Manly refers to William as Sabra’s 4th child: UALSC, Manly Family Papers, Diary Number 2, Basil Manly, Sr., 1834-1846, image no. 122. This would have made Kitty her 8th child. Kitty’s birth: UALSC, Manly Family Papers, Diary Number 5, Basil Manly, Sr., 1847-1857, image no. 136.
33 Jones, “‘My Mother Was Much of a Woman,’” 246.
34 White, Ar’n’t I a Woman?, 114-15.
35 UALSC, Manly Family Papers, Diary Number 2, Basil Manly, Sr., 1834-1846, image no. 184.
36 UALSC, Manly Family Papers, Diary Number 2, Basil Manly, Sr., 1834-1846, image no. 186.
dedicate enough time and care to their children in light of the demands they had to meet. If one of Manly’s enslaved mothers took on the role of breastfeeding another one of the enslaved mother’s children, this could have allowed some of Manly’s enslaved women to meet the demands of domestic slavery while also making sure that their children were properly nourished and cared for at the same time.

While it is impossible to know what responsibilities all of Manly’s enslaved women had to grapple with on a day-to-day basis, the work they were forced to do for the Manly family would have inevitably interfered with their ability to devote most of their time and energy to their roles as mothers. Due to the priority placed upon their bodies as laborers, Manly’s enslaved mothers might have utilized more communal forms of mothering to ensure that their many children were well cared for. On top of finding ways to balance the demands of the Manly household with their ability to care for their children, Manly’s enslaved mothers also had to contend with the reality that they could be separated from their families.

Resistance to Sale and Separation

In addition to exploiting their labor in his own household, Manly also sought to capitalize on his enslaved men, women, and children by selling them or hiring them out to other White households in Tuscaloosa. Selling and hiring out his enslaved people, often individually rather than as families, meant that Manly not only separated enslaved women from their husbands but that he also separated enslaved children from their mothers. In effect, Manly prioritized his enslaved people’s roles as property that he could turn a profit from over their roles as friends, parents, siblings, and children. Despite this, there is evidence in the Manly diaries indicating that Manly’s enslaved women resisted the selling and hiring out of their labor, especially if it meant separating them from their families.

While owning an enslaved person was an investment for a slaveholder, it was an expensive one; slaveholders had to feed, clothe, and pay taxes on their slaves. If an enslaved person could not bring in a profit, either because they were too young, too old, or because a slaveholder did not have anything for them to do, slaveholders would sell or hire out their enslaved property to ensure a return on their investment. In a diary entry dated December 21, 1848, Manly writes that his “old woman” Nancy was hired out for the year (at three dollars a month) to Mr. William Miller, who is to provide Nancy with “clothing of the value of $12 in the course of the year.” When Manly originally purchased Nancy in 1845, his wife may have needed extra help caring for their children given that the Manlys had five younger children with ages ranging from a couple months old to twelve years of age. Although Manly purchased Nancy to be a nurse for his children, it is possible that Nancy’s services were no longer needed when he hired her out in 1848. By hiring Nancy out to Miller, Manly found a way to profit off of her labor while also saving money by having Miller clothe Nancy.

Besides older enslaved men and women, enslaved children were often prime candidates for hiring out, as well. The work enslaved children could perform was often insignificant. Yet, enslaved children still had to be fed, clothed, and sheltered despite the fact that the labor they were capable of performing rarely justified their expenses. For example, in a diary entry dated December 26, 1850, Manly writes that he has hired the ten-year-old Hetty out to Mr. Agustin Lynch. Lynch is to pay Manly twenty-five

39 UALSC, Manly Family Papers, Diary Number 5, Basil Manly, Sr., 1847-1857, image no. 79.
dollars for a year of Hetty’s service, and he is responsible for feeding and clothing Hetty as well as paying her taxes.40 Because younger enslaved children like Hetty were expensive to care for, slaveholders often hired out enslaved children as soon as they were able to obtain a decent price.

Despite Manly selling and hiring his slaves, there is evidence that points to some of Manly’s enslaved women working to shape some of these transactions. In a diary entry dated July 26, 1849, Manly writes that he sold his enslaved woman Lydia and Lydia’s youngest child Charity to Mr. Thomas H. Walker, which effectively separated Lydia from her mother, Molly, and two of her other children.41 A couple months after Lydia and Charity were sold, Manly writes that he sold Molly to the same Mr. Thomas H. Walker for fifty dollars, reasoning that while he may have been able to get one hundred dollars for her on the market, he “took that some to let her be with her daughter, where she wishes to go.”42 Although Manly writes that he accepted a lower sale price for Molly so that she could be with her daughter, this could be an exaggeration on his part, as it fits Manly’s perception of himself as a benevolent slaveholder. Molly would have been around fifty-six or fifty-seven years old, and older enslaved people did not always command a high purchase price. Even so, it is entirely feasible that what Manly writes about Molly is true. If this is the case, Molly was able to negotiate for her sale to Walker in order to be with her daughter and grandchild, essentially overriding another potential transaction that would have made Manly more money.

In addition to shaping the terms of a sale or hire, there is also evidence in the Manly diaries indicating that Manly’s enslaved women may have resisted being sold or hired out. When Manly wrote on December 31, 1850 that he had hired “Little Mary” out to Mr. L. D. Duren, Manly makes no mention of sending Mary’s daughter Margaret with her.43 Less than a month later on January 20, 1851, he added to this entry that because Duren was “dissatisfied with her,” Manly sent Mary (this time with Margaret) to be hired out to V. Hart.44 Because Manly does not mention Margaret coming with Mary when she is hired out to Duren, but then writes later that he sent both the mother and child to Hart, perhaps Manly separated Mary from her daughter when he originally sent her to Duren. Slaveholders could often expect to make less money by hiring out mothers with small children: not only did hirers have to financially maintain small children (who provided no labor in return), but small children also demanded attention from mothers.45 Wanting to be reunited with her daughter, Mary may have defied or withheld labor from Duren, believing this would get her sent back to Manly.

Although Mary and Margaret were hired out to Hart, this arrangement would not last long, as Mary and her daughter were sent back home just a few weeks later. In a diary entry dated February 28, 1851, Manly writes that “Little Mary came home … threatened with miscarriage. Some accounts say that Mrs. Hart has beaten her on the back with a stick.”46 While it is unclear what the pregnant Mary did to provoke such a beating, the rest of Manly’s entry indicates a possible explanation when he writes that Mary had to “bring all the water the family use[d] for drinking, cooking, washing & all purposes, on her head, up that high hill from the spring below.”47 On

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40 UALSC, Manly Family Papers, Diary Number 5, Basil Manly, Sr., 1847-1857, image no. 185.
41 UALSC, Manly Family Papers, Diary Number 5, Basil Manly, Sr., 1847-1857, image no. 117.
42 UALSC, Manly Family Papers, Diary Number 5, Basil Manly, Sr., 1847-1857, image no. 136.
43 UALSC, Manly Family Papers, Diary Number 5, Basil Manly, Sr., 1847-1857, image no. 185.
44 UALSC, Manly Family Papers, Diary Number 5, Basil Manly, Sr., 1847-1857, image no. 185.
45 Martin, *Divided Mastery*, 49-51.
46 UALSC, Manly Family Papers, Diary Number 5, Basil Manly, Sr., 1847-1857, image no. 191.
47 UALSC, Manly Family Papers, Diary Number 5, Basil Manly, Sr., 1847-1857, image no. 191.
one hand, Mrs. Hart might have punished Mary because she was physically unable to perform her assigned duties at a fast enough pace due to her pregnancy. On the other hand, it is equally possible that Mary could have purposely labored slowly or even withheld labor altogether. Even though she was no longer separated from Margaret, she was separated from her husband, Ben, and she could have resisted her hirers in an effort to reunite her family. Another explanation might be that because the labor the Harts asked Mary to perform could have negatively impacted her pregnancy, Mary may have resisted their orders so as to remove herself from their temporary control. That “Little Mary” only lasted a couple weeks in both the Duren and Hart households, and that she was beaten over the back with a stick at one point, indicates that Mary resisted the exploitation of her labor on purpose.

The selling or hiring out of an enslaved man, woman, or child carried the risk of either permanently or temporarily breaking up enslaved families. For slaveholders like Manly, the financial incentives of these transactions were often prioritized over any attempts to keep an enslaved family together. However, despite Manly’s efforts to profit off of his enslaved women by selling them or hiring them out, Manly’s diary entries suggest that his enslaved women both explicitly and implicitly worked to influence these transactions. It appears that this might have especially been the case when a particular sale or hire meant that an enslaved mother would be separated from her children.

By applying historical scholarship to the lives of enslaved women and the ways they resisted the exploitation of their bodies, it is possible to read what Manly writes of his enslaved women in a new light. In this context, Manly’s diary entries suggest that his enslaved women found ways to navigate and, at times, resist the control and exploitation of both their bodies and their motherhood. Despite slaveholders like Manly having a vested interest in an enslaved woman’s pregnancy and childbirth, Manly’s enslaved women could have worked to counteract his exploitation of their bodies by reclaiming control over their birthing experience and by regulating how many children they had and when they had them. In addition to slaveholders exploiting enslaved women’s reproductive capabilities, slaveholders also exploited enslaved women’s labor—often at the expense of their roles as mothers. Because of this, Manly’s enslaved women may have been forced to come up with ways that they could ensure their children were well-cared for while they met the demands of the Manly household. Lastly, even though Manly attempted to maximize the profits he could make off enslaved women’s bodies by selling and hiring out his enslaved women and their children, there is evidence that at least some of Manly’s enslaved women worked against these transactions, especially if it meant they might be separated from their children.

The information that Manly chose to disclose in his diary entries dedicated to Sabra, Mary, Lydia, “Little Mary,” Nancy, and Molly were undoubtedly shaped by what Manly valued as a slaveholder—not by what his enslaved women valued as mothers. Unfortunately, enslaved women had very few opportunities to write about themselves and what they valued as mothers, daughters, wives, or friends. This means that historians are forced to reconcile the lack of primary sources told from an enslaved woman’s perspective by relying on the words of people like Manly, individuals who rarely (if ever) made attempts to better understand bondwomen’s experiences under slavery. However daunting of a task this may prove to be, it is worth undertaking if we wish to better understand a group of women relegated to the margins of written records—both inside and outside the university. Exploring the lives of enslaved women at UA reveals aspects of what life was like inside the President’s Mansion from the perspectives of Sabra, Mary, Lydia, Little Mary, Nancy, and Molly.
It also reminds us that we cannot understand enslavement at institutions of higher learning or indeed, at The University of Alabama, without focusing on the experiences of enslaved women who lived and labored on campus.
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This paper explores how members of the Southern Baptist (SB) denomination developed their arguments, tactics, and rhetoric to stall integration during the Civil Rights Movement (CRM). It argues that the physical and ideological structure of the SB denomination and the Biblical argument underlying the fight against integration were the catalyst for the SB response to the CRM. As the Southern Baptist Convention’s (SBC) annual reports—SBC’s resolutions passed at their yearly convention meetings—and The Alabama Baptist demonstrate, many SB leaders determined that preventing integration was a moral crusade instituted by God. These writings reveal that the SB argument for segregation rested solely on the authority of scripture, the emphasis placed on individual autonomy, and the threat of God’s wrath towards humanity—and the nation—should it not abide by his commands. As a result of this language, integration was significantly stalled in Alabama and the road was paved for the denomination to later achieve political ascendancy.

Introduction

Inflamed by the Civil Rights Movement (CRM) and responses to it, the United States faced widespread turmoil and divisiveness during the 1950s-1960s. Many citizens and institutions had to again contend with this century-long “moral dilemma”: whether to condone or condemn integration. Since the Southern Baptist (SB) denomination was the largest and the most influential tradition in the South during this time period, this was an especially acute conflict for certain Southern Baptists. Many Southern Baptists in Alabama utilized their long-held beliefs in local church autonomy, a priesthood of all believers, the separation of church and state, and biblical inerrancy to forge a framework that was in opposition to swift and progressive change, both in the denomination and throughout the state. Segregationists in this tradition later abused this network in order to supersede the SB belief in the separation of church and state. Once this was accomplished, segregationists entered the political realm based on purported righteousness while convincing other Southern Baptists that doing the same did not undo the current denominational structure, but it, in fact, sustained it. By allowing autonomous churches and individuals to decide how to combat integration, certain Southern Baptist leaders exhibited segregationist ideas as righteous, moral, and necessary, creating a path for Southern Baptists to carry out their holy war, preventing integration at all costs.

2 Flynt, Alabama Baptists, 77-85.
A major component of the Southern Baptist denomination’s argument against integration entailed maintaining that God’s vision for humanity on earth ought to be determined by the book of Genesis and interpreted by white, male leaders in the tradition. According to these men, God divinely ordained a separation of the races in order to prevent pervasive immorality. Anything less than vigilantly promoting this social hierarchy was considered heresy. In order to make God’s vision a reality on earth, segregationist Southern Baptists began melding “the religious” and with “the political” in their own tradition in new ways. This brought their concerns directly to the laity and solidified an ideology suitable in the previously forbidden political realm. After, this racial hierarchy was presented to the state in what was called “mission work.” Southern Baptist leaders accomplished this primarily through presenting resolutions at their annual convention meetings, which, once accepted, were later promulgated in local churches. After these propositions were instituted on the provincial level, their racial orthodoxy was presented in publications like the Alabama Baptist. For example, Leon Macon, editor of this publication, argued that God had indeed established a clear social hierarchy during the creation account, thereby placing the Southern Baptist Convention’s (SBC) claims in the public sphere. The Southern Baptist Denomination’s structure and belief system, their utilization of that framework at their annual convention meetings, and the permeation of this construct into the political world, as seen through Leon Macon’s writings, reveals that the Southern Baptist response to the CRM was slow but effective because it flourished in both religious and secular realms. In addition, this Southern Baptist argument against integration emphasized the individual’s ability to choose the best moral response to the CRM in the political realm in ways that the denomination itself could not accomplish.

In this paper, I explore the numerous denominational publications such as the SBC’s annuals, pamphlets documenting the proceedings of the SBC’s yearly gathering, and resolutions, passed and affirmed at the annual convention, that were released during the CRM. In addition, I examine writings by prominent Southern Baptists such as Leon Macon’s editorial page in the Alabama Baptist. As a result, it is clear that the SB denomination succeeded in portraying integration as immoral because they utilized rhetoric which emphasized that God’s vision for humanity entailed a separation of the races. These writings also reveal that the Southern Baptists’ argument for segregation rested solely on the authority of scripture, the emphasis placed on individual autonomy, and the threat of God’s wrath towards humanity should they not abide by his commands. This paper argues that an examination of the physical and ideological structure of the Southern Baptist denomination and the Biblical argument underlying the fight against integration were the catalyst for the SB response to the CRM. Examining these aspects of the denomination first exhibits that the rhetoric utilized by the SBC and Leon Macon was effective because it emphasized individual choice, God’s vision for humanity, and the precarious position the nation’s morality occupied. As a result of this language, integration was significantly stalled in Alabama and the road was paved for the denomination to later achieve political ascendancy.

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3 Andrew M. Manis, “‘Dying from the neck up’: Southern Baptist Resistance to the Civil Rights Movement.” Baptist History and Heritage 34, no. 1 (1999): 112.
4 Manis, “‘Dying from the neck up,’” 112.
5 Leon Macon, editorial, Alabama Baptist, August 10, 1950.
6 Flynt, Alabama Baptists, 77-85.
Historiography

Most studies discussing religion in the American South during the mid-20th century have primarily focused on either the role that religion played in the push for integration or Southern Baptist history as a whole. For example, Paul Harvey’s *Freedom’s Coming: Religious Culture and the Shaping of the South from the Civil War through the Civil Rights Era* is largely concerned with analyzing the religious life of African Americans oppressed by slavery and segregation. Wayne Flynt’s *Alabama Baptists: Southern Baptists in the Heart of Dixie* focuses on the construction, development, and history of the Southern Baptist Convention. Similarly, John Lee Eighmy’s *Churches in Cultural Captivity: a History of the Social Attitudes of Southern Baptists* discusses the prevalence of Southern Baptists’ social attitudes in constructing a virtuous society. All of these works are incredibly fruitful when discussing race and religion in Alabama, but they do not address how the Southern Baptist Denomination’s response to the Civil Rights Movement evolved from passive approval to vigilantism because the ideological and physical structure of the denomination created a moral entreaty against segregation which could exist and flourish in both the religious and secular spheres.

The Physical and Ideological Structure of the Southern Baptist Denomination in Alabama

The Southern Baptist Denomination’s size, multi-level structure, and ideological beliefs in local church autonomy, a priesthood of believers, and a separation of church and state all aided in portraying the preservation of segregation as a righteous and necessary cause. Although the composition of this denomination was initially designed with the intent to protect members from an overarching church hierarchy, segregationists exploited this construct during this time period to prevent rapid change within the tradition. This granted segregationists the time and mechanisms to thoroughly formulate a moral outcry against integration that later resounded throughout the entire state. Demands for integration by other Alabama citizens were overpowered by Southern Baptist segregationists, harming additional citizens, especially African-Americans.

By the time the CRM began, the Southern Baptist Denomination was the largest and most influential religious tradition in the South and especially in Alabama. This group had the community and resources to fully implement their belief system inside and outside the denomination once they had adequately defined the methodology needed to ascertain God’s vision on earth. This subsequently allowed them to blockade any government efforts. The Southern Baptist Denomination’s structure provided what appeared to be Biblically-led free choice: entire churches, individuals, and the whole tradition could choose to either reject or accept integration. In actuality, this structure operated as a facade allowing the entire institution to righteously uphold white supremacy. The first level of this organization contained the individual members of the denomination (Figure 1 below, Box 1). These people ranged from the laity to teachers to leaders such as deacons and pastors. When combined, these individuals comprised the local churches (Figure 1, Box 2). The

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separate congregations were spread throughout the South and operated independently of other churches and the denomination as a whole. The next aspect of this tradition was the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC; Figure 1, Box 3). The convention was both an annual gathering where Southern Baptists met to discuss pressing national issues and an institution composed of pastors from churches, convention officers, “messengers” or local church members, and convention committees. At the SBC’s annual meeting, various panels would convene to make recommendations based on the needs of the churches and the social situations present throughout the country. These resolutions would then be presented at the convention where everyone would vote to pass or deny the propositions. The adopted resolutions would be published in that year’s convention annual, an essential primary source utilized in this study. After publication, the annual would be presented to local churches (Figure 1, Box 4). At which point congregations would decide either to accept the resolutions (Figure 1, Box 5a), bestowing them onto individual members (Figure 1, Box 6) who would take them out into the mission field (Figure 1, Box 7), or deny the resolutions sending them back to the SBC (Figure 1, Box 5b). The primary result of this organization was that it fostered a belief in local autonomy because each individual church could decide whether to accept or reject resolutions passed at the annual convention meeting without losing denominational membership. This component was initially designed with what appeared to be an attempt at protecting local church members from a domineering ecclesiastical
construct because it slowed any sort of expeditious or unwanted change from occurring. In actuality, it was weaponized by segregationists during this time period to manufacture denomination-wide consent for their arguments. Over time, the resolutions presented by segregationists at the annual meeting garnered support from a majority of the convention’s members because it appeared to give each individual the freedom to decide if segregation was moral. This resolution-based organization along with the belief in local church autonomy was not only effective in preventing integration, it was also highly regarded as evidenced by the numerous defenses of this system in SBC annuals published during this time period. This effort was simultaneously amplified by the denomination’s belief in a priesthood of believers.

The Southern Baptist Convention, and its subsequent churches, also had a very distinct belief in a “priesthood of all believers” which pushed each individual Southern Baptist to carry the “good news” of segregation to those inside and outside of their home congregations. In this tradition, the interpretation of scripture was not the sole responsibility of leadership, but of every member of a congregation. However, if one was unsure of how to understand scriptural mandates, they were expected to consult leadership. This resulted in a wide array of viewpoints on various important topics such as segregation, racism, and discrimination. Some parishioners held the view that the Bible supported segregation and condemned integration while others believed that there was no explicit support of segregation in the Bible. Those who claimed that the Bible promoted segregation typically prevailed because the multi-tiered structure of the Southern Baptist Denomination in Alabama created a space resistant to change. As the current social construct was segregation, integration failed because it was “new.” Initially, it would seem that a belief in a priesthood of all believers would prevent the spread of segregationists’ arguments because this slowed the development of a cohesive denomination. In actuality, segregationists created an approach that focused on the individual’s ability to choose the right course of action because the belief in a priesthood of believers was so highly regarded.

The Southern Baptist denomination’s position on the separation of church and state further prevented integration throughout the state of Alabama. Many Southern Baptists wanted to prevent government control over religion in any capacity in the United States. In fact, Leon Macon writes,

Baptists believe in the separation of church and state. They do not like to become partisan in politics, nor do they seek to influence legislation dealing with laws which do not involve morals and principles vital to the churches in America. In spite of the distastefulness of the task there are instances when churchmen must declare the positions of their constituency.

Macon makes it clear that a majority of Southern Baptists were reluctant to enter politics because this goes against their initial faith in the complete separation of politics and religion. However, Southern Baptists still had a moral obligation to follow

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22 Eighmy, Churches in Cultural Captivity, 74.
23 Eighmy, Churches in Cultural Captivity, 74.
24 Eighmy, Churches in Cultural Captivity, 74.
26 Flynt, Alabama Baptists, 450.
27 Leon Macon, editorial, Alabama Baptist, March 14, 1957.
God’s call for configuring his ideal earth. When the situation becomes desperate, as it was during the CRM, capable leaders, such as Macon, are necessary for discussing their ideologies in the public forum. The argument for the separation of church and state may at first seem counterintuitive to the goals of Southern Baptists during this time period, but segregationists emphasized that it was the individual’s responsibility to righteously enter the political realm in ways that the SBC could not, thus cohering with their stance on individual autonomy. The push for each Southern Baptist to morally enter the secular world, combined with the separation of religion and politics, was effective for manufacturing consent to segregationists’ version of God’s vision. Each individual was not obligated to do what segregationists were suggesting, but they were responsible for considering it as a viable course of action. From there, each person was expected to make what they felt was the correct moral choice, in this case, pushing segregation. However, each individual was expected to make their decision only after vigilantly studying scripture.

Segregation: A Biblical Mandate

Although the use of the Bible as evidence for God’s favor towards segregation was limited, many Southern Baptists still implemented this as a tool to prove that segregation was a righteous and necessary battle. During the Civil War, the Bible was regularly utilized to justify slavery as a moral institution because the canon had several instances of positive support for slavery. However, segregationists lacked that same evidence. Instead, certain Southern Baptists appropriated the Bible to define their version of God’s vision for earth claiming it was each individual’s responsibility to interpret the pericopes ambivalent on social relations. An analysis of this usage and “evidence” reveals that leaders convinced lay people to institute the same ideology on the local level by encouraging each person to determine if segregation was cohesive with the Bible.

Southern Baptists who employed the Bible to support segregation primarily wanted to preserve the Southern way of life by creating “God’s vision” on earth. A major issue that arose for segregationists when presenting the Bible as evidence for stopping integration was that the way people were separated in the Bible was entirely different from the discrimination they were promoting. Therefore, segregationists exploited the denomination’s acceptance of a priesthood of believers when reading passages that were ambiguous on equality. They wanted each individual to evaluate this textual evidence and see that God had indeed designed earth to remain as it was during Biblical times. The primary passage that defined God’s vision for these men was Acts 17:26, “... he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted ... the boundaries of the places where they would live.” Here, these Southern Baptists claimed that God had created separate habitations for different people in ancient times that should be preserved in the present day. Segregationists claimed that the Bible’s inerrancy made Scripture insusceptible to changing cultural trends, such as the CRM. Since these passages were unclear, each Christian had an obligation to attempt understanding the text and seek the guidance of denominational leadership to clarify its meaning if they were unsure. The numerous Southern Baptists who elected to adopt this two-fold plan—individual Biblical interpretation, alongside conversations

29 Manis, “Dying from the neck up,” 112.
30 Manis, “Dying from the neck up,” 112.
with denominational leaders—agreed that segregation is God’s vision for earth, as Acts 17:26 suggests.

In addition to promoting God’s vision as a separation of the races, several Southern Baptists also utilized the canon to dismantle integrationists’ arguments. For example, integrationists claimed that since Galatians 3:26-28 states, “... you are all children of God through faith ... There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female ...” implying that God intended for all people to be equal throughout the earth. This would therefore necessitate integration being implemented rather than segregation being maintained. Many Southern Baptists, on the other hand, argued that there was still separation present in the canon such as the construct presented in Acts 17:26. Southern Baptists declared that this one passage in Galatians was not enough evidence to condone changing the three-hundred-year-old social hierarchy present in the south. According to proponents of this argument, preserving the separation of the races was a righteous and necessary cause.

Southern Baptists also found positive support for segregation in Biblical passages such as the story of the great flood in Genesis. For segregationists, the events leading up to the flood demonstrated why God enacted it,

The sons of God went into the daughters of humans, who bore children to them ... The Lord saw that the wickedness of humankind was great in the earth ... So the Lord said, ‘I will blot out from the earth the human beings I have created ... for I am sorry that I have made them.’

According to them, this passage proved that the flood occurred because the races mixed resulting in unrighteous behavior throughout the earth. It was believed that if integration was implemented then “amalgamation,” or intermarriage, would occur leading to increased immorality similar to that of Noah’s time. This would inevitably cause God to punish all people, as he did here. However, Christians still had to take the “good news” of Jesus to all people while maintaining God’s divinely ordained hierarchy. An examination of these Biblical arguments reveals that preserving the Southern way of life and protecting God’s supposed vision for earth were primary goals of many Southern Baptists. However, these arguments were much weaker than their predecessors’ because there is significantly less in the canon that explicitly supported segregation. Therefore, Southern Baptists in Alabama had to branch out from solely Biblical rhetoric. This involved looking at the political, constitutional, and social ramifications of integration. Although a solely Biblical argument was successful at sustaining slavery, it was not enough to maintain an argument for segregation. Therefore, by going beyond the pages of the canon, Southern Baptists began to weaponize extra-religious realms in order to present segregation as a righteous cause that the rest of the nation should follow. This initially involved the Southern Baptists denomination making arguments about the moral consequences of implementing integration. Later on, prominent Southern Baptists leaders, such as Leon Macon, melded the religious and the political in extra-denominational publications by focusing on the social and political ramifications of integration.

35 Manis, “‘Dying from the neck up,’” 112.
36 Chappell, “Religious Ideas of the Segregationists,” 246; Manis, “‘Dying from the neck up,’” 1.
37 At this time, missions were separated based on race as well; Southern Baptist Convention, Annual Report 1956 (1956), 71-75; 195-196; 335.
Although Southern Baptists seemed to be moving away from the Bible, they still utilized the canon as the foundation of their arguments.

The SBC's Response to *Brown v. Board* (1954)

The passage of *Brown v. Board* (1954) ignited numerous responses from all across the nation but presented Southern Baptists with an especially unique challenge. As discussed previously, many Southern Baptists were incredibly reluctant to be involved in political discussions because of the belief in the separation of church and state. However, as the responses to the CRM became more violent and chaotic, segregationists felt a moral and spiritual obligation to preserve God’s vision and prevent integration. At first, denominational leaders responded passively and advocated “cautious acquiescence” towards the mandate. This recommendation later evolved into actively promoting interposition or interference with Supreme Court mandates. As the CRM progressed, many Southern Baptists became even more involved in the political and secular world, but they needed to justify for this substantial deviation from the previously recommended course of action. SBC publications and annuals from their convention meetings reveal that Southern Baptists wanted to abide by legal statutes but God’s command for a global Christian community superseded those requirements. Therefore, it was the moral and spiritual obligation of every Southern Baptist to maintain the community that God so clearly outlined in scripture. These same denomination-wide proclamations were published by *Alabama Baptist* editor Leon Macon in order to convince outsiders to join the fight against integration. As a result, the Southern Baptist political stance became much clearer and vigilant over time.

The first phase (1954-1957) of “cautious acquiescence” largely entailed following the law but also promoting the segregationist version of racial harmony, or total separation. When the Supreme Court ruled that “in the field of public education the doctrine of ‘separate but equal’ has no place,” it superseded all closely-held Biblical arguments previously made by Southern Baptists for supporting segregation. The SBC responded rather apathetically when stating, “We recognize the fact that this Supreme Court decision is in harmony with the constitutional guarantee of equal freedom to all citizens, and with the Christian principles of equal justice and love for all men.” The SBC did not want to completely support the ruling or integration by advising tangible actions for carrying out this statute, but they also did not want to encourage unlawful disobedience because that could lead to the very chaos they were trying to prevent by promoting segregation. The main goal was to pacify African-Americans with subtle change while also retaining the white stronghold in the South and not subverting their belief in the separation of church and state.

Near the end of this first phase, the SBC became much more persistent in their belief that integration would lead to more harm than good and that they had a moral obligation to stop it. This is largely represented by their response to the ruling in *Brown II*, which declared on May 31, 1955, that schools should be integrated with

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“all deliberate speed.” The convention resolved that “The far-reaching implication of [Brown II] has become the most disturbing issue … [and] … we will find the solution for this question on the local level and demonstrate to the world that men of every race can live together in peace.” Local churches were thereby commissioned to decide independently how they would approach this issue because the implications of integration were more imminent than previously believed. Even so, the SBC still recommends that churches should not remain totally ambivalent, but must act in a Christian manner. The SBC, through promoting clear action, challenged the belief in the “separation of church and state,” based on purported divinely-ordained separation of the races. The SBC thus concluded that a passive stance was necessary to slowly comply with the ruling’s decrees while also maintaining God’s righteous call for Southern Baptists.

The Little Rock Central High School crisis of 1957 precipitated the next phase of the SBC’s response, as described by Wayne Flynt. This entailed a period of staunch segregationist stances which lasted until the late 1960s and early 1970s. From this point forward, the SBC supported segregation due to the violence that was erupting in the South. In Alabama, many Southern Baptists viewed the riots as evidence that the races were meant to be separated as God intended. The SBC wrote in 1958, “Some of the tragic governmental conflicts involving race have obscured the fact that there are proven and accepted ways by which Southern Baptists may express their Christian concern for the minority’s welfare and progress.” In this example, segregation is presented as a form of Christian and brotherly love. The SBC is arguing that in order to “love thy neighbor” as Christ exemplified, the races must be separate. In addition, certain Southern Baptists strongly held onto the concept of a clear separation of church and state because God’s law superseded man’s statutes. If government mandates contradicted God’s rulings in the Bible, then the canon’s commands must be preserved. This, once again, sustained their belief that integration was immoral and their definition of God’s vision was correct.

By the 1960s, the SBC formally admitted that they had to play an explicit role in politically and socially addressing the morally corrupt responses to the CRM. They stated, “This Convention in years past has expressed itself clearly and positively on issues related to race relations … We believe that the race problem is a moral and spiritual as well as [a] social problem.” Race was finally recognized as a problem needing Southern Baptists’ attention. Their response, however, was not integration, only non-violence. The SBC wanted their members to exhibit the love of Christ towards non-members by being “peaceful,” but they also desired for their message to be widely known and accepted. The SBC refrained from making clear-cut statements in the secular world because of their belief system, but the resolutions discussed in this section demonstrate that within the denomination there was an expectation that individuals should carry out what the SBC, because of their traditional doctrine, was not able to accomplish. The most prominent member to do that was Leon Macon. An analysis of his writings and reactions to the CRM reveals how the Southern Baptist denomination superseded their own condemnation against mingling politics and religion to present their ideology as divinely ordained and necessary in the public sphere.

48 SBC, Annual Report 1956, 72.
49 SBC, Annual Report 1956, 72.
50 Flynt, Alabama Baptists, 460.
51 Flynt, Alabama Baptists, 460.
Leon Macon’s Righteous Politics

Newspapers were the primary mechanism through which people received information about the CRM and other topics; therefore, newspapers were crucial in presenting segregation as a moral crusade. The most prominent newspaper for Southern Baptists in Alabama during this time period was the Alabama Baptist, a periodical with a circulation of approximately 106,000 subscribers in 1960. The writings of Leon Macon, editor of the Alabama Baptist from 1950-1965, are essential to analyze because he accomplished what the SBC could not do on their own: he was overtly active in the political sphere. Since the Southern Baptist denomination believed in a separation of church and state, the convention itself could not engage in political and largely secular activities. However, since Southern Baptists believed that a priesthood of believers was so important to this tradition, individuals could righteously speak out against integration in politics. Macon exhibited the success of this “loophole” in his writings on the of separation of church and state, the need for anti-communism, preventing outsider influence, and stopping sudden action in regards to integration.

As early as 1953 Macon was advocating for the preservation of segregation because he feared integration would lead to widespread immorality. He wrote, “Historic attitudes are passed down to oncoming generations. All of these inherited attitudes are not desired, but to break them off suddenly would do more harm than good ... There are many tedious things facing this generation, and generations to come, regarding the problem of minority groups.” Macon claimed that great progress was being made in the South in regards to race relations and that conditions were better than before for minority groups. For him, more harm than good would occur if the current social construct was adjusted. However, Southern Baptists should still maintain a Christian attitude towards the situation because any rapid change could mirror the immorality preceding the great flood. Therefore, Macon argued that segregation must be preserved through love and respect for all people.

Immediately following the Brown v. Board (1954) ruling, Macon affirmed the need to protect Christians from the inevitable violence caused by integration. He argued that immediate action would cause significant harm to white people in the South so “caution must be exercised lest racial animosities create clashes and bloodshed.” Christians still had an obligation to abide by the law even if it would cause massive panic in the region. Although Macon presents a passive stance here, he did become more vigilant about protecting segregation when it was determined that integration be implemented “with all deliberate speed.” As he wrote in 1956,

The nation, and the South in particular, is faced with a grave problem which is a result of the Supreme Court’s decision ... It is the human factor which makes it very essential to not enter into hasty action in any direction. There are some things which can be accomplished better by some sudden action, there are other things which must occur gradually lest there be more damage done than good accomplished.

Here again, Macon claims that the Supreme Court is the outside influence causing chaos and violence to erupt throughout the area. Abiding entirely by this statute, which would entail complete integration of public schools, from his perspective, would

54 Flynt, Alabama Baptists, 474.
56 Flynt, Alabama Baptists, 77-85.
57 Leon Macon, editorial, Alabama Baptist, June 25, 1953.
59 Flynt, Alabama Baptists, 77-85.
60 Leon Macon, editorial, Alabama Baptist, March 8, 1956.
ultimately result in the downfall of society. Since, according to Macon, humans were made for God’s commands, they cannot fit perfectly into secular laws. Therefore, he advised his readers to very slowly comply with the ruling’s decrees to maintain peace while also remaining resolute on God’s commands for Christians. His argument was incredibly persuasive during this time period as the Alabama Baptist’s readership was constantly increasing during this time period. Macon’s writings reveal that the SBC had successfully inserted their moral crusade from a solely religious to a largely secular realm without ever formally entering the political sphere.

The Little Rock Central High School crisis of 1957 was another turning point for Macon and other Alabama Southern Baptists. Macon became ever more vigilant in his attempts to circumvent integration, and he instituted several rhetorical strategies to accomplish his goals. Macon first tried to prevent the publication of integrationist literature as when the Woman’s Missionary Union published literature written by African-Americans in an effort to pursue racial reconciliation. He claimed, “that no Scripture instructed Baptists to join reform movements or solve social problems.” Macon was concerned that the WMU, and other institutions like it, were causing people to question the validity of Southern Baptists’ moral argument against integration. He did not want his hard work to be undone by more progressive female writers. Macon also argued that the true moral crusade was not the CRM but preserving segregation. He utilized the danger resulting from integration as evidence of this. He wrote, “We can see no reason why our churches should not be used to continue to educate young people in an atmosphere in which there is an absence of violence and contention,” indicating that an improvement in racial relations cannot truly be an improvement if it puts white individuals in danger. Macon clarified that “We have the kindest regards for all men but we cannot conscientiously sanction a procedure which will almost certainly result in chaos, violence and confusion.”

Macon placed himself entirely into the political sphere by 1964 when responding to President Lyndon B. Johnson’s attempt to convince Southern Baptist clergy to promote integrationist legislation from their pulpits. Macon began actively promoting non-compliance,

President Johnson evidently does not understand the position of Southern Baptists relative to making their pulpits political rostrums ... Those who are seeking to get this bill passed are appealing to the churches by calling it a moral issue ... The most objectionable features do not center around segregation and integration but around our basic freedoms and freedom of choice.

Macon is again exhibiting his belief in a total separation of church and state. In addition, he is making it very clear that segregation is immoral. This is a viewpoint he has made very clear to his readers throughout his tenure, as he regularly reminded them that the chaos and violence invoked from forced segregation could not have possibly been moral. In the following years after this publication, Macon continued to condemn outsider influence on race relations, connecting the Civil Rights Movement

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to communism and supporting George Wallace’s stance after Selma. The *Alabama Baptist* and Leon Macon were especially capable in stalling Civil Rights progress because they pushed this cause beyond the religious realm and appealed to the common man in a way that was righteous for Southern Baptists. As a result, Macon, and the rest of the SBC, became more vigilant in championing segregation as a moral crusade.

**Conclusion**

During the 1960s, the United States was entirely divided over the moral and practical implications of demands for integration. The Southern Baptist Convention did not escape this turmoil; indeed Baptist structures and theologies were irrevocably transformed by their responses to these crises. By resisting the implementation of integration, the SBC re-interpreted what the central doctrines of church-state separation, local church autonomy, and the “priestly” insights of all could possibly mean. The focus on the individual acceptance of divinely given insights became in this period a way to manufacture widespread consent for segregation. Outright political statements remained outside the pale of the denomination as a whole, but SBC resolutions became instruments of spirit-led political involvement on the part of individual citizen-members, acting in harmony with church teaching but independently of direct denominational control. Strong “secular” leaders writing on behalf of Southern Baptist principles, but as individuals, righteously entered the political realm. Figures like Leon Macon and the “righteous cause” he defended were instrumental at stalling the integrationist efforts of African Americans, progressive Christians, and even the United States government.

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Seventy years after the supreme court ruled “separate but equal” education illegal, the Tuscaloosa City School system is still deeply segregated: Central and Bryant High are around 90% Black while the city’s third high school, Northridge, (and the city’s private “segregation academies”) are majority-white. This article takes national narratives of desegregation history and applies them locally through analysis of school board documents, court rulings, white newspapers, and interviews with teachers and administrators from Central High School. With this hyper-local focus, the article uncovers the overt and implicitly violent mechanisms of white resistance that Tuscaloosans used to maintain this school segregation. Through an examination spanning fifty years of white Tuscaloosans’ segregationist policies and protest, this article expands upon the research of segregated education by highlighting the power of local white people to fight school integration and ultimately perpetuate white supremacy in America.

Introduction

In 1885, the citizens of Tuscaloosa established their public school system. From the start, it was marked by startling inequity. White children attended a brick schoolhouse while Black students went to school next to the railroad yard and city horse barn. At the Black school, three teachers instructed five grades with 173 students enrolled. Today, more than a century later, in a time when Americans supposedly value integration and equality, schools remain unofficially segregated and majority-Black schools still face disparities in educational resources and support. The percentage of intensely segregated, minority schools (90-100% non-white students) has tripled since the height of integration for Black students in 1988. This observation begs the question: how is it possible, after the dismantling of Jim Crow and the push for equality during the Civil Rights Era, that segregated education still persists?

1 I am grateful for Mrs. Lesley Bruinton at the Tuscaloosa City School archives, Mr. Alex Boucher and Mr. Kevin Ray from the University of Alabama Special Collections Library, and Mr. Ronnie Harris at the Tuscaloosa Public Library who all helped to find the primary source documentation for this project. The conversations with Central principal, Dr. Teresha Jones-Hamilton, and veteran educator, Mrs. Marlisa Wiggins, gave me invaluable insight into the history of Central that shaped this paper. I would like to extend my deepest thanks to Ms. Margaret Lawson whose exceptional mentoring, discussion, and encouragement have guided me through this research process. Finally, thanks to all the teachers, administrators, and fellow classmates who have made Central High School my home for the past four years. This paper is my attempt to grapple with my experience at Central, and I hope it will encourage others to think critically of the violent system of white supremacy that is so closely fastened to our American educational system.


Tuscaloosa serves as an important case study for the history of segregation in America. The city saw one of the earliest instances of a Black student integrating a public white university after the Brown v. Board ruling;² the public school system was then radically integrated under federal oversight, and after it was later released from court supervision, Tuscaloosa became one of the most extensively resegregated school districts in the country.⁵ This return to segregated education fifty years after the Brown ruling suggests the presence of a powerful, continuous, and understudied white resistance movement. This paper will investigate the evolution of white resistance to integration through analysis of the protests led by local politicians, educational leaders, white supremacist organizations, and families as well as the policy of local, state, and national authorities.

Elizabeth McRae’s Mothers of Mass Resistance and Joseph Bagley’s Politics of White Rights inspired the methodological framework for this essay. As opposed to scholars like Gary Orfield or Charles Clotfelter whose work quantified integration and resegregation using enrollment data, McRae and Bagley used analysis of political rhetoric, legislative action, and protest events to describe the deliberate preservation of white supremacist power structures.⁶ In a similar vein, this paper analyzes local primary source documentation such as city school documents, local and national white newspapers (namely the Tuscaloosa News), court rulings, and interviews with city school employees and students.

Nikole Hannah-Jones, reporter for The New York Times and developer of The 1619 Project, largely inspired the hyper-local focus for this investigation.⁷ Her work, “Segregation Now,” outlines the history of segregation in the Tuscaloosa City Schools (TCS) through an intergenerational family history. Similarly, this investigation uses a local scale of analysis to show how white Tuscaloosans perpetuated a system of racially segregated education over the course of fifty years. This local historical approach is significant because it reveals the important role of grassroots resistance movements in preserving segregation, an element of history that is too often overlooked by the national perspective maintained by most scholarship. Other noteworthy sources referenced in this paper explore segregation in TCS, but unlike “Segregation Now,” research on the history of white resistance strategy is not currently a major focus.⁸

The paper is divided into three sections that separate Tuscaloosa’s history of white resistance into thematic eras. Section I explores the violent, “massive resistance” movement and subsequent “law and order” approach that developed in response to integration at the University of Alabama. Section II investigates the white opposition towards integrating the primary and secondary schools in Tuscaloosa during a time of federal oversight. Finally, Section III explores how white families fought to get rid of federal supervision, resulting in the resegregation of the schools.

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⁷ Nikole Hannah-Jones, “The 1619 Project.”
From “Massive Resistance” to the “Law and Order” Movement: Early Resistance to Integration after Brown, 1956-1963

In February of 1956, the nation was on edge to see what would happen in Tuscaloosa. After three and a half years of legal dispute, Autherine Lucy Foster had finally been admitted to the University of Alabama (UA) (see fig. 1). Foster’s efforts to attend the university followed the recent Brown v. Board ruling and raised the question of whether the ruling would actually dismantle Jim Crow segregation in the South. White Tuscaloosans had previously maintained segregation through a regime of racial terror; the city had a strong Ku Klux Klan (KKK) presence and over a dozen documented lynchings as late as 1933, so it came as no surprise that Foster’s admission was not peacefully accepted.

During her first night at UA, fraternity members formed a mob and burned a cross on the Quad in protest of her presence (see fig. 2), and the week before Foster’s admission, thirteen other crosses had been burned in protest across Tuscaloosa. The next night, a mob of at least 1,200 white men—some of whom wore KKK robes—marched downtown chanting “keep Bama white” and “to hell with Atherine” (see fig. 3 and fig. 4). On Foster’s third day, a swarm of more than 2,000 “university and high school students and townspeople” waving Confederate flags forced Foster to hide in the education library. She managed to escape to the safety of Rev. Thomas Linton’s barber shop in Tuscaloosa’s majority-Black West Side where beauticians cleaned her hair of the eggs that had been thrown at her. Shortly after this violent occurrence, she was suspended by the university “for her own safety.”

The protests in Tuscaloosa were significant because they represented some of the earliest and most violent opposition to educational integration that resulted after the Brown decision. As Black students continued to integrate institutions throughout the South, white people across the region organized their resistance. In March 1956, 101 Southern congressmen signed the “Southern Manifesto” in which legislators formalized their desire to fight integration “by all legal means.” As exemplified in Tuscaloosa, the resistance tactic relied on outward, violent, and often large-scale demonstrations of absolute defiance towards integration and was dubbed the “massive resistance” movement.

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Within Tuscaloosa, Foster’s attempt to integrate UA demonstrated what many Black townspeople had feared—the Brown ruling would not be enough to counter white Tuscaloosans’ demands for segregated education. On top of the rioting and mob violence, a few nights after Foster’s enrollment, a thousand men crowded into Tuscaloosa’s largest courthouse to form the West Alabama Citizens’ Council. The inaugural meeting drew white Tuscaloosans from all social spheres, including parents of children in the public school system. They sought to “protect their rights in the South” and “to help defeat the NAACP.” Jesse Hall, the temporary vice president of the organization, declared that “our schools are created by your dollars, the taxpayers dollars, and we do not appreciate being branded as mobsters and rioters when we go out as Southern gentlemen on our own property to see what’s going on.”17 Citizens’ Councils sprouted up across the South as white locals saw the violent regulation of public education as critical to the protection of a centuries-old system of segregation.

These early efforts had immediate success at preserving segregation through violence and intimidation; however, politically minded Southerners quickly realized these “massive resistance” strategies created bad publicity and stained the image of the South. In Tuscaloosa, Buford Boone, the editor of the Tuscaloosa News published his Pulitzer-prize winning editorial “What a Price for Peace” in which he harshly criticized the mob protest around Autherine Lucy’s enrollment and called for “law and order.”

Boone wanted to bring an end to the rioting, and to encourage citizens to adopt a new strategy of resistance—one that worked within the law. The “law and order” approach recognized that rioting and violence were detrimental to the image of the South and that lawmakers could fight integration effectively using legislation.

At a state level, officials produced “color-blind” policies that were meant to comply with federally-mandated desegregation guidelines in writing; but in practice, these policies perpetuated a system of racially segregated schooling. For example, after the Brown ruling, the Alabama legislature quickly passed the Pupil Placement Law. Under this legislation, schools could use criteria like available classroom space, “the adequacy of the pupil’s academic preparation,” or even “morals, conduct, health and personal standards” to place children in schools. Though the law claimed to adhere to lawful, race-neutral language (allegedly “color-blind”), it ultimately resulted in segregated outcomes.

Many historians contextualize these “law and order” strategies as a move toward non-violence, but it is important to recognize that violence remained inseparable from the fight against desegregation. White leaders exacerbated the racial divides that years of violent oppression had codified to protect white values. Legislation reinforced centuries-old racial Southern racial hierarchy, ultimately perpetuating years of violence towards Black people. Additionally, many acts of violence continued through this time, as is discussed below. Although white moderates looked down upon outward violence, such instances demonstrated that white extremists were willing to use force to preserve racial divides.

Tuscaloosa had its first test of the “law and order” approach when Vivian Malone and James Hood once again attempted to break the color barrier at UA. George Wallace had won the state’s most recent gubernatorial election on his platform of defying the federal government and maintaining “segregation forever.” As admission day for Malone and Hood drew near, local white townspeople were unsure of how to express their opposition. In order to prevent the disorganized mob violence similar to that which erupted in response to Foster’s admission, political leaders delivered a clear message about how to advance white resistance efforts within the structure of the new “law and order” approach.

The Birmingham city police chief, Eugene “Bull” Connor, traveled to Tuscaloosa to address the White Citizens’ Council in anticipation of vicious protests. Connor had recently attracted national attention for his treatment of civil rights protestors after beating them down with hoses and attacking them with snarling dogs. His resistance strategy was far too violent, and it became an international news story that Civil Rights activists used to garner attention and momentum for their cause. Connor encouraged Tuscaloosans not to adopt his failed strategy:

You can never whip these birds if you don’t keep you and them separate, I found that out in Birmingham. You’ve got to keep your white and the Black separate, just like you’ve got to keep them in schools. Don’t go around that university. … You know

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20 Bagley, The Politics of White Rights, 43.
those Kennedys … They’d give anything in the world if we had some trouble here, if we don’t have any trouble, we can beat them at their own game.\textsuperscript{21}

Wallace had expressed similar sentiments the day he came to Tuscaloosa: “Martin Luther King likes to fight these things out in the street. But we’re going to right it in the courts. We’re going to have peace here.”\textsuperscript{22} This shift in strategy away from mob violence exemplified the new Southern resistance movement of law and order. These leaders were confident that new legislation, rather than violent protest, would be effective at sustaining racial division in the South.

On June 11, 1963, Wallace, unaided by a mob, fulfilled his promise and stood in the door of Foster Auditorium (see fig. 5 and fig. 6). Although he was not successful in blocking the integration of the school and was eventually removed by the federalized National Guard, Wallace made it clear that the absence of a mob certainly did not mean white Southerners had given up in the fight for segregation.\textsuperscript{23} “Law and order,” a strategy whose long-lasting effects are still deeply felt today, would be the new mode of resistance in Tuscaloosa.

On the surface it may appear that this strategy was non-violent; indeed, white politicians wanted the nation to believe the South was moving away from such aggressive resistance. However, through the lens of local historical investigation, it is clear this was simply untrue. For example, four of the National Guardsmen who were mobilized to protect Vivian Malone and James Hood planted explosives near Malone’s dorm, though she fortunately remained unharmed.\textsuperscript{24} Within Tuscaloosa, racial terror groups like the KKK gained followers through this supposedly non-violent era of “law and order” resistance.\textsuperscript{25} Before Wallace’s “Stand,” Robert Shelton, the Imperial Wizard of the United Klans of America, spoke to a gathering of thousands in a field outside Tuscaloosa. He promised that Wallace could “rewrite history in Tuscaloosa in the next three or four days,” and Shelton’s words remain true 50 years later.

\textsuperscript{23} Hubbs, Tuscaloosa: 200 Years in the Making, 147.
\textsuperscript{24} “4 Guardsmen are Charged in Bombings,” Alton Evening Telegraph, December 20, 1963.
PERSISTENT RESISTANCE

later. Through Wallace’s rhetorical commitment to seemingly progressive “law and order” opposition, narratives of white violence have largely been largely written out of the history of white Tuscaloosans’ long-lasting struggle for segregated education.27

Although UA was the first school in Tuscaloosa where students challenged segregation, it is important to place these events in the larger context of the city school system. It was the parents of local school children who joined Citizens’ Councils and demonstrated with the KKK, and high school students themselves marched through the streets waving Confederate flags. Meanwhile, the Black community organized a Civil Rights movement that would play an important role in fighting for the desegregation of the TCS.28 An examination of the responses to the enrollments of Foster, Malone, and Hood reveals that white individuals established violent, community-wide resistance strategies in the decade following Brown. When the federal government finally began to enforce desegregation in the TCS during the mid-1960’s, white Tuscaloosans had already developed the tools to fight racial integration.

White Resistance Fails?: Federal Oversight and the Integration of the Secondary and Primary Schools, 1964-1979

After Wallace failed to halt the admission of Vivian Malone and James Hood to the University of Alabama, white Alabamians feared that integration of the primary and secondary schools would soon follow. The Alabama legislature’s post-Brown “color-blind” strategies as well as the local resistance strategies of white Alabamians kept the state’s school systems entirely segregated through 1963. Even though the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) had been pressuring school districts across Alabama to desegregate since 1954, the federal government did very little to support these efforts.29 In July 1964, a federal court finally ruled on the landmark Lee v. Macon case, which focused on the violent backlash of white families following the attempted integration of Tuskegee High by a group of Black students. The Court’s decision laid the foundation for a statewide desegregation order and ruled the Pupil Placement Law unconstitutional (as mentioned in Section I).30 Additionally, a few weeks prior to the ruling, the US Congress passed the Civil Rights Act of 1964, allowing the federal government to withhold funding from school districts if they maintained segregation.31

These new legislative developments did not immediately cause the integration of the Tuscaloosa schools, as is evidenced by the fact that there were no transfers in the 1964-1965 academic year; however, the following school year, school districts were put under increased pressure as the federal government tightened its guidelines. Every school district across the state would need to submit a desegregation plan and make a “good faith start” to fully desegregate their school facilities, student bodies, and faculty by 1967.32 Alabama’s schools were extremely reliant on federal funding, so this threat finally provoked a strong reaction in the state. TCS, like many other school districts across Alabama, implemented a “freedom of choice” plan. Similar to the Pupil Placement Law, this was a “color-blind” plan that supposedly allowed students to apply for admission to any school in the district regardless of where they

27 For an example, see Hubbs, Tuscaloosa: 200 Years in the Making, 154-155.
28 Wendt, “God, Gandhi, and Guns,” 44.
32 Bagley, The Politics of White Rights, 94.
lived. In theory, these plans would bring desegregation, but Tuscaloosa used excuses like overcrowding in schools to purposefully limit integration.\textsuperscript{33}

In the 1965-1966 school year, eighty-eight Black students from the all-Black Druid High applied for transfer to Tuscaloosa High, the city’s white high school, but only twenty-five to thirty of these students actually attended on the first day. The \textit{Tuscaloosa News} described the schools as having “mixed quietly,” but the ongoing conflict between local Civil Rights activists and white terror organizations makes this claim seem unlikely.\textsuperscript{34} During the mid-1960’s, race relations in Tuscaloosa were inflamed, with Black citizens leading a strong Civil Rights movement and white Tuscaloosans putting forth a violent counter-movement. The Civil Rights movement erupted on June 9, 1964, also known as “Bloody Tuesday.” Headed by Reverend T.Y Rogers, Black protestors (many of whom were high school students) peacefully petitioned for the desegregation of the city courthouse but were met with extreme violence from the local police force. The protestors were horrifically beaten, demonstrating that integration in Tuscaloosa would not be accepted peacefully.\textsuperscript{35}

As the Civil Rights movement grew in Tuscaloosa, the KKK gained popularity in response. Robert Shelton, leader of the local United Klans of America (UKA), made Tuscaloosa the headquarters of the chapter and membership peaked in 1965 with around 26,000 to 33,000 people. The UKA was one of the most violent KKK chapters in the country and was responsible for the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing that killed four girls in Birmingham.\textsuperscript{36} Shelton had warned long ago of “bloodshed” if Black students attempted to integrate schools and said that “we are ready to take whatever steps are necessary to maintain segregation and our Christian ideals in the state of Alabama. We mean business.”\textsuperscript{37}

The regime of racial terror in Tuscaloosa—whether it came from local law enforcement or white supremacist terrorists—severely limited integration. Across the state, KKK members and local officials violently intimidated Black students and only 1% of Black students attended a previously all-white school in Alabama that year.\textsuperscript{38} Although politicians preached a policy of “law and order” resistance to integration, segregation was largely preserved through white violence.

Despite the extreme limits placed upon desegregation in the 1965-1966 academic year, white families still made plans to avoid attending the racially mixed schools. A week after school began, an article appeared in the \textit{Tuscaloosa News} detailing plans for a “private school for all white children in Tuscaloosa.”\textsuperscript{39} These new “segregation academies” sprung up across the state in response to federally ordered desegregation. The state incentivized this transition by giving tuition grants to children who left the public system for the private schools.\textsuperscript{40} White Tuscaloosans elected to abandon their public school system in droves rather than face attending school with Black students.

The federal government changed the guidelines to increase desegregation the following year. They required districts to sign the 441-B form that would promise expanded freedom of choice plans and initiatives to desegregate school faculties.\textsuperscript{41}

\textsuperscript{33} Paul Davis, “Mixing here Speeded Up,” \textit{The Tuscaloosa News}, April 1, 1966.


\textsuperscript{35} Wendt, “God, Gandhi, and Guns,” 36-37.


\textsuperscript{38} Bagley, \textit{The Politics of White Rights}, 98.


\textsuperscript{40} Bagley, \textit{The Politics of White Rights}, 80.

\textsuperscript{41} Bagley, \textit{The Politics of White Rights}, 100-101.
response, the city schools modified their freedom of choice plan to include all elementary and high schools and started the process of transferring a select few Black faculty members to white schools. The school board correctly predicted that its revised guidelines would probably “go too far to please Gov. George Wallace and probably not quite far enough to make federal officials happy.”

Soon after TCS released its revised freedom of choice plan, Rev. T.Y. Rogers began a series of demonstrations demanding stricter desegregation of the schools and better facilities for Black students and employees, as well as advocating for the TCS school board to sign the 441-B form (see fig. 7). Although the city had revised its desegregation plan, the school board refused to sign the 441-B, thereby refusing to abide by the new federal guidelines.

Figure 7: Signs of Protest Displayed by Negro Demonstrators: Low Pay For Lunchroom Workers, Janitors Among Grievances, April 16, 1966, Tuscaloosa News, Google News Archives.

Meanwhile, George Wallace escalated his efforts to maintain school segregation by intimidating local school boards. In an attempt to limit the federal government’s desegregation authority, the state legislature passed Wallace’s “Anti-Guidelines Act” in August 1966, nullifying the 441-B desegregation forms. Wallace claimed that Alabama could compensate districts for the funding they lost from the federal government, though this was almost certainly untrue. One Tuscaloosa educational official protested: “I think the bill is real bad because it takes the authority away from local boards of education. Some city and county boards may be helped by the bill because they aren’t getting any aid, but it just kills us.” While Wallace fought federal oversight and attempted to return autonomy to the local school districts, he simultaneously imposed laws to take decision-making power away from those very same educational systems. Wallace’s aggressive anti-integration policy formed a rift between white Alabamian officials and education leaders, thereby weakening white resistance across the state.

As the Tuscaloosa city schools opened their doors for a new academic year in September 1966, 240 Black students chose to attend previously all-white schools.\(^{46}\) When Wallace received a letter with over 2,000 signatures complaining about the desegregation of the city schools, he became incensed and threatened to use the state’s “police power” if faculty members were not segregated.\(^{47}\) Reminiscent of the resistance to Atherine Lucy Foster’s admission, angry white citizens again marched through downtown Tuscaloosa (see fig. 8). Protestors claimed that local officials had broken the law by following federal guidelines. One marcher commented on a recent editorial concerning the integration of the schools: “The editor complimented the people on going so smooth. He said it was a bitter pill but one that had to come. I want to tell you this … it is still lodged in our throat and we are getting ready to spit it out.”\(^{48}\) Even though Wallace encouraged lawful resistance in speeches and public settings, he consciously stoked white Alabamians’ outrage over desegregation, which resulted in mass protests similar to those in Tuscaloosa occurring across the state.\(^{49}\)

![Figure 8: Verner Colburn, Marchers Protesting Faculty Mixing Approach Warrior River Bridge. September 11, 1966. Tuscaloosa News, Tuscaloosa, AL.](image)

In March of 1967, a new ruling on the *Lee v. Macon* case brought the entire state under a desegregation order and integration accelerated considerably.\(^{50}\) Although 1,000 Black students had desegregated Tuscaloosa’s previously all-white schools by 1969, one white student had yet to attend a previously all-Black school.\(^{51}\) The courts used this as proof to show that the freedom of choice plan did not work, and Tuscaloosa was put under a court order, called “*Tuscaloosa I*,” to create a more effective desegregation plan. The policy used color-blind mechanisms like “geographic zones” that were dependent on “residential proximity,” and very little desegregation occurred.\(^{52}\) Even so, the changes enraged Tuscaloosa’s KKK leader,


\(^{50}\) Bagley, *The Politics of White Rights*, 120.


\(^{52}\) *Lee v. Macon County Bd. of Education*, 29584 (United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit 1970). Referred to as *Tuscaloosa I*.
Robert Shelton, who encouraged white families to boycott the TCS, saying it was their duty to “stay home and take a stand” because it was the only thing they could do to “end this menace.” Families continued to leave the district for the Tuscaloosa County School system and private schools as white leaders like Wallace and Shelton continued to preach a message of defiance.

The *Tuscaloosa I* plan was so unsuccessful in desegregating previously all-Black schools that by 1978 only ten of the 1007 students at Druid High were white. Once again, Tuscaloosa came under the scrutiny of the courts. A second court order (*Tuscaloosa II*) more radically restructured the organization of the school system using bussing. Druid High (see fig. 9 and fig. 10) and Tuscaloosa High (see fig. 11 and fig. 12) combined to form a new “mega” high school called Central High, and under the new plan, each of the middle schools would house an individual grade. Although the elementary schools were initially included in the integration plan, a court order in 1980 ruled that the integration of the elementary schools was too “impractical” because the cost of bussing children to various elementary schools was too expensive.

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**Figure 9:** John E. Scott, *Druid High School in Tuscaloosa, Alabama.* December 14, 1955. Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, AL.

**Figure 10:** John E. Scott, *Students in an art class at Druid High School in Tuscaloosa, Alabama.* December 14, 1955. Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, AL.

**Figure 11:** John E. Scott, *Tuscaloosa High School in Tuscaloosa, Alabama.* December 13, 1955. Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, AL.

**Figure 12:** John E. Scott, *Students in art class at Tuscaloosa High School in Tuscaloosa, Alabama.* December 13, 1955. Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, AL.

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54 *Lee v. Tuscaloosa City School System*, 76-3644 (United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit 1978). Referred to as *Tuscaloosa II*.
55 *Lee v. Macon County Board of Education*, 79-2499 (United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit 1980).
Some Black leaders were furious over the merger, and pleaded to rezone the schools as opposed to combining them. Joe Mallisham, president of the Tuscaloosa Citizens for Action Committee (TCAC), said that “we will march, we will protest, and we will go to jail” to preserve Druid High, and he encouraged Black students to boycott the school (see fig. 13). Similarly, John England, a prominent lawyer in Tuscaloosa, said that Black leaders would use “every avenue available” to stop the plan’s implementation (see fig. 14). It was mostly white officials who aggressively pushed for Central’s creation because it was the only option that would “give promise of a more lasting solution.”

This tension demonstrates that debates over integration are nuanced, and Black citizens’ interests do not necessarily align with strict desegregation. Druid High had become a place of community for Black Tuscaloosans, and the preservation of the school was of importance to Black leaders. When the schools did eventually merge, many of the veteran Black teachers and administrators from Druid were replaced with white faculty members who had minimal teaching experience in order to comply with federal desegregation guidelines. McDonald Hughes, long-time principal of Druid High, reported that by 1970, over “31,384 Black teachers were replaced through discriminatory hiring and dismissals” in the United States. The pushback from Tuscaloosa’s Black community problematizes the assumption that integration can only produce positive outcomes for all students and suggests that desegregation can have harmful outcomes for those who it aims to benefit, especially when its implementation fulfills the desires of a whole population against the wishes of the minority community.


Hughes, Secondary Education for Blacks in the Tuscaloosa City School System, 100-107.

A growing body of research shows that in some instances, majority-Black institutions (some of which are the products of systematic, white enforced segregation) are sources of pride, safety, and solace for Black individuals. For research on this topic, see Barbara J. Shircliffe, The Best of that World: Historically Black High Schools and the Crisis of Desegregation in a Southern Metropolis (Hampton Pr, 2006); Janelle L. Williams and Robert T. Palmer, “A Response to Racism: How HBCU Enrollment Grew in the Face of Hatred,” (2019); Erik Gleibermann, “Challenging the Stigma of an all-Black School: The Selma High Story,” The Black Scholar 48, no. 3 (2018), 27-45; Adam Fairclough, A Class of their Own: Black Teachers in the Segregated South (Harvard University Press, 2009).
As the city made preparations to reorganize the schools in 1979, the KKK staged a last-ditch protest. Only a few dozen members of the group actually attended (see fig. 15 and fig. 16) while Joe Mallisham organized a counter-protest that garnered a huge crowd (see fig. 17 and fig. 18). Don Black, the Grand Dragon of the Knights of the KKK, said “students can’t learn in an environment that resembles a jungle” and that the KKK would fill all local governmental positions and “work for the interest of other good white people.”

Even though the KKK had lost followers through the 1970’s, this did not suggest that white Tuscaloosans had become accepting of desegregation.

By the time the schools restructured in 1979, over two thousand white students had fled the city school system.

The success of the era of federal oversight is debatable. Although the schools substantially desegregated after 1979, it took almost three decades for the federal

government to accomplish. White leaders and families fashioned potent strategies to preserve segregation, many of which are still present in Tuscaloosa today, such as the implementation of the “color-blind” rezoning policy from Tuscaloosa I as recently as 2014.63 Not only did the federal government fail to desegregate the school system quickly, but it also gave room for Tuscaloosans to develop the mechanisms of white resistance that continue to perpetuate segregation today.

The Class of 1979 marked the last group of graduates from Druid High and Tuscaloosa High. The commencement speaker for Tuscaloosa High tellingly gave a speech titled, “The Times They are A-Changin’, but the Important Things Stay the Same.”64 The times certainly were changing with the most desegregation TCS had ever experienced. But since white commitment to segregation remained strong, the era of integration would be short-lived.

**Back to the Beginning: White Flight and School Resegregation, 1993-2007**

The Tuscaloosa City Schools hoped that the new integration plan would represent a blank slate for the school system. After years of dodging desegregation orders and resisting school integration, TCS wanted a solution that would inhibit further federal intervention.65 The idea to combine all high schools into one mega-school was a sweeping approach that most Southern school districts did not take. As soon as Central High was established, TCS made sure that Druid and Tuscaloosa High were forgotten: “By this fall, a federal court order will have erased all that was Tuscaloosa and Druid. School names will be chiseled from brick, mascots will be obliterated and murals will disappear from walls.”66 With these measures, many hoped that the system’s deeply segregated history could simply be swept away, allowing a new era of “integrated” learning to emerge.

Mega-Central only lasted from 1979 to 2003, but for that time many Alabamians considered the school to be one of the best in the state. The school set records for its number of National Merit Scholars, regularly won state championships in sports and academic competitions, and possessed a wide variety of extracurricular activities and advanced course offerings.67 The school’s success was largely attributed to its large size: the combined Central East and West campuses had around 2,300 students. In many ways, Central served as a prototype for the mega-school model that many well-known Alabama schools like Hoover and Vestavia Hills later employed.68 The main advantage of the mega-school model is that the large size of the school allows it to bring in more funding. A large student body has diverse interests and goals, and the increased funding allows the school to afford activities to engage every student.69

Even as an integrated mega-school, Central still struggled with issues of educational inequity. The school separated its students with “tracking” based on academic performance, resulting in white students being placed in honors classes while many Black students were directed into vocational courses.70 Across the school system, Black students were disproportionately punished for behavioral infractions and funneled into special education courses, and Black students also had higher

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63 Carolyn Jones (Central High School teacher) in discussion with the author, February 2020.
67 Hannah-Jones, Segregation Now.
68 Dr. Teresha Jones-Hamilton (Central High School principal) and Marlisa Wiggins (Central High School teacher) in discussion with the author, December 2019.
69 Hannah-Jones, Segregation Now; Kinslow, Resegregation, 172.
70 Hannah-Jones, Segregation Now.
dropout rates than their white counterparts.\textsuperscript{71} In 1999, for example there were 280 disciplinary referrals for non-white students as opposed to just six for white students.\textsuperscript{72} These divisions demonstrated that combining all students into one school does not simply erase inequality; however, the mega-school model was the only way to ensure that students had equal access to resources.

Even though Central proved to be one of the state’s flagship high schools, the ever-decreasing white enrollment worried city officials. As desegregation was more strictly enforced, white people responded by creating more segregation academies: Tuscaloosa Academy opened in 1967, the American Christian Academy opened in 1978, and Holy Spirit Catholic School added its high school program in 1995. White families increasingly joined private schools, but some left the city altogether to live in the exponentially growing suburbs which quickly resulted in the overcrowding of the County School system.\textsuperscript{73}

White flight from Central demonstrated that a deeply rooted desire for racial segregation was still ingrained in Tuscaloosan society. Central High School was performing at a higher level than the old white school, Tuscaloosa High, in terms of athletic and academic achievements; the only difference was that Central had a desegregated student body. Rather than fleeing from an underperforming school system, white families were simply refusing to attend an integrated one.

White flight from the schools started to affect the city’s economic success. The 2000 census revealed that the city’s population had only grown by 147 people in ten years, a 0.2\% growth rate.\textsuperscript{74} Businesses in the downtown’s core struggled to survive. When the city failed to attract the car manufacturer, Saturn, officials blamed the school system’s large Black population.\textsuperscript{75}

City officials faced a dilemma: they could either resegregate schools in order to bring white families back to the city, or they could keep the schools integrated at the expense of the city’s economic success. White families that had fled the schools made integration impossible—there simply were not enough white bodies to have racial balance. White Tuscaloosans had weaponized integration: if the city wanted white students to return economic resources to the city and white bodies to diversify the city’s schools, the school board would need to comply with white families’ demands to have segregated, majority-white schools. In essence, white people had taken integration, a virtue that was meant to topple the system of white supremacy in Tuscaloosa, and instead turned it into a weapon of racial stratification. Tuscaloosa’s leaders decided that their only choice to save the city would be to build majority-white schools.\textsuperscript{76}

With Tuscaloosa still under a desegregation order, it was impossible to create a majority-white school. In 1993, Tuscaloosa officials tested the courts’ willingness to free the city of federal oversight with a proposal to build Rock Quarry Elementary (RQE).\textsuperscript{77} Between 1980 and 1990, over 10,000 residents fled from Tuscaloosa’s

\textsuperscript{72} An Equity Plan to Strengthen Academic Excellence in Tuscaloosa City Schools, (1999).
\textsuperscript{75} Hannah-Jones, Segregation Now.
\textsuperscript{76} Hannah-Jones, Segregation Now.
\textsuperscript{77} Hannah-Jones, Segregation Now.
historic downtown to suburbs located north of the Black Warrior River. The school board decided to build RQE in the heart of these suburbs in an effort to draw white students back into the school system. The proposal was highly controversial, but some influential Black leaders decided to support the idea. They claimed that the school would be better for the community as a whole and privately admitted that restoring white students to the system might be the only way to attract business to the failing city.

Judge John England Jr., a prominent Black leader in Tuscaloosa, later said he had compromised with white officials to support the new school in exchange for stronger educational opportunities on Tuscaloosa’s majority-Black West Side. He believed the school system had reached the point where the burden of desegregation had fallen on Black children: “Under the court order, England said, Black students had ridden buses all over the city chasing an ever-receding white population. Desegregation had not ended the stigmatization of Black children, England said. It had reinforced it.”

After the Court permitted the construction of majority-white RQE, the school board decided it was safe to apply for release from court oversight. More conservative leaning Supreme Court rulings and general exhaustion in the Court over these desegregation cases had weakened the stricter guidelines that previously granted school systems “unitary status.” After city members made their cases for and against eliminating federal supervision, Judge Sharon Blackburn released the three-decades-old court oversight. With federal supervision gone, years of work to integrate the system was undone.

Once the city school’s desegregation order was lifted, Board of Education members hastened their efforts to restructure Tuscaloosa’s schools. In 1999, the board voted to return the middle schools to their original structure, allowing Eastwood, Westlawn, and Tuscaloosa Middle Schools (TMS) to each host grades 6-8. Although TMS and Eastwood were reasonably integrated, a return to neighborhood school zoning left Westlawn almost entirely Black.

In many ways, Westlawn was a preview of what education at Central High School would become. The school had 571 students and only five of them were white. Immediately, test scores dropped and the community’s perception of the school worsened. Students at the school complained about the lack of test preparation and the fact that they were the only school that required the students to wear uniforms. Similarly, Westlawn was the only middle school to have a police officer on-site. Students perceived that the school had fewer resources, fewer opportunities and teachers who were not interested in the students’ success. Poignantly, B.J., then a 7th grader at Westlawn, said: “the city board changed the middle schools because of some spoiled white people. I liked being with them, but it’s still wrong”; he continued, “they ship us out as long as they get us out and they don’t care where we go. They’re using us.”

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78 Lee v. United States, 70-0251 (United States District Court for the Northern District of Alabama, Southern Division 1996).
79 Hannah-Jones, Segregation Now.
80 Hannah-Jones, Segregation Now.
82 Lee v. Macon County Board of Education, 70-0251 (The United States District Court for the Northern District of Alabama Southern Division 2000), in Tuscaloosa City Schools archives.
84 Lisa Deffendall, “Disparities Abound among Tuscaloosa’s Three Middle Schools.”
Once the middle schools were restructured, the high schools were next on the school board’s docket. After seeing an uptick in middle school enrollment for the first time since 1994, along with fifty-five transfers from private schools, the school board was convinced that restructuring the high schools would reverse white flight.85

In August of 2000, board members voted to split the city’s mega-school into three smaller high schools. Smaller schools would reduce class sizes, which would supposedly benefit struggling minority students. More importantly for city officials, though, was the fact that two of these high schools would have sufficient white enrollment to attract more white families. In the process, this model would create an all-Black school: “Thus we have the irony that smaller schools may be of the greatest benefit to less affluent students, and yet a three-school scenario virtually forces the creation of an all-Black high school.” This restructuring plan stated that the district would one day rezone in order to desegregate the schools, but twenty years later this rezoning has yet to happen.86 Black board member Olympia McCrackin was concerned about the return to segregation in the city and remained unconvinced that restructuring would be able to attract white families back to the system.87 Even so, every white member of the board voted in support of multiple schools fully aware of the segregation that would develop.88

The desire to attract white families to the school system had completely overshadowed the need for integration. The board decided to create three new high schools: Bryant would be placed on the Eastern side of the city, Northridge would go in the affluent neighborhoods north of the river, and the new virtually all-Black Central would take the location of old Central East. When Board Member Shelly Jones voted for this measure, she said: “Yes, we’re out from under court order, but it bothers me to think that people would feel that we would go back to doing things like we used to do it. That just isn’t going to happen.”89 Jones was wrong. When Central High opened, the school was just as segregated as Druid High was in the 1970’s.90

To the dismay of the school board, the restructuring efforts of the Tuscaloosa City School system largely failed to reverse white flight. White enrollment had dropped to 22% in 2007, and the school system decided to take even more drastic efforts to segregate the school system.91 Many of the remaining white families north of the river complained about the overcrowding and “safety” issues at their schools, so the district decided to rezone.92 They claimed the reorganization would limit overcrowding and more equally use school buildings. This re zoning was touted as a racially-unbiased policy that would affect students of all races equally, but in reality, Black students were almost exclusively rezoned. The school system saw a return to neighborhood schools where Black students who had been bussed to affluent schools

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91 Hannah-Jones, Segregation Now.
north of the river were rezoned for schools with a high density of poverty located in Tuscaloosa’s underprivileged West Side.  

Many of these policy decisions mirrored the opposition methods that white Tuscaloosans had used during the era of federal oversight. The school board used the excuse that the recently passed “No Child Left Behind” (NCLB) policy gave parents the opportunity to transfer their children from underperforming schools into better ones, so the decision to return to neighborhood schooling was justified. NCLB used test scores to identify which schools needed improvement leading to the large-scale stigmatization of majority-Black, impoverished schools that failed to perform as well on standardized tests. Additionally, only around 3% of parents who were eligible to transfer their children to higher-performing schools were successful in doing so. This new NCLB policy closely resembled the freedom of choice plans from the 1960s and 1970s that used nuanced legal language to limit the ability of minorities to attend white schools. Similarly, the return to neighborhood school zoning patterns was the exact same strategy used in Tuscaloosa I to limit all meaningful integration in 1970. To top it all off, there were no federal guidelines to strike down the blatant racial segregation this “color-blind” policy created. 

Conclusion

Through an examination of the protest and policy that have maintained school segregation in Tuscaloosa over the last fifty years, this paper demonstrates the need for more scholarship investigating white resistance to educational integration at the scale of local, community-wide analysis. Although the federal and state governments played significant roles in the history of segregated education in Tuscaloosa, the work of maintaining school segregation overwhelmingly came from local white Tuscaloosans who utilized strategies such as racial terror organizations, “color-blind” policy, and mass protest to resist integration. The continued separation of Black and white people in the Tuscaloosa City School system allows white Tuscaloosans to perpetuate their privilege through the racist myth of white supremacy and the isolation of economic resources. In order to dismantle white supremacy in America, there must be a larger body of work that emphasizes the overt and implicit violence of grassroots resistance by local white Americans to integration. Only after this analysis historians can fight against white supremacy with truth-telling and a process of reconciliation that illuminates the structural ties between segregation and the American education system.

With this anti-white supremacist aspiration, this paper provides the historical framework for dismantling structural school segregation in Tuscaloosa. Modern-day Central High School exemplifies the degree to which Tuscaloosa’s white resistance history is still deeply ingrained, as many members of the white community label the school as Tuscaloosa’s “failing” or “bad Black high school” without having ever stepped foot into Central High. White families hear and tell stories of drugs, violence,

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93 Nikole Hannah-Jones, *Segregation Now.*
94 Barron, “Amending No Child Left Behind,” 394.
and low academic achievement.\textsuperscript{99} With Central being over 95\% Black, racial stereotypes and implicit bias allow these narratives to persist within the white community.\textsuperscript{100} The overarching effect is that Central, a school where 80\% of students live in households around the poverty line, is stigmatized and labeled as “bad.”\textsuperscript{101}

As a member of Tuscaloosa’s white community, I too was guilty of consuming and circulating these racist myths. After attending Central for four years, it is now clear to me that the school is extraordinary in its fight against the systemic deprivileging of Black communities in Tuscaloosa.\textsuperscript{102} White families brand Central as “bad” to legitimize their instinct to send their children to “good” majority-white schools.\textsuperscript{103} It is through communication across racial divides and an understanding of the harmful modern day legacies of white resistance that Tuscaloosans will successfully dismantle this systematic segregation in our schools.

\textsuperscript{99} For discussion on the negative effects of the “bad” label on Black students at Central High School, see Kinslow, \textit{Resegregation}, 110-146.

\textsuperscript{100} “Search for Public Schools: Central High School,” accessed February 10, 2020.


\textsuperscript{103} For more discussion on the relationship between white supremacy and “bad”?“good” schools, see Chana Joffe- Walt, \textit{Nice White Parents}: Serial, 2020.
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