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Table of Contents

Table of Contents **1**

Foreword **2**

Anti-Communist and Authoritarian Allies: US Foreign Policy with Paraguay and Chile During the Cold War
Graciela Best **4**

Archaeological Evidence of South Asian Domestic Workers Place and Space
Addison Perkins **26**

Caesar's Legion: Roman Legacy in a World that Forgot Rome
Paolo Spica **36**

Kendo as a Feminist Sport: Martial Arts and the Japanese Women's Liberation Movement
Naomi Saathoff **44**

The Right to Read: Literacy, Slavery, and the Fight for Freedom in Early Virginia
Emily Helfand **59**

Foreword

The five papers compiled in this edition of the journal are uniquely special from our standard editions. The Undergraduate History Journal Vol. 5, No. 2 publication commemorates the "Reflections of Power" Undergraduate History Conference, hosted in April 2026 by the Undergraduate History Journal. We welcomed six amazing panels at this conference, and accepted 18 speakers. Our presenters covered topic ranging from colonial deconstruction of Irish farming practices to infertility campaigns against Black communities in Chicago. Despite our incredible breadth, however, the conference was unified in its quality, comradery, and purpose.

The conference was built from the ground up following the success of the Phi Alpha Theta Regional Conference in 2024 ("Conflict and Culture). The undergraduate team of that year's committees proved that it was possible. Our team at the UHJI decided to shoulder the responsibility of carrying on with a second conference, and we could not be more proud of the time, dedication, and labor that went into pulling it off.

The Undergraduate History Conference was a task set about by undergraduates, carried on by undergraduates, and ultimately for undergraduate work. In the conversations, presentations, and questions shared throughout our two-day event, we continued the art of the Historian, passed down to our present generation from eras past.

The five articles you will read here were papers that had presented and then sought publication. We are delighted to share them, and look forward to any future discussion and scholarship they may inspire. If you would like to see the full program for the "Reflections on Power" Undergraduate History Conference, you can find more information on our website.

We wish you happy reading, and thank you for your support:

Michael Zimmerman II
on behalf of the Executive Board

About the Journal

The Undergraduate History Journal at Illinois is a peer-reviewed, double-blind, historical research publication, run by students at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, that strives to provide undergraduate students with the opportunity to share their research and gain exposure for their writing. The journal is committed to high standards of writing, a broad sampling of areas of research, and the integrity of academic research.

The journal is double-blind peer-reviewed by a group of student editors. Once submissions are chosen, they are reviewed multiple times by our teams of editors, before being published in one of our issues.

Acknowledgements

The journal would like to thank its authors for their work, our hard working editors for their tireless efforts to continue to push the journal towards higher standards of quality and output, the University of Illinois history professors and faculty for their advice and dedication to academic study, our undergraduate advisor Stefan Djordjevic for his plentiful advice and support, and librarian and professor Merinda Hensley for her enthusiasm towards the journal and her efforts to support the journal's publication.

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Anti-Communist and Authoritarian Allies: US Foreign Policy with Paraguay and Chile During the Cold War

Graciela Best

University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

Editors: Vanessa Turner, Brendon Crowson, Dora Horaitis

ABSTRACT

During the Cold War, the United States was focused on containing communism and ensuring the stability of non-communist governments. Stability within governments was highly prioritized, as it was less likely to fall to communism, as this could only occur during a regime change or if the people elected a more progressive-leaning president. This paper focuses on how US foreign policy during the Cold War, particularly in Latin America, was focused on ensuring this anti-communist stability, oftentimes to the detriment of democratic ideals. While United States leaders and politicians framed their support of governments in South America as interventions for the purpose of stopping communism and spreading democracy, in reality, these leaders supported repressive, authoritarian leaders and valued anti-communism and stability over human life and democracy. By examining how the United States interacted with Paraguayan and Chilean dictators Alfredo Stroessner and Augusto Pinochet, I argue that the United States' over-focus on halting communism in its international intervention during the Cold War caused politicians and the public to largely ignore authoritarian regimes in South America in order to maintain stability in the region, despite purporting anti-communist ideals as a way to spread democracy.

INTRODUCTION

During the Cold War, the United States focused on containing communism and ensuring the political stability of non-communist governments. Stability within governments was highly prioritized since stable governments were less likely to fall to communism; most countries adopted communism during regime changes or if the people elected a progressive-leaning president. This paper focuses on how US foreign policy during the Cold War, particularly in Latin America, was focused on ensuring this anti-communist stability, oftentimes to the detriment of democratic ideals. Despite purporting anti-communist ideals as a way to spread democracy and in order to maintain stability in South America, this paper argues that the US had an overfocus on halting communism in its international intervention during the Cold War, as shown through how the US interacted with Paraguayan and Chilean dictators Alfredo Stroessner and Augusto Pinochet, which caused politicians and the public to largely ignore authoritarian regimes in South America.

HISTORIOGRAPHY OF US INTERVENTION DURING THE COLD WAR

Following World War II, historians and political scientists began to characterize US intervention as a moral endeavor and as a way for the US to spread democracy to combat the Soviet Union's spread of communism. Mid-twentieth-century scholars cite resistance to communism as a moral obligation for why the US transitioned from a policy of nonintervention to a policy of intervention. Historian Arthur P. Whitaker's article "The United States in Latin America Since 1865" maps the relationship between the US and Latin America, highlighting how the US supported the overthrow of the communist Guatemalan government in 1954.[1] Whitaker frames this action as a success of US intervention in the region, as it showed an example of a moral intervention to aid in the spread of democracy. Scholar Theodore Wright's article "Free Elections in the Latin American Policy of the United States" mentions failed attempts by the US government to support elections in Latin America from the Spanish-American War in 1898 until the Good Neighbor Policy of 1933. Wright argues that America used elections as a way to combat communism because of "Soviet resistance to free elections."[2] Additionally, historian Ernest R. May wrote in 1963 about the history of American intervention specifically as it related to Latin America, focusing less on communism but still discussing the moral reasons behind US intervention in the region.[3] The historiography of American intervention in the years following World War II began to focus on moral and democratic issues, with historians generally being supportive of American policy.

However, beginning in the 1960s, a shift in the historiography of US intervention is evident as American historians became more critical of American Cold War policy. Historian William Appleman Williams began critiquing American foreign policy as early as 1959, commenting on both the ideology behind and the execution of US intervention in foreign nations.[4] The shift to a perspective that was more critical of American intervention was popularized by New Left Historians during the late 1960s and into the early 1970s. Historians began to question whether or not the containment of communism sufficiently justified intervention in other countries, particularly as communism began to spread beyond Soviet-controlled countries.[5] The apparent lack of success in

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[1] Arthur P. Whitaker, "The United States in Latin America Since 1865," *Current History* 28, no. 163 (1955).
[2] Theodore P. Wright, "Free Elections in the Latin American Policy of the United States," *Political Science Quarterly* 74, no. 1 (1959): 89.
[3] May credits a humanitarian sentiment for intervention in Cuba in 1898 and a moral obligation to Latin American countries as a small part of the motivation for Roosevelt's Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine. See in Ernest R. May, "The Alliance for Progress in Historical Perspective," *Foreign Affairs* 41, no. 4 (1963): 761, 763.
[4] The first edition of Williams' book was published in 1959 with the second edition being published in 1962. Williams opens the second edition of his book *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* by describing American iIntervention in Cuba. He describes this intervention as a violation of American neutrality and asks the question of whether concepts of traditional American diplomacy are sound or contradictory. See in William Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (Dell Publishing, 1962), 6.
[5] Hans J. Morgenthau, "To Intervene or Not to Intervene," *Foreign Affairs* 45, no. 3 (1967): 432.

minimizing the spread of communism through US intervention in foreign countries contributed to the growing criticism of intervention policies, as seen in how historians understand intervention into Latin America and the Caribbean. For example, politician and historian George C. Lodge criticized American foreign policy in Latin America for not providing enough actual change and for lacking ideological strength, citing US military assistance and intervention as part of the reason for this lack of power.[6] In addition to critiquing the interventionist ideology, historians have also criticized the moral justification of American intervention present in post-World War II historiography. Scholar David E. Weischadle utilizes political and diplomatic documents to examine the US's paternalistic attitude toward other nations, particularly those in Latin America. He critiques the outcome of this moral attitude, calling it "the most irritating but also the least productive" way to structure foreign intervention.[7] Together, these critiques mark a historiographical turning point in which scholars increasingly challenged both the effectiveness and the moral legitimacy of US Cold War interventionism.

Contemporary historians have built on the historiography contributed by New Left historians, continuing to critique historians of the early Cold War who justified US intervention as a moral imperative. Thomas J. McCormick's book *America's Half-Century: United States Foreign Policy in the Cold War and After* shows a continuity of these New Left critiques, arguing that intervention methods such as economic and military assistance were used to support American hegemony as opposed to supporting the development of individual countries.[8] McCormick's book focuses on establishing and supporting how the US used anti-communist intervention as a way to solidify American hegemony, showing how stopping the spread of communism served American self-interest during the Cold War. While criticism is ongoing regarding American motivation for intervention, contemporary historians are also creating a new historiographical approach that focuses more on the transnational history of US intervention. This transnational historical method emphasizes the negative consequences, such as ongoing political instability, of US intervention, particularly in Latin America.[9] Newer writings also include a tighter focus on individual historical actors. These actors can be used to reveal new information about US intervention, largely thanks to

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[6] Lodge comments that intervention has been characterized by contradictory goals of helping Latin America stay politically stable while also wanting to enact anti-communist and pro-American change. See in George C. Lodge, "US Aid to Latin America: Funding Radical Change," *Foreign Affairs* 47, no. 4 (1969): 738.
United States military intervention is also analyzed in Harold Molineu's 1973 article. See in Harold Molineu, "The Concept of the Caribbean in the Latin American Policy of the United States," *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 15, no. 3 (1973).
[7] David E. Weischadle, "Paternalism: A View of the Latin American Foreign Policy of the United States, 1823–1934," *The Social Sciences* 61, no. 6 (1970): 269.
[8] Thomas J. McCormick, *America's Half-Century: United States Foreign Policy in the CoOld War and After*, (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), xiv.
[9] Stephen G. Rabe, *The Killing Zone: The United States Wages Cold War in Latin America* (Oxford University Press, 2012): xxxvii.

new historical sources becoming available.[10] This paper will fit into these contemporary conversations about transnational and biographical historiographies by examining how actors such as Alfredo Stroessner and Augusto Pinochet interacted with the American government. It will show how US intervention in South America during the Cold War fit within an anti-communist framework, but contradicted American values of democracy and human rights through its support of authoritarian dictators.

PARAGUAY UNDER ALFREDO STROESSNER

EARLY YEARS OF THE STRONATO

Alfredo Stroessner's regime in Paraguay officially began in May 1954. At this time, the US was largely focused on maintaining the political stability of the Stroessner administration, also known as the Stronato, to prevent Paraguay from falling to communism. On September 1, 1955, a dispatch from the Paraguayan chargé—a diplomat who serves in a country's embassy as second in line after the ambassador—to the Department of State, Andrew B. Wardlaw, wrote that Stroessner's position one year after his installation remained strong despite a "substantial part" of the population being opposed to the administration. According to Wardlaw, opposition groups did not have the capacity to seriously contest the military force of the administration.[11] The language of the dispatch shows that, even at the onset of the Stronato, the US was aware of public dissent toward the administration, and, more crucial to US foreign policy, the importance of Paraguayan military power to the stability of an authoritarian regime. To further ensure this militaristic stability, the US accepted Paraguayan military officers into training facilities so Paraguay's military would be able to "fend off Communist threats" in South America.[12] The US also provided economic support

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[10] Kirk Tyvela's book *The Dictator Dilemma: The United States and Paraguay in the Cold War* focuses on the relationship between the United States and Paraguay during the dictatorship of Alfredo Stroessner. Tyvela criticizes the work done by Frank O. Mora and Jerry W. Cooney in their book *Paraguay and the United States: Distant Allies* (2007) for not being "informed by archival sources."
See in Kirk Tyvela, *The Dictator Dilemma: The United States and Paraguay in the Cold War* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2019).
Patrick Iber's *Neither Peace nor Freedom: The Cultural Cold War in Latin America* analyzes the World Peace Council, the Congress for Cultural Freedom, and the Casa de las Américas. See in Patrick Iber, *Neither Peace nor Freedom: The Cultural Cold War in Latin America* (Harvard University Press, 2015).
Kissinger in Latin America: Intervention, Human Rights, and Diplomacy by Stephen G. Rabe uses archives from the US National Archives, presidential libraries, and electronic archives to discuss Kissinger's career as it specifically relates to Latin America.
Stephen G. Rabe, *Kissinger and Latin America: Intervention, Human Rights, and Diplomacy* (Cornell University Press, 2020).
[11] Andrew B. Wardlaw, "Despatch From the Chargé in Paraguay (Wardlaw) to the Department of State," September 1, 1955, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1955-1957, American Republics: Central and South America, Volume VII*, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1955-57v07/d494.
[12] Along with training military officers, the United States also provided arms and expanded the presence of military advisers in Asunción. Jerry W. Cooney and Frank O. Mora, *Paraguay and the United States: Distant Allies* (The University of Georgia Press, 2007), 134.

to the country.[13] The perceived stability of the Stronato through military force supported the US's decision to continue providing Paraguay with military and economic support, as the US became confident that Paraguay would not fall to communism. While Paraguay did experience some guerrilla activities during the late 1950s and early 1960s, the US government was not concerned about the activity.[14] This was largely due to the Stronato's developing reputation for state repression and violence. In this way, early US engagement with Stroessner's regime demonstrates how anti-communist priorities outweighed concerns about authoritarian governance in Paraguay.

Along with wanting to support the stability of the country, support for the Stroessner regime also came from its verbal commitment to anti-communism. In a memorandum summarizing a conversation with President Dwight Eisenhower, which occurred in Panama on July 23, 1956, Stroessner expressed "that Paraguay was one-hundred percent anti-communist and would continue to be so," while also expressing gratitude to the US Army and Air Force for its military missions in Paraguay.[15] The reiteration of the country's commitment to being anti-communist, and mentioning the military support the US was providing to the country, demonstrates how economic and military support were given to Stroessner's regime as a way to uplift anti-communist sentiments. It was not only Stroessner himself who spoke on Paraguay's commitment to anti-communism. In 1962, the Paraguayan foreign minister said his country did not fear a communist takeover, and "stressed" that the country would support measures to fight the communist control of Cuba.[16] This further illustrates the Paraguayan politicians' commitment to maintaining a non-communist stable regime. This politically stable, anti-communist commitment was key to the US-Paraguay relationship.

THE KENNEDY AND JOHNSON YEARS

Despite supporting the regime for its anti-communist ideology, the US was aware of the Stronato's lack of democracy. As the US entered the John F. Kennedy administration, concerns over state repression and authoritarianism, along with attempts to advance democracy, became prevalent in foreign policy. The Alliance for Progress, an aid program started by Kennedy, sought to improve the socio-

[13] The United States provided over twenty-four million dollars in bilateral economic and military assistance in addition to over ten million dollars in loans through Eximbank from 1954-1960. Kirk Tyvela, *The Dictator Dilemma: The United States and Paraguay in the Cold War* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2019), 27.
Between 1954 and 1969, the US accounted for close to 17 percent of Paraguay's national defense budget. Stephen G. Rabe, "Kissinger and Friends: Paraguay, Brazil, and Uruguay," in *Kissinger and Latin America: Intervention, Human Rights, and Diplomacy* (Cornell University Press, 2020), 87.
[14] Cooney and Mora, *Paraguay and the United States*, 151.
[15] "Memorandum of a Conversation, Embassy Residence, Panama City," July 23, 1956, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1955–1957, American Republics: Central and South America, Volume VII,* history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1955-5707/d500
[16] "Memorandum of conversation among Foreign Ministers of the American Republics," October 2, 1962, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963, Volumes X/Xi/XII, Microfiche Supplement, American Republics; Cuba 1961-1962; Cuban Missile Crisis and Aftermath,* https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v1commitment0-12mSupp/d311

economic condition of Latin American countries. This policy was put into place in reaction to the Castro communist regime in Cuba; impoverished Latin American nations would be less susceptible to communist takeovers if they became modernized and experienced some social reform.[17] Through the Alliance for Progress, the US was able to apply political pressure on Paraguay to promote some democratization of the authoritarian regime, such as the opening of elections to opposition parties. After being told that US aid would become conditional upon political reform, Stroessner introduced changes such as lifting the ban on opposition political parties in 1962.[18] This demonstrates US political awareness of the authoritarian nature of the Stronato, as politicians were attempting to loosen the authoritarian nature of Stroessner's regime through supporting democratic elections.

The American people were aware of the authoritarian nature of the Paraguayan and other Latin American dictatorships. An article in *The Daily News* of the US Virgin Islands criticizes the Nicaraguan and Paraguayan governments for lacking freedom of the press, calling suppressing news information tyrannical.[19] American journalists directly calling the Stronato a suppressive and tyrannical regime is demonstrative of how people within the US were aware of the authoritarian nature of the Paraguayan regime. The US's democratizing requirement for aid was also reported in the newspaper *Diario las Américas*, a Florida-based Spanish-language newspaper. This article reads that Stroessner should not have had a problem introducing these reforms, as there was already a set of tactics for this type of liberalization work among Latin American dictatorships.[20] It emphasizes how political reforms are necessary for social reforms to be effective in Paraguay. As advancing democracy was touted as the primary motivation for the US's intervention in other countries, the US would need to apply pressure in order for the country to democratize.

With his incremental changes, Stroessner continued to rule with few consequences from the US. Anti-communism was still seen as the primary ideological motivation behind US policy in Latin America, limiting the amount of democratization efforts that would succeed in Paraguay. Officials during the Kennedy administration had begun to "embrace" authoritarian leaders as allies in the fight to contain communism in Cuba and to keep the rest of Latin America

[17] Tyvela, *Dictator Dilemma,* 56.
[18] Frank O. Mora, "The Forgotten Relationship: United States-Paraguay Relations, 1937-89," *Journal of Contemporary History* 33, no. 3 (1998): 462. https://www-jstor-org.proxy2.library.illinois.edu/stable/261125?seq=12
[19] *The Daily News of the Virgin Islands*, "Free Press, Free People,"April 3, 1962, from Library of Congress *Chronicling America Historic American Newspapers* https://www.loc.gov/item/sn83025327/1962-04-03/ed-1/.
[20] N. Viera Altamirano, *Diarios las Américas*, "Reformas sociales sin producción mayor de riqueza," July 11, 1962, from Library of Congress *Chronicling America Historic American Newspapers*, https://www.loc.gov/resource/sn82001257/1962-07-11/ed-1/?sp=2&q=paraguay&r=0.562,0.229,0.626,0.3,authoritarian0

safe from communism.[21] Concerns about the stability of the Stroessner regime as an anti-communist government had surpassed the importance of social and political reforms in the authoritarian state. This attitude continued into the Lyndon B. Johnson administration as the US continued to view Paraguay as a staunchly anti-communist ally.[22] Stroessner's March 1968 visit to Washington, D.C., further reveals the lack of concern government officials had for the authoritarian nature of the Stroessner regime. *Stroessner's Paraguay*, a CIA special report, highlights how the US viewed Paraguay in favorable terms. The eight-page report was written just over two weeks before Stroessner's visit to Washington, D.C.; he would be visiting the US and speaking with Johnson from March 20-22. The document explicitly calls Stroessner an authoritarian leader. It references a change made to the Paraguayan constitution in 1967 to allow Stroessner to run for president consecutively in 1968 and 1973, and mentions how the conservative element of Stroessner's Colorado Party continues to oppose the idea of political coexistence with other political parties. The document states that "Paraguay takes a firm anti-communist and anti-Castro stand" in the Organization of American States, an organization comprised of the nations within the Western Hemisphere for international cooperation.[23] The language in this document shows explicit knowledge of the authoritarian nature of the Stronato, and the document makes clear references to Stroessner's anti-communist political ideology. An action memorandum sent to Johnson regarding Stroessner's 1968 visit to Washington, D.C., also illustrates the lack of concern over the Stronato's authoritarian nature. In this memorandum, Special Assistant to the President W. W. Rostow describes Johnson's responsibilities during the Stroessner visit, how Stroessner will ask for further military and economic assistance, and his image as an "old-style Latin American dictator" being the primary problem with the visit.[24] This epithet further reinforces the fact that US politicians were well aware of the repressive, dictatorial regime that Stroessner oversaw; the Kennedy and Johnson era governments were not focused on maintaining democracy in Latin America so long as the politicians in power were anti-communist.

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[21] Emphasis on stability continued on during the Johnson administration, with it becoming the primary policy goal in regard to the Latin American dictatorship. Tyvela, *Dictator Dilemma*, 50 and 75.

[22] Cooney and Mora cite the Mann Doctrine, or the idea that the US would support any government, including antidemocratic regimes, that opposed communism and remained open to US business interests as to why the Johnson administration diverged from Kennedy's focus on human rights. Cooney and Mora, *Paraguay and the United States*, 174. The Mann Doctrine is also cited by Tyvela in *The Dictator Dilemma* on page 77.

[23] Directorate of Intelligence, "Special Report: Weekly Review, Stroessner's Paraguay," March 1, 1968, Central Intelligence Agency *Freedom of Information Act Electronic Reading Room* https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/DOC_0000680044.pdf.

[24] W. W. Rostow, "Action Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant (Rostow) to President Johnson," March 19, 1968. *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-1968, Volume XXXI, South and Central America; Mexico*, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v31/d469.

THE NIXON YEARS

The US continued its focus on the stability of the anti-communist regime as the Stronato entered its second decade. The Richard Nixon administration was generally supportive of the Stronato, with historian Kirk Tyvela writing, "there was no dictator dilemma at all for the White House."[25] Under Nixon, the US had fully embraced the use of authoritarian dictators to promote anti-communism abroad. Stroessner's strong, militaristic grip on Paraguay and verbal commitment to both "defending democratic institutions" and supporting US policy gave the US confidence in the country's position as an anti-communist ally.[26] However, US-Paraguay relations became strained toward the end of Nixon's tenure in office. This was partially due to a drug extradition issue centered around the French-Corsican heroin trafficker Auguste Ricard.[27] Paraguay did eventually agree to extradite Ricard, leading to a return to more stable relations between the US and Paraguay.[28] The normalization of these relations means that the US would continue to provide support to the stability of the Paraguayan regime.

Following the Ricard situation, Congress was forced to reassess the US's policy toward Paraguay, and US politicians began expressing concern over the authoritarian nature of the dictatorship. The extradition of Ricard resulted in the 1976 hearing of the Subcommittee on International Organizations of the Committee on International Relations, which, while focusing primarily on human rights violations in Uruguay, also included witness testimonies about human rights violations under Stroessner.[29] Whereas this hearing provided further awareness of human rights issues, such as unlawful imprisonments, no immediate changes were made. The hearing was not the only example of political officers expressing concerns and not being heard. Aurelia Brazeal, a County Officer for Paraguay and Uruguay, wrote to the Political Officer of the Embassy in Uruguay expressing her concerns about the human rights issues and received a response stating that an investigation into human rights issues would be counterproductive and, while subversives were being arrested and prisoners tortured, there was no extreme treatment of prisoners.[30] These concerns over human rights violations and

[25] Tyvela, *The Dictator Dilemma*, 102.
[26] Tyvela, *The Dictator Dilemma,* 106.
[27] Paraguay during the Stronato had a history of sheltering criminals involved in the drug trade. One such criminal was Auguste Ricard who was heavily involved with heroin trafficking. Paraguay was hesitant to allow extradition. Tyvela *Dictator Dilemma*, 112.
In a memorandum to President Nixon on narcotics cooperation in Paraguay, Secretary of State William P. Rogers wrote that Nixon should write to Stroessner and express the fact that the US and Paraguay's relationship would be in danger if Paraguay continues to be uncooperative with the Ricard extradition request. William P. Rogers, "Memorandum from Secretary of State Rogers to President Nixon," July 28, 1972. *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Volume E-10, Documents on American Republics, 1969-1972,* https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve10/d574.
[28] Cooney and Mora, *Paraguay and the United States,* 191.
[29] Tyvela, *The Dictator Dilemma*, 118.
[30] While the response Brazeal receives is from the Uruguayan Embassy, the letter still provides a good example of how complaints about human rights violations were not being taken seriously.

other influences caused people within the US to begin questioning the relationship between the US and the South American dictator. These concerns continue throughout the remainder of the Stronato.

CARTER, REAGAN, AND INCREASING HUMAN RIGHTS CONCERNS

It was not until President Jimmy Carter's administration began in 1977 that human rights violations began to directly impact US policy in Paraguay. During this administration, anti-communism was no longer a sufficient justification for providing mostly unconditional support for the Stronato.[31] The shift to a human rights-focused international policy meant politicians could no longer ignore the authoritarian nature of the Stroessner regime, as evidenced through a conversation between Carter and Stroessner in September 1977. In a memorandum on this conversation, Stroessner responded to Carter's concerns about human rights by stating that any imprisonments are legal and justified.[32] Carter's direct confrontation in this moment shows the importance that was being placed on human rights. Evidence of suspicious imprisonments was also made available to the US during the Carter administration. Epifanio Mendez, a Paraguayan politician and author, was arrested in Argentina shortly after sending a letter to Jack Watson, Carter's White House Chief of Staff, on how the Paraguayan government was not following US human rights policy objectives.[33] Human rights became something on which aid was contingent. In a memorandum on loans to Brazil, multiple officials argued that Brazil should be denied the loans in order to strengthen the US's consistency when it came to human rights policies.[34] By denying Brazil loans for human rights violations, the US would indicate to other South American countries, like Paraguay, that they were serious about halting aid to countries that did not promote democracy.

As the Stronato entered its last decade, its relationship with the US became tumultuous. The Ronald Reagan administration initially re-embraced authoritarian rulers, arguing that authoritarian regimes could gradually be

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Russell E. Olson, "Letter from Russell E. Olson, Political Officer of the Embassy in Uruguay to Aurelia A. Brazeal, County Officer for Uruguay and Paraguay, ARA-LA/APU," August 8, 1975, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1076, Volume E011, Part 2, Documents on South American, 1973-1976, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve11p2/d342*

[31] Tyvela, *The Dictator Dilemma*, 128.

[32] During this conversation, Stroessner also asked that loans not be pulled as it would impede Paraguayan development.
"Memorandum of Conversation," September 6, 1977, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1977-1980, Volume XXIV, South America; Latin America Region,* https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1977-80v24/d290.

[33] Peter Tarnoff, "Memorandum for Dr, Zbgniew Brzezinski, The White House,"October 22, 1977, Department of State *Freedom of Information Act Electronic Reading Room* https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/LETTER%20TO%20JACK%20WATSON%20FRO%5B15516000%5D.pdf

[34] "Action Memorandum From the Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs (Schneider) and the Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs (Stedman) to the Deputy Secretary of State (Christopher)," November 25, 1977, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1977-1980, Volume XXIV, South America; Latin America Region,* https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1977-80v24/d169

liberalized while communist regimes could not be.[35] This anti-communist ideology was a return to the political justification seen during the earlier years of the relationship between Stroessner and US politicians. In 1981, US officials agreed to continue providing economic support to the country.[36] The provision of support once again connected an anti-communist ideology and desire for stability in authoritarian states as a crucial facet of American foreign policy. Restrictions on Paraguay were further reduced in 1982, justified by the assumption that authoritarian regimes would be more willing to cooperate with the US if they were not facing critiques or consequences for their human rights issues.[37] The renewal of military and economic support during the Reagan administration shows that the focus on stability and anti-communism remained. A 1984 report on security assistance to Paraguay states that the US should continue to provide military support. The military was considered a crucial factor in moving Paraguay toward democracy, as training in the US "often has a significant and lasting effect on the attitudes of individual officers toward political values and basic human rights."[38] Ideally, politicians believed military personnel would take their US-based training and implement it in Paraguay in a way that reduced human rights violations such as extrajudicial killings and unlawful imprisonments.

The support given to Paraguay during the Reagan years did not go uncriticized, and a lack of support for the regime reemerged in the second half of the decade. In 1984, members of Americas Watch, an international committee on human rights, were denied entry into Paraguay. Members of the group were also not permitted to contact the US Embassy.[39] This indicated that Paraguay did not want Americans looking into its human rights and judicial practices. In a 1987 National Security Council Meeting, US politicians revealed concerns about democracy in South America.[40] A 1987 article from the *New York Times*, published in the University of Illinois' student newspaper, mentions how US

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[35] Tyvela, *The Dictator Dilemma*, 151.

[36] In 1981, the Reagan administration approved a loan of $63.9 million dollars.
Tyvela, *The Dictator Dilemma*, 153.
A general note about maintaining assistance to economically weak countries like Paraguay is seen in the National Security Decision Directive 71. Ronald Reagan, "National Security Decision Directive 71," November 30, 1982, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1981-1988, Volume XII, Conflict in the South Atlantic, 1981-1984,*
https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1981-88v13/d416

[37] Associated Press News, "Former aide rips lack of human rights policy," November 18, 1982, *Daily Illini*, University of Illinois *Illinois Digital Newspaper Collection*
https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=DIL19821118-01.1.7&srpos=20&e=------198-en-20-DIL-1--txt-txIN-paraguay---------#documentdisplayleftpanesectionleveltabcontent

[38] American Embassy in Asunción, Paraguay, "Congressional Action on Security Assistance for Paraguay," March 8, 1984, Central Intelligence Agency *Freedom of Information Act Electronic Reading Room*, https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/cia-rdp90b01370r000801120051-4

[39] American Embassy in Asunción, Paraguay, "Statement by Congressional Friends of Human Rights on Paraguay," May 19, 1984, Central Intelligence Agency *Freedom of INformation Act Electronic Reading Room,* https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/cia-rdp90b01370r000801050093-6

[40] "Minutes of a National Security Council Meeting," March 13, 1987, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1981-1988, Volume I, Foundations of Foreign Policy*,
https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1981-88v01/d295

ambassadors were attacked for speaking out against human rights violations.[41] Articles on human rights issues in another country being featured in a university newspaper demonstrate how far-reaching the knowledge of these issues was. The issue of Paraguayan state-sponsored violence against American citizens shows how authoritarian repression could no longer be justified through a need to stop the spread of communism, especially as the Cold War was coming to a close.

CHILE UNDER AUGUSTO PINOCHET

THE US AND SALVADOR ALLENDE

US relations with Chile during the Cold War were also characterized by intervention related to communist and anti-communist governments. Before the installation of the authoritarian dictator General Augusto Pinochet on September 11, 1973, Chile was led by President Salvador Allende, a man whose Marxist ideology posed a threat to the anti-communist stability that the US centered its Cold War-era foreign policy on. As revealed in a 1978 document, the CIA began anti-Allende covert actions following his first run for the presidency in 1954, such as providing financial support to anti-Allende opposition groups and moderate politicians.[42] The extreme measures evident in these covert operations show how the US feared Allende and the potential for communism that he represented. The CIA also engaged in covert operations surrounding the September 1970 election in hopes of stopping the election and inauguration of Allende.[43] The US justified its intervention in another country's democratic process as it feared a democratically elected socialist like Allende would destabilize the anti-communist policies in the region. A 1972 document titled "Background for Chilean Hearting" outlines these worries; Allende's collaboration with the Communist Party, his relationship to Cuba, the political opposition he is facing, and how Chile's turn toward socialism could motivate other Latin American countries to embrace communism are all points of concern the US had with the Allende

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[41] New York Times, "Paraguayan officials denounce US envoy's human-rights stand," March 25, 1987, *Daily Illini,* University of Illinois *Illinois Digital Newspaper Collection,* https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=DIL19870325-01.1.17&srpos=25&e=------198-en-20-DIL-21--txt-txIN-paraguay---------
Also discussed is how the American ambassador, his wife, and about 35 other diplomats and opposition leaders were tear gassed during a prodemocracy forum.
Tyvela, *The Dictator Dilemma* 159 and 163

[42] This document was compiled on February 21, 1978, but has attached documents related to a 1975 statement to the Senate, a resume of contacts with the Chilean International Telephone and Telegram Corporation, and the general misconceptions related to the CIA activities in the 1970 Chilean election.
Raymond A. Warren, "Memorandum for the Director of Central Intelligence on Chile," February 21, 1978, Central Intelligence Agency *Freedom of Information Act Electronic Reading Room* https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/16032110

[43] The CIA admitted to spending $7 million in Chile between 1970 and 1973, although the agency may have channeled additional funds into the country through third parties.
Stephen G. Rabe, "Overthrowing Governments: Chile and Bolivia," in *Kissinger and Latin America: Intervention, Human Rights, and Diplomacy* (Cornell University Press, 2020), 55 and 64.

administration.[44] The concerns expressed in this document outline the main policy concerns surrounding Latin America during the early 1970s: stability within anti-communist regimes, not the spread of democracy.

Allende represented neither a stable nor an anti-communist regime, pushing Chile toward socialism despite public opposition. Public opposition to Allende's programs was seen during moments such as anti-left youth protests during his first year in office and a failed coup attempt in early 1973.[45] The conflict came to a head in September 1973 when the military staged a coup, killing Allende and installing Pinochet as leader. Shortly following the coup, Pinochet spoke with the Chief of the US Military Advisory Group, Colonel Urrutia. Pinochet said the new Chilean government would break ties with the Soviet Union and other communist countries, spoke on acquiring US aid in terms of military and food support, and mentioned his desire to strengthen the relationship between Chile and the US.[46] The interaction described in this memorandum foreshadows the ease with which the US would accept the authoritarian regime of Pinochet. The anti-communist Pinochet had successfully overthrown the left-wing Allende, allowing Chile to cut ties with Cuba and reaffirm its relationship with the US.[47] Pinochet's overthrow of Allende affirmed the US's idea that a communist-aligned state was unstable. The militaristic stability that Pinochet supplied, as well as his anti-communist stance, made the US's decision to recognize the regime and provide it with "goodwill" understandable.[48] While the installation of Pinochet as the leader of Chile represented a move away from democracy, his government was still recognized by the US because he solidified himself as an anti-communist ally.

RESPONSE TO THE PINOCHET GOVERNMENT

The response to the new Chilean government was varied. The CIA received some criticism for its perceived involvement. It reportedly did provide support to

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[44] "Background for Chilean Hearing," March 23, 1972, Central Intelligence Agency *Freedom of Information Act Electronic Reading Room* https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/0005496321

[45] Associated Press News, "Anti-leftist protest continues in Chile," December 3, 1971, *Daily Illini*, from University of Illinois *Illinois Digital Newspaper Collections,* https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=DIL19711203.2.9&srpos=1&e=------197-en-20-DIL-1--txt-txIN-Allende----1971-----

[46] "Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to president Nixon," September 14, 1973, *Foreign Relations of the United Syayes, 1969-1976, Volume XXI, Chile, 1969-1973,* https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969the -76v21/d355

[47] Tanya Harmer, "Fractitious Allies: Chile, the United States, and the Cold War, 1973-1976," *Diplomatic History* 37, no. 1 (2013): 109.

[48] "Goodwill" comes from meeting minutes on September 20, 1973. During this meeting, officials also discussed how the United States was planning on handling economic assistance to the new government, when the US should announce their recognition of the new Chilean government, and briefly mentioned refugee policy and the OAS Human Rights Commission.
"Minutes of a Meeting of the Washington Special Actions Group," September 20, 1973, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Volume XXI, Chile, 1969-1973,* https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v21/d361

Allende's opposition groups, but the US and CIA denied having any involvement with the actual coup.[49] The lack of involvement by the CIA in facilitating the coup was not fully believed. Leftist activist groups in both the US and Latin America placed responsibility for the coup onto the US.[50] The issue of democracy was also a concern. Two days after the coup, *The Daily Illini* published an editorial titled "Democracy undermined in Chile," which criticized the fact that Chile was now under a military regime and claimed that providing support to the regime would be "unjustifiable intervention" that would "perpetuate the anti-communist ideology that resulted in the Vietnam War."[51] Americans were split in reaction to Chile's fall to dictatorship; some Americans protested and wrote against the fall, while others, who had not been in support of Allende's presidency, were more accepting of the new military rule. An editorial by another student focuses on the issues within the Allende administration, calling some of his acts dictatorial, primarily focusing on the economic issues caused by nationalizing certain industries and removing government support of anti-Allende newspapers.[52] Americans also criticized rallies that were being held in protest of the Chilean government and the US attitude toward it. In the anti-communist periodical *The Pink Sheet on the Left*, no. 83, "US radicals" were critiqued while readers are encouraged to reach out to government officials and local newspapers to reiterate their support for their "anti-Communist friends in Chile."[53] Both the support and criticism of Pinochet's military regime emphasized American ideas about communism and democracy. Americans were supportive of the anti-communist nature of the regime but critical of its lack of democracy.

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[49] A memorandum was sent to Henry Kissinger by William J. Jorden of the National Security Council Staff to discuss how the US's covert actions in Chile should be discussed. "Memorandum from Filliam J. Jordan of the National Security Council Staff to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)," September 16, 1973, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Volume XXI, Chile, 1969-1973*, https://history.state.gov/hstoricaldocuments/frus1969-76v21/d356

[50] Associated Press News, US waiting on Chile recognition," September 13, 1973, *Daily Illini*, University of Illinois *Illinois Digital Newspaper Collection*, https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=DIL19730913.2.10&srpos=44&e=------197-en-20-DIL-41--txt-txIN-Allende----1973-----

[51] "Democracy Undermined in Chile," September 13, 1973, *Daily Illini*, University of Illinois *Illinois Digital Newspaper Collection,* https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=DIL19730913.2.45&srpos=23&e=------197-en-20-DIL-21--txt-txIN-Allende----1973-----

[52] Tom Veal, "No tears for Chile," September 13, 1973, *Daily Illini*, University of Illinois *Illinois Digital Newspaper Collection* https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=DIL19730913.2.46&e=------197-en-20-DIL-21--txt-txIN-Allende----1973-----

[53] This newsletter also includes articles on South Los Angeles, the five year anniversary of the Ted Kennedy Chippaquiddick Mystery, Vietnam veteran demonstrations, and others. Phillip Abbott Luce, *The Pink Sheet on the Left: America's Authoritative Report on Left-Wing Activities, no. 83*, Washington D.C.,: Horizon House, July 22, 1974, https://search-alexanderstreet-com.proxy2.library.illinoregime;is.edu/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cbibliographic_details%7C4651471

HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY CONCERNS

Unlike with Stroessner in Paraguay, human rights remained a centralized issue when it came to how the US perceived Pinochet and Chile, perhaps because Chile was a larger country and more within the American consciousness. While providing stability remained a concern, focus on human rights issues seemed to overtake the desire for unconditional support of the regime. A Senate resolution on aid to Chile in 1973 recommended that economic or military aid should not be provided until the US could be sure that these rights were being protected in the country.[54] This resolution, released early on during Pinochet's military regime, indicates that the perception of human rights issues played a large factor in US support and aid decisions. The US would not be able to provide military aid because of these concerns.[55] This posed an issue as military support was important to the new Pinochet government, as military force was the one way in which the regime was maintaining stability; unfortunately, this military force was also part of the reason for human rights concerns. A 1977 paper prepared in the CIA writes that the military government in Chile sees itself as supporting national development and seems to blame the Allende administration for the issues present with the military regime.[56] This report recognizes the human repression that the military regime is enforcing. Chile continued to come under fire for its human rights violations. Human rights issues were first publicly recognized by the Pinochet regime in 1975.[57] In a CIA memorandum, it was revealed that Pinochet had publicly announced that people within his administration had overstepped their position, but these individuals were being tried and punished for it. This shows how Pinochet was trying to construct the human rights issues in Chile as an individual problem, not a systematic problem, as would later be revealed. These issues included security forces arresting foreign nationals without contacting their embassies. A 1976 *Associated Press* article outlines how the government had refused to cooperate with the Human Rights Commission of the Organization of American States.[58] Not cooperating with an international agency focused on

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[54] "Senate Resolution on Aid to Chile," October 4, 1973, *Freedom of Information Act Electronic Reading Room*, https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/cia-rdp75b00380r000600170031-8

[55] Pinochet found US refusal to provide military aid because of human rights concerns was unjust, mentioning how the use of military power was important for the internal security of the state. [?] Popper, "Telegram 2046 From the Embassy in Chile to the Department of State," April 18, 1974, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976, Volume E–11, Part 2, Documents on South America, 1973–1976,* https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve11p2/d165

[56] "Paper Prepared in the Central Intelligence Agency," June 1977, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1977-1980, Volume XXIV, South America; Latin America Region,* https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1977-80v24/d16

[57] Deputy Director for Operations, "Memorandum for the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency on Human Rights in Chile," February 21, 1975, Central Intelligence Agency *Freedom of Information Act Reading Room,* https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/0005492956

[58] This article was originally published in *Associated Press News* and was reprinted in the *Daily Illini*. It was accessed through the University of Illinois' Digital Newspaper Collection's digitized copies of the *Daily Illini*.
Associated Press News, "Secret report tells of Chilean persecution," June 8, 1976, *Daily Illini*, University of Illinois *Illinois Digital Newspaper Collection*

human rights highlights the authoritarian regime's repressive behavior. US politicians felt that supporting the dictatorship was directly clashing with democratic values.[59] Violations persisted into the 1980s. A 1981 article published on the eighth anniversary of the military coup emphasizes how the regime has suppressed human rights, stating that Amnesty International regards torture of citizens as officially condoned by the government.[60] An article on how the Reagan administration was considering the resumption of gun sales to Pinochet discusses how military aid had been stopped for a reason; despite the reported decrease in human rights abuses, many political dissidents were still being imprisoned.[61] These policy examples and newspaper sources demonstrate how reporting of human rights abuses, such as unlawful detentions and state-sponsored political violence, complicated US policy toward Chile, forcing policymakers to confront the tension between supporting anti-communist regimes and upholding democratic values.

As concerns over human rights persisted, conversations around a return to democratic rule continued as well. The assassination of Chilean Orlando Letelier, a former diplomat and opponent of Pinochet, on US soil heavily impacted the relationship between the US and Chile, as the US was once again forced to confront the authoritarian nature of the regime. The Chilean Supreme Court refused to extradite parties who had orchestrated the assassination to hold trial in the US; as a result, the US introduced sanctions on Chile in 1979.[62] Chile's refusal to cooperate with the US during this case shows the distance that was growing between the two countries. Concern over human rights was reiterated throughout the 1980s. A 1985 report on human rights "blasted" Chile, marking a divergence from previous conversations within the US about the regime.[63] The continuing concern over this issue coincided with conversations around democratization in Chile. In an interview with an American journalist, Pinochet describes how Chile is slowly moving toward democracy and that the US should not push the government to increase its pace, as he wanted to ensure that the transition went

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[59] Some of these US politicians included senators Edward Kennedy and Frank Church. Harmer, "Fracticious Allies," 143.

[60] Dan Slack, "Eight years after military coup, Chilean junta represses rights," September 11, 1981, *Daily Illini*, University of Illinois *Illinois Digital Newspaper Collection* https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=DIL19810911-01.1.17&srpos=8&e=------198-en-20-DIL-1--txt-txIN-pinochet+AND+human+rights---------

[61] Kenneth Freed, "Does Chile's Dictator Deserve to Buy Washington's Guns," *The Los Angeles Times,* August 8, 1982, *Freedom of Information Act Electronic Reading Room*, https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/cia-rdp90-00552r000100540002-1

[62] "Memorandum from Thomas Thornton of the National Security Council Staff to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Brzezinski)," November 18, 1980, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1977-1980, Volume XXIV, South America: Latin America Region,* https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1977-80v24/d238

[63] Alfonso Chardy, "US Report Blasts Chile on Rights," *Miami Herald*, February 14, 1985, *Freedom of Information Act Electronic Reading Room,* https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/cia-rdp90-00965r000201080059-0

smoothly and did not result in a fall back to communism.[64] While there was skepticism over whether or not Pinochet would allow himself to be removed from power, Pinochet did relinquish the presidency in early 1990, following the 1989 election, in which he did not run.

CONCLUSION

This paper has highlighted the importance of Paraguay and Chile as case studies when it comes to understanding US foreign policy and intervention during the Cold War. By examining how Alfredo Stroessner and Augusto Pinochet interacted with the American government, this paper has shown how US intervention during the Cold War fit within an anti-communist framework while also contradicting American values of democracy. While US leaders and politicians framed their support of governments in South America as interventions for the purpose of stopping communism and spreading democracy, in reality, US leaders supported repressive, authoritarian leaders and valued anti-communism and stability over human rights and democracy. The relationship that the US had with Stroessner in Paraguay and Pinochet in Chile demonstrates how supposed American values of freedom and democracy were overlooked during the fight to stop communism.

[64] Roger Fontain, "Don't push Chile, Pinochet warns," *Washington Times*, July 23, 1985, *Freedom of Information Act Electronic Reading Room*, https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/cia-rdp90-00965rintervention000302050030-2

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Archaeological Evidence of South Asian Domestic Workers Place and Space

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ABSTRACT

Architectural evidence of servant presence in households is a common practice infiltrating not just South Asia, but almost every part of the world. Viewing this presence from an archaeological standpoint examines the existence of a serving class within upper class households, and tells us a lot about social structures related to power and inequality. Specifically, living and working quarters within these households are very distinct and reflect how they live and their general presence within their employer's household. Although colonization and colonial existence within and involving South Asia is an impactful factor to the indentured servitude industry, the presence of 'help' living within Indian households is a culture of its own that is alive and well and has its own contributing intricate factors in how it is maintained such as a caste system. Acknowledging colonialist presence, it has made indentured servitude common practice within many parts of the world in the terms of how it may be viewed now, but this social structure system could also exist without it. An example of colonial context is Indian indentured servitude within South Africa happened due to a labor shortage after the abolishment of slavery and to escape poverty and famines resulting from British colonial rule ("Indentured labour from South Asia (1834-1917) | Striking Women", n.d.). Noting that indentured servitude in other regions evolved because slavery ended, slave quarters and their archaeology contributes to this study of servant household examination. By analyzing the material culture this practice has both left behind and presents itself as today, most commonly seen in the quarters used to house these workers within the employer/enslaver's household, we can learn about domestic servant's daily lives and places within society.

Around 4.75 million people within India remain unseen and unheard as their status in society establishes.[1] This group of people are domestic workers, working within households of individuals wealthier than themselves. Within South Asian household culture, there is a notable presence of domestic servitude that reflects cultural systems in place relating to socioeconomic power, gender inequalities, and the caste system. Domestic servitude, intertwined with the system of caste, are present both historically and in the present, in countries such as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, the Maldives, and Afghanistan.

[1] Cherylann Mollan, "Why India Fails to Protect Its Domestic Workers despite Decades of Abuse," *BBC*, February 12, 2025, https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cp3j0e79q52o.

This paper will focus on these institutional practices within India. Domestic work specifically refers to cooking, cleaning, and laundry. Each of these tasks emphasize the almost invisible presence of domestic workers within South Asian homes as these jobs do not require very much contact with the family the worker is employed by. This includes kitchen spaces and places of living such as bedrooms within employer's households. These spaces exemplify class social structures that not only transcend modern South Asian domestic servitude, but also highlight this practice in the past, making it comparable to other places in the world. By examining the history of domestic servitude within India using the archaeology of domestic worker's place within upper class homes, we can examine the underlying structures of power that uphold rigid hierarchical class systems throughout South Asia. Studying archaeological evidence of the presence of domestic workers within the spaces they occupy and how domestic workers are treated is important because servant and helping occupations still exist today within many cultures due to systems of power reinforcing unfair practices of the past. Domestic servitude has been influenced over thousands of years in South Asia by changing political and religious climates, colonialism within the 18th-19th century, and modern-day discussions surrounding its ethicality. Its commonality is largely in reflection of the caste system. The caste system is a form of social stratification, based in Hinduism but branching off from this religion to form its own entity that is intricately intertwined into societies within and outside of South Asia. Many countries within South Asia use the caste system.

Domestic servitude takes form in two ways: live-in servitude or a commute to the employer's home. Live-in domestic workers remain in small rooms of the house of their employer. This is usually out of the boundaries of where the members of the family would be seen, making it so the domestic worker's presence can go unacknowledged by the family. Commuters most commonly live in makeshift, temporary housing that the Indian government often destroys, leaving the people who live in these spaces without a home and in overcrowded communities. For domestic workers who are in this situation, they are facing housing insecurity. Their temporary housing are in areas away from the homes they work in and are reflective of their position in social class. In big cities such as Delhi, the Indian government has destroyed many poor urban communities by bulldozing the sites, stating that they are "encroachments" to the city[2]. The government destroys these homes as they deem them as disruptors to public architecture such as the Barapullah drain in Delhi resulting in the destruction of the Madrasi Camp[3]. The Madrasi Camp housed poor migrant workers who contribute to Delhi's "economy through jobs in sanitation, domestic work, and construction"[4]. The government overlooks the urban poor's pivotal role in society though. Maya John, a labor historian at the University of Delhi and

[2] Anuj Behal, "Delhi Slum Demolitions: Who Is Left Behind?," Frontline, July 10, 2025, https://frontline.thehindu.com/society/delhi-slum-demolition-drive-madrasi-camp-evictions/article69792100.ece.
[3] Anuj Behal, "Delhi Slum Demolitions: Who Is Left Behind?,"
[4] Anuj Behal, "Delhi Slum Demolitions: Who Is Left Behind?,"

Convenor of the Gharelu Kamgar Union (Domestic Workers' Union), explains that because domestic work is in such high demand, it is a field in which people who are in financial need usually seek out.[5] Therefore, domestic housework is cheap to employ, making this a readily available resource for middle class and wealthy Indian families to hire. Culturally, it is expected and reinforced by social pressures to have a domestic worker within your household to reinforce your financial status and to show that you can afford this kind of help.[6]

The domestic servitude sphere mainly affects one half of the population more than the other: women. Women are financially vulnerable within India, making them more susceptible to becoming domestic workers. According to the Financial Inclusion Index provided by *The Reserve Bank of India*, there is financial gendered discrimination against women across South Asia.[7] Within India, legal equality for women is protected under law, however, there is still a gender gap between men and women.[8] This is largely due to systemic and legal frameworks such as teenage marriage and lack of repercussions for violence against women within households that plays a part in the power they have over their finances.[9] The fairness of domestic work is highly contested considering the low pay and their standards of work/rights.[10] This is an undervalued position and, when compared to Western cultures, domestic work is much more common, including services provided in more middle class homes vs. solely in upper-class, wealthier homes.[11]

Indian domestic servitude is dependent on the social ordinance of the caste system because it plays a large part in who is employed and in which households. This system assigns 'levels' to people and this level can determine who you can marry, what jobs you can have, and what opportunities and resources people have access to. It can be a factor in how households hire their 'help' as well[12]. This hierarchy is very affluent throughout South Asian history and as Nicole Boivin, an Archaeologist and Professor at the School of Social Science at the University of Queensland states, "caste today is an important feature of social and political life in India, and that it has undergone substantive changes during the course of the

[5] Maya John, "The Persistent Precarity of Domestic Workers in South Asia," Rosa Luxembourg Stiftung (Rosa Luxembourg Stiftung, June 8, 2021), https://www.rosalux.de/en/news/id/44474/the-persistent-precarity-of-domestic-workers-in-south-asia..
[6] Maya John, "The Persistent Precarity of Domestic Workers in South Asia," Rosa Luxembourg Stiftung (Rosa Luxembourg Stiftung, June 8, 2021), https://www.rosalux.de/en/news/id/44474/the-persistent-precarity-of-domestic-workers-in-south-asia..
[7] Indrani Chakraborty and Archana Meena, "Closing India's Gender Gap in Financial Inclusion," The India Forum (TheIndiaForum, October 17, 2025), https://www.theindiaforum.in/gender/closing-indias-gender-gap-financial-inclusion.
[8] Chakraborty, Indrani and Meena, Archana. 2025
[9] Chakraborty, Indrani and Meena, Archana. 2025
[10] John, "Persistent Precarity of Workers"
[11] John, "Persistent Precarity of Workers"
[12] PEW RESEARCH CENTER, "Attitudes about Caste," Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project (Pew Research Center, June 29, 2021), https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2021/06/29/attitudes-about-caste/.

past century or more…".[13] According to data collected from a survey sent out within India by the Pew Research Center, many who subscribe to the caste system would not describe it as being discriminatory when asked if they experience caste discrimination.[14] The power the caste system is indirect and is technically illegal due to legislation such as the Indian Constitution of 1949, which explicitly prohibits untouchability under Article 17. Dalits, previously known as 'Untouchables' occupy the bottom of the caste totem pole and are usually seen within the domestic worker's sphere.[15] Within the caste system, a lot of households will hire their 'help' based on whether they share the same caste as the family.[16] Caste within India goes back at least 3,000 years, so this is not just a social order impacting domestic workers, but also an ingrained system that has pre-shaped who has access to certain opportunities.[17] Caste is mentioned in Ancient Aryan-Vedic script dating back to 1750-500 BCE written in Sanskrit establishing social distinction in the form of the caste system[18]. The four different levels within caste established in this script as "Brahmin, consisting of priests, scholars, and teachers; Kshatriyas, the kings, governors, and warriors; Vaishyas, comprising agriculturists, artisans, and merchants; and Sudras, the service providers and artisans who were originally non-Aryans but were admitted to Vedic society"[19]. Dalits would be considered as complete outcasts of this system.

Although the effects of colonization are being compared in current arguments in terms of how this has affected domestic servitude, this system pre-dates British colonialism in South Asia as Shireen Moosvi, a History Professor at Aligarh Muslim University, discusses.[20] The lack of attention to pre-colonial social systems in play contributes to the misunderstanding of current day domestic servitude in South Asia. According to Moosvi, "The history of domestic servants in pre-colonial India has not received much attention so far…" in comparison to how contemporary, post-colonial India deals with caste as a result of colonialism.[21] Historical research predominantly examines the proliferation of domestic servitude under colonialism across South Asian countries. Moosvi further explains within *Domestic Service in Precolonial India: Bondage, Caste and Market* that the caste system influenced who worked within the domestic servitude sphere: "those who perform personal service are not only held in scorn,

[13] Nicole Boivin, "Orientalism, Ideology and Identity," *Journal of Social Archaeology* 5, no. 2 (June 2005): 225–52, https://doi.org/10.1177/1469605305053368.
[14] PEW RESEARCH CENTER, "Attitudes about Caste,".
[15] Gregory Kozlowki, "Indian Government Bans Discrimination against Untouchables | EBSCO," EBSCO Information Services, Inc. | www.ebsco.com (EBSCO, 2023), https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/politics-and-government/indian-government-bans-discrimination-against.
[16] PEW RESEARCH CENTER, "Attitudes about Caste,".
[17] PEW RESEARCH CENTER, "Attitudes about Caste,"
[18] Lumen Learning, "The Caste System | World Civilization," Lumenlearning.com, 2019, https://courses.lumenlearning.com/suny-hccc-worldcivilization/chapter/the-caste-system/.
[19] Lumen Learning, "The Caste System | World Civilization,"
[20] Shireen Moosvi, "DOMESTIC SERVICE in PRECOLONIAL INDIA: BONDAGE, CASTE and MARKET," *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 64 (2003): 560–82, https://doi.org/10.2307/44145491.
[21] Moosvi, "DOMESTIC SERVICE PRECOLONIAL INDIA".

but are also excluded from the three 'twice-born' Aryan varnas or caste, and put among the Sudras the lowliest of the castes".[22] There is a global emphasis in South Asia on how colonialism has affected the region but not very much interest in the longstanding social structures created well before the idea of 'European invasion'. This ideology does not consider the tracing of people and what kinds of customs and culture belongs to who. Without considering the social systems in place before colonialization, we are simplifying human interaction, migration, and the presence of multi-cultural origin, including domestic service work, within South Asia. In premodern India, domestic work was done by slaves and servants, and this is a reflection of the social systems set in place at the time.[23] Now, domestic servitude is an occupation dependent on both social class and caste.

The presence of unfair work practices inflicted upon lower caste Indian workers was not exclusive to India though. After the abolishment of slavery within many parts of the world, South Asians migrated in pursuit of work and economic growth after British colonial occupation led to poverty and famine.[24] Chattel slavery entailed the brutal abduction of Africans, passage, and work of mostly sugar cane within the Caribbean islands. The Trans-Atlantic slave trade to the Caribbean began in the early 16th century and persisted until the early 19th century. Abolishment and emancipation staggered in the Caribbean due to the many different colonial forces at hand. After the abolishment of slavery, colonial forces looked to other places for cheap labor. The installment of indentured servitude transported Indian workers to places such as the Caribbean, South Africa, Fiji, parts of East Africa, and South America in pursuit of job opportunities. Indians were misled into thinking that traveling to these new places would allow them to acquire some wealth in comparison to their conditions within India and return home in a better state. This was far from the truth of the brutal overseas passage to their destinations and the labor and living conditions they were subjected to once they reached their destination. Indians were legally bound to indentured servitude contracts through signing with a thumbprint, becoming indentured workers for a certain number of years.[25] This system differs from that of slavery because enslaved people were considered legal property, and even though indentured workers were not well informed in their decision, they did legally agree to work as indentured workers. Despite the legal implications between slavery and indentured servitude being different, the enslavement system outlined the brutal treatment of indentured workers. Indentured workers were subjected to severe work and production expectations, inadequate health assistance and nutrition, and lack of access to clean water.[26] This mass migration

[22] Moosvi, "DOMESTIC SERVICE PRECOLONIAL INDIA".
[23] Moosvi, "DOMESTIC SERVICE PRECOLONIAL INDIA".
[24] Striking Women, "Indentured Labour from South Asia (1834-1917) | Striking Women," Striking-women.org, 2019, https://www.striking-women.org/module/map-major-south-asian-migration-flows/indentured-labour-south-asia-1834-1917.
[25] Girmitunitedorg, "Coolies: How British Reinvented Slavery," *YouTube*, November 11, 2012, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oxl4q_jfDPI.
[26] Melissa Ramnauth, ed., "Indian Indentured Labourers in Trinidad, Guyana, and the Caribbean," West Indian Diplomacy ®, January 3, 2024, https://westindiandiplomacy.com/indian-indentured-labourers-in-trinidad/#life-on-the-plantations-hardship-and-resistance.

generated a large Indian presence outside of South Asia that continued a system like domestic servitude in terms of rank in society of the workers. When looking for how colonial powers have exploited cheap labor, this presence is not just evident in the living communities of the descendants who originally traveled in search of opportunity, but also through the archeological presence of Indian domestic workers sharing the same living quarters as people who were once enslaved. Even though indentured servitude implies a payment, the relationship between employer and the employed was not fair. In this mass migration of workers, conditions were harsh. The journeys to where they would end up working, the conditions in which they worked in, and the wages they received were all inhumane considering this was right after slavery ended and their treatment was very similar[27]. South Asian mistreatment in terms of working in other places can be traced starting from the ships they had to make the journey on. The South Asian immigrants' form of transportation to other countries were slave ships which were cramped and promoted disease.[28] Their living quarters in these foreign places were often repurposed slave quarters. Julia Haines notes in *Mauritian Indentured Labour and Plantation Household Archaeology* that slave quarters are often made of stone or wood, are very small (accommodating many people), run down, and are distinctly "built separate from, but away from the owner's house", which is usually also very grand in size and decor[29]. Barbara Mooney, a Professor of Art and Art History focusing on North American Architecture and African American Art and Architecture, argues that "Limiting slave sites to discreet Black architectural space set apart from what is defined as distinct white architectural space too easily erases the presence of enslaved human beings from the sites altogether".[30] Archaeological evidence of overlap between indentured workers and previously enslaved people can be seen through examples such as the Bras d'Eau plantation. The Bras d'Eau cane plantation, a sugar plantation in Mauritius, gives insight to how indentured servants built upon slave plantation spaces including the material items they brought with them that can be found within their living quarters[31]. Within formerly enslaved living spaces, objects related to the caste system such as glass and ceramic bottles used to carry water were found. Specifically, the number of bottles found in the quarters indicated a person's place within the caste system. Haines states "They used proportionally more of these bottles, and individual ceramic dishes to materially assert distance between themselves and other immigrants who they may not have known, and whose caste identities they may not have known".[32] Indian workers

[27] Striking Women, "Indentured Labour South Asia".
[28] Striking Women, "Indentured Labour South Asia".
[29] Julia Jong Haines, "Mauritian Indentured Labour and Plantation Household Archaeology," *Azania: Archaeological Research in Africa* 55, no. 4 (October 1, 2020): 509–27, https://doi.org/10.1080/0067270x.2020.1841966.
[30] Barbara Burlison Mooney, "Understanding History's Huts," Scribd, 2004, https://www.scribd.com/document/184755123/looking-for-history-s-hut.
[31] Haines, "Mauritian Indentured Labour Archaeology,".
[32] Julia Long Haines, "Diasporic Kinship: Indentured Laborers and the Archaeology of Relations in Mauritius," ScienceDirect, June 2025, https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S027841652500011X.

had to adjust to the new social order of the Colonial Caribbean while also maintaining their own forms of social stratification and they did so by upholding the caste system. Archaeology studying the presence of enslaved people, or colonial archaeology, (in terms of the period of the Atlantic slave trade and after) is important to acknowledge in reference to South Asian domestic worker's space and place because it explains why future domestic worker's occupied the same spaces in either separate or overlapping time periods. Arguably, "the materiality and culture of enslavement laid the groundwork for the indentured labour system."[33] After their period of indentured servitude, "the descendents of those who stayed back became significant parts of the population of a number of countries including like Guyana, Surinam, Trinidad, Jamaica, Malaysia and South Africa, and, to a lesser extent, in the East African countries of Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania."[34] During the initial migrations of Indians to places such as the Caribbean, field and agricultural work was mostly done, but the presence of Indians within the Caribbean and other places of the world post-servitude is still present and we can see this in the domestic servitude systems that present today, similar to the domestic servitude field within India.

Colonial spatial practices are reflective all over the world. The evolution of the living quarters of enslaved people inhabited by Indian indentured workers can be studied in correlation to socially structured power. Globally, archaeological evidence of where servants, enslaved people, indentured servants, domestic workers, etc. occupied within the household is evident through the material evidence that they have left behind, whether that is within the employer's home or the designated spaces they live in outside of their employer's home. In some spaces within the U.S, outside of evidence of slavery on plantations, servitude within the household is evident through the location of the servant's bedrooms and living areas which are secluded and away from the areas of living for the family, similar to the examples discussed within India. They are built so the servants are seldom seen and can carry out their work without much acknowledgment from the family. Something that is a global pattern that almost every region has seen and is still experiencing is class differences. The issue of class difference often entails "massive homes that demanded an entire staff to keep them running."[35]

Domestic servitude, like other forms of work that is historically seen to be done by people who are in lower socioeconomic status or social class can be studied through the places these workers have occupied in the past. The people who are employed in this role, whether willingly or out of necessity, often do not get a voice to share their experiences and the hardships they endure. To locate this

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[33] Julia Jong Haines, "Mauritian Indentured Labour and Plantation Household Archaeology," *Azania: Archaeological Research in Africa* 55, no. 4 (October 1, 2020): 509–27, https://doi.org/10.1080/0067270x.2020.1841966.
[34] Striking Women, "Indentured Labour South Asia".

[35] Lily Theders, "Driehaus Museum," Driehausmuseum.org, 2025, https://driehausmuseum.org/blog/view/below-americas-stairs-domestic-servants-in-the-gilded-age..

knowledge, we can consult the material evidence that they have left behind and interpret what this said about their lives. Advocacy within the modern day is seen through sociopolitical movements and protests that are held to better the conditions of domestic workers. Vandana Bhujan, writing for a blog to empower South Asian women, claims that the solution to the inequalities faced within the domestic servitude sphere lies in financial education which, historically, South Asian women have not had access to.[36] The Global Fund for Women claims that "domestic worker activism is present at the national and state levels" in India by raising awareness and creating solidarity within the domestic worker's field.[37] This unification between workers would hopefully encourage private households to legally be recognized as workplaces and domestic work as a field to qualify as work under labor laws.[38] Social progress, seen through the work of Sr. Christin Mary, coordinator for the National Domestic Workers' Movement, aims to create equality for domestic workers within their treatment and advocate for their rights.[39] Through the examination of the archaeological place of domestic workers, we have learned that these jobs are the backbone of how society functions within India and other parts of the world, maintaining the households for families who contribute in their own ways to society, while also providing people in need with some form of employment. Mary states that the NDWM was started "to empower the Indian domestic workers who had no recognition, no identity, no visibility, and who were treated by the employers like slaves."[40] Domestic workers' spaces are reflective of this inequality between their position and their employer's while also implying mistreatment such as unfair wages and lack of governmental regulation on this industry. Social systems that contribute to hierarchical power dynamics in India are shaped by systems such as class and caste that have been implemented into everyday life, creating distinct positions in society.

[36] Vandana Bhujang, "Advertising Services," Girl Power Talk, September 22, 2024, https://girlpowertalk.com/financial-literacy-of-women-in-india/.
[37] Global Fund For Women, "Female Domestic Workers Rights Movement in India," Global Fund for Women, January 6, 2021, https://www.globalfundforwomen.org/movements/domestic-workers-rights-movement/.
[38] Global Fund For Women, "Female Domestic Workers Rights Movement in India,"
[39] Philip Mathew, "Q & a with Sr. Christin Mary, Advocate for India's Domestic Workers," Global Sisters Report, January 12, 2021,
[40] Mathew, "Q & a with Sr. Christin Mary, Advocate for India's Domestic Workers," Global https://www.globalsistersreport.org/ministry/q-sr-christin-mary-advocate-indias-domestic-workers.

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Caesar's Legion: Roman Legacy in a World that Forgot Rome

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ABSTRACT

Often in fiction, bad guys are simple, and often they make illusions to the great big baddies of our real historical past, Nazis, Romans, and other such easily identifiable foes. The 2011 game Fallout: New Vegas goes a step further, however, and creates a faction that has a deep and involved history, and fascinating connections to the real Roman Empire of our time. This faction is Caesar's Legion, a brutal totalitarian slave state built around the personality of one man and in-world illusions to ancient Rome. This would not be the first time a murderous regime has tried to copy the Romans, but in this case, what does imitating Rome mean in a world that forgot Rome? The world of Fallout is a post-apocalyptic one, and the ways in which the faction of Caesar's Legion copies Roman legacy, the ways in which they don't, and why they do either is deeply interesting. How does Caesar's Legion exhibit the themes of Roman Legacy, Diversity, and Gender and Sexuality in empire? This faction can serve as a fantastic glimpse into media history regarding empires, the historical empires themselves, and what the Game has to say about the nature of empire and fascism as a whole.

When making the antagonists in a piece of media, most role-playing games and other media usually just take a bunch of guys, dress them up as Nazis, make them genocidal, and call it a day, but *New Vegas* chose a different path. The writers crafted an intricate faction with deep ideological convictions and a fascinating in-world history. Caesar's Legion is the primary 'evil' faction in the game *Fallout: New Vegas* (2010). The legion is a brutal totalitarian slave state built around the personality of one man and with allusions to ancient Rome. This is a common trope, but the world of *Fallout* is a post-apocalyptic one with scant memory of history before the apocalypse. So, how does the fictional empire of Caesar's Legion compare to other relevant texts? How does Caesar's Legion exhibit the themes of Roman Legacy, Diversity, and Gender and Sexuality in an empire? And how do the ways the empire embodies these themes maintain it?

The story of Caesar's Legion, a faction in the game *Fallout: New Vegas,* and the way in which it expanded tells us a lot about the way historical and fictional empires engage with the Roman legacy and other themes. The 2011 game *Fallout: New Vegas* is a beloved role-playing game (RPG) that takes place

in a post-apocalyptic America hundreds of years after the world was devastated by nuclear warfare. The series is known for its clever commentary on American history and ideologies, inventing a world where the culture of the 1940s and 50s never dissipated. Caesar, the leader of the faction, was born as Edward Sallow. He grew up in the Followers of the Apocalypse, a group of philanthropic academics, doctors, and educators whose mission was to bring helpful knowledge to tribes across the wasteland.[1] Sallow was generally uninterested in medicine or education, but took a liking to military history, particularly *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* by Edward Gibbon and *Commentarii* by the historical Julius Caesar. Sallow and a Follower's doctor were eventually sent on a mission to one of these post-apocalyptic tribes the Followers sought to help, far to the east in Arizona. His small group, now including a Mormon missionary named Joshua Graham, was captured by the Blackfoot tribe. The Blackfoot were beset by military enemies and were ill-prepared to defend themselves. Caesar chose to break Followers law and teach this tribe in the ways of war, including military tactics and the concept of 'total war' to the group. The Blackfoot were able to defeat their weakest neighbor, the Ridgers, and Sallow had every member of the group killed. Emissaries from other rivals of the Blackfeet were taken to see the bodies of the Ridgers, and many groups surrendered to him. It is at this point that Sallow renamed himself Caesar and introduced the concept of Rome to these tribal groups via his personal leadership and lessons taught to the groups. Caesar (Sallow) concluded that cultural and political divisions prevented the tribes under him from becoming a united, effective group, and he needed to form them into something new. He based this new culture on Roman history and exterminated any remaining cultural identity. Caesar's Legion soon expanded, taking in one tribe after another, and slowly absorbing bigger and more powerful groups in the wasteland that he would break and assimilate. By the year the game *New Vegas* takes place (2281), the Legion spans much of Utah and Colorado, and all of Arizona and New Mexico, having conquered 87 separate tribes and larger civilizations, assimilating them into the Legion.

Caesar rules with an iron fist. Citizens are either soldiers, producers, or slaves. Individuals have no value outside their dedication to the Legion. All men owe their loyalty to Caesar, and all women are slaves. Social and political elevation can only be achieved by the domination of others. The Legion follows the monotheistic Cult of Mars, which holds Caesar as a holy representative of Mars, the god of power. The law in Legion lands is brutally enforced, with extremely little room for crime. Most crimes are punishable by death, or worse, with punishments like crucifixion being very common. Technology, especially medical technology, is strictly forbidden. Homosexuality is punishable by death. Caesar's Legion has infused ancient Latin into normal speech, and some within

[1] Note on use of the word tribe: In the *Fallout* universe, the word tribe is applied to any group of people that rely on basic agriculture and social associations, and have not grown past one or two towns, regardless of culture. Unfortunately, the depiction of these tribes is at times problematic as archaic comparisons are often made to real-life indigenous groups. Nonetheless, as this terminology has a different meaning in the world of *Fallout*, I will continue to use it here.

the nation speak strictly in Latin. While normal settlers can wear whatever they like, slaves are made to wear rags and are marked with a red X, and soldiers all wear red combat uniforms based on historical Roman armor constructed from various other faction armors. The economy is entirely built around production for the military and maintaining trade with other groups. Although The Legion demands tribute, it does not levy taxes on commerce. That being said, there is no private industry, as all things are in the benefit of the military state. The Legion is poorly populated, as most conquered people are either killed or sold into slavery. Women are maintained as breeders and homemakers to try to shore up the population of the Nation.[2] There is no question that Caesar's Legion fits the definitions of a fascist empire. With this background established, we can explore how this empire engages with the themes of Roman legacy, diversity in empire, and gender and sexuality.

Caesar's Legion is clearly based on Rome, but the post-apocalyptic setting of the game poses an interesting complication to the trend of empires appealing to the Roman Legacy; very few people remember what Rome was at all. Roman Legacy, as referenced by this paper, is the lasting cultural and sociopolitical impact left by the Roman Empire on nations that came after, and referenced Rome in its institutions and propaganda. As evidence to this, most people in the world of *Fallout* refer to the language of Latin not as Latin, or the language of ancient Rome, but instead as "the tongue of Caesar."[3] Many see Caesar's Legion as its own separate entity, and not connected to any historical empire. But if most people, especially the tribes the Legion interacts with most often, do not remember Rome, why use it as a political and ideological framework? To quote Caesar directly:

> "I used imperial Rome as the model for my Legion precisely because it was so foreign… Rome was a highly militarized autocracy that effectively integrated the foreign cultures it conquered. It dedicated its citizens to something higher than themselves - to the idea of Rome itself. In Rome, I found a template for a society equal to the challenges of the post-apocalyptic world - a society that could and would survive."[4]

This gets to the crux of why Caesar used the Roman legacy as a basis for his empire: the world did not remember Rome, and Caesar was not attempting to appeal to the Roman legacy in the same way as other powers in the real world have. Empires tried to capture the Roman legacy not because their systems were derived from Roman law, but because it lent them significant legitimacy.[5] Instead of copying Rome and Roman themes to gain historical legitimacy in a wasteland

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[2] *Fallout: New Vegas*, Obsidian Entertainment. (2010; Irvine, CA: Bethesda Softworks), Video game.

[3] *Fallout: New Vegas*

[4] *Fallout: New Vegas*

[5] Marshall Poe, "*Moscow, the Third Rome: The Origins and Transformations of a 'Pivotal Moment.',*" Jahrbücher Für Geschichte Osteuropas 49, No. 3 (2001): 414.

that had forgotten Rome, Caesar instead adopted these ideas because he believed Rome to be a genuinely good basis for a post-apocalyptic society.

One of the main problems faced by Caesar was cultural resilience, and by forcing tribes and other conquered groups to conform to a new, legendary unity, he was able to better extinguish this cultural and ideological diversity to make a more stable whole. This theme is also present in the 2000 film *Gladiator*. In *Gladiator,* the idea that serving Rome is a greater ideal than any personal ambition is a very important theme throughout the film. Characters like Maximus extoll Roman brotherhood by exclaiming that they serve the interests of the Roman people as opposed to the main villain, Commodus, who only serves himself.[6] Caesar recognizes the ability of a uniting idea, like that of Rome, to bring people together, not for egalitarian purposes, but for the sake of national stability. Caesar contends that his main geopolitical rival, the New Californian Republic, is a loose conglomerate of people only serving themselves, while the Legion is united, full of men serving Caesar, and therefore a far stronger nation. In this way Caesar uses the Roman legacy in a world that has forgotten Rome, by using Rome as a framing device, a fiction to unite, he can create a much stronger state, at least in his ideological framework.

Diversity is a very important element in any empire, and the way that any empire encounters and accommodates that diversity is a necessary part of what defines it. Caesar's Legion is no different, being the home of 87 different tribes, all having had unique cultures and, in many cases, languages. As previously established, the Legion has made the eradication of cultural differences its top priority. No tribe within the Legion had been allowed to maintain its identity. Exceptions seemed to be made when cultural differences were useful to Caesar, but they never lasted. Joshua Graham, Caesar's right-hand man, was allowed to maintain his Mormon faith as long as he was a successful conqueror. The moment he failed Caesar and lost the first battle for the Hoover Dam, he was covered with pitch, burned alive, and thrown into the Grand Canyon. As another example of this phenomenon, one of the more powerful groups conquered by the Legion was the Twisted Hairs. This tribe was composed of strong warriors, diplomats, and scouts. They swiftly became vital to Caesar's operation while maintaining their culture and language system. However, when a Twisted Hairs agent failed to aid in the capture of New Canaan, the Mormon capital, they were replaced with Caesar's spies, the Frumentarii, and all those who refused to abandon their cultural ties to the Twisted Hairs were crucified along the roads of the Legion. Tribes with cultural practices that remained useful to the Legion would still be assimilated, even if their cultural practices were reshaped. A different group, the Hangdogs, maintained a deep connection with dogs and built their religion around this connection. When they were eradicated, the dogs were burnt alive. However, Caesar realized the tactical utility of war-dogs and maintained some animal husbandry practices used by the Hangdogs and rebranded them under Caesarian religion and ideological practice. Similarly, the medicinal practices of the Twin

[6] *Gladiator*, directed by Ridley Scott. (2000; Los Angeles, CA: Universal Pictures, 2000), Film.

Mothers were copied and maintained, even though all members of the matriarchal society were tortured to death.[7] Caesar takes what is useful from certain groups while still exterminating them. Stripping the parts while still removing any relationship to where these practices originated.

The way in which Caesar tolerates cultural differences speaks to the very unique ideology the Legion holds. Caesar maintains an ideological blend based on the theories presented in Gibbon's *Fall of Rome,* Hegelian Dialectics, and Social Darwinism. Caesar seems to have learnt the wrong lessons from Gibbon. Gibbon, a highly elitist historian, blames the fall of Rome on decadence and the failures of bureaucracy. Gibbon states that weakness, anarchy, and barbarity are all that follow the fall of the undisputed power of the Roman executive.[8] Caesar took this and interpreted it to mean that the failures of Rome were the weakness of the executive, and therefore decided to be even more totalitarian. This ties in with his unique combination of Hegelian Dialectics and Social Darwinism. Like Hegel, Caesar believes that all things, thesis, inherently has its opposite, antithesis, and these two opposing theses, when put in inevitable conflict, result in a new third thing that is better than the parts that created it, called synthesis.[9] This understanding of dialectics is remedial at best, but it ties well with Social Darwinism. Social Darwinism is the belief that the principles of 'survival of the fittest' also apply to human social relations. Those with the most wealth and power have that power because they had the strength to take it. The Legion truly believes that all suffering, murder, strife, and struggle are ultimately good for the Legion, the idea being that you can become stronger if the weak die out. This is why the Legion is so brutal: it wishes to produce the very best men via the elimination of all weak elements of society. Modern medicine is banned as it would help the weak survive when they shouldn't have, and all weapons and armor must be earned, creating more effective warriors, at least in theory. This deeply fascist ideology is why Caesar has no issue with incorporating the useful elements of cultures it destroyed. Racially, Caesar's Legion is far more egalitarian than its counterparts. It does not matter what race you are, or what tribe you come from, as long as the people are an effective tool of Caesar, you will have your place. Even ghouls, the rotting former-people who are hated throughout the wasteland, face little prejudice from the Legion. This creates a unique dynamic within the empire where racial and ethnic background matter very little, but any semblance of cultural independence is punishable by death.[10] This unique approach to governance sets Caesar's Legion apart as a particularly brutal and

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[7] *Fallout: New Vegas*

[8] Edward Gibbon, "*Chapter LXXI: Prospect of the Ruins of Rome in the Fifteenth Century. Part I*," in The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire - Complete (New York, CA: Project Gutenberg, 2013)

[9] Hans-Georg Gadamer, Hegel's Dialectic: Five Hermeneutical Studies (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982)

[10] *Fallout: New Vegas*

powerful organization in the world of *Fallout*. More than a band of slavers, this is an empire built on a wheel of suffering.

This pure Social Darwinism leads to an approach to diversity very rarely seen in real-life empires and other media. In *Star Wars,* for example, the fascism of the Galactic Empire is highlighted by its population being entirely composed of posh white men, conveying to the audience the fascist tendencies of that Empire.[11] Conversely, Caesar's Legion eschews ethnic purity in exchange for a purity of strength, an entirely different way of conveying fascism. A close parallel is found in the case of the Ottoman Empire, with its system of Janissaries. As the Ottoman Empire conquered the Balkans, it engaged in a practice of enslaving, converting, and ultimately employing Christian children as the most elite soldiers in the Ottoman military. That being said, the cultural domination of the Balkans was never complete or even intended to be so. This practice of creating elite soldiers was not rooted in meritocratic reasons, but instead as a method of controlling the Balkan population.[12] This unique quality of almost pure Darwinist meritocracy sets Caesar's Legion apart from its imperial peers both in history and in media, and creates a very interesting picture of diversity within the empire. This meritocracy does not extend to all, however, as one of the most notable things about Caesar's Legion is its approach to gender and sexuality.

When it comes to women and sexual deviants, meritocracy in the Legion comes to a swift end. In the legion, women are used as either breeders or manual laborers, and are always slaves. To the Legion, women are less than human; they are a commodity. There is not a single free woman in the entirety of the faction, and even the player is not allowed full entry into the Legion if they play as a female character. In fact, a lot of dialogue and even whole quests are completely unavailable to a female player character. Similarly, homosexuality is explicitly banned, and if caught, an act punishable by torture and death.[13] The Legion has based its ethos on the idea that if you are strong enough, you can rule, no matter who you are. Why does this not apply to women or homosexuals within the empire? Totalitarian states are always afraid of women and LGBTQ people. It is extremely useful in totalitarian states to construct masculinity as a willingness to die for the state and little else. There is a utility in constructing the feminine as antithetical to the masculine. By having a diagonal opposite, the Legion (and other fascist states) can enforce loyalty and a dedication to the state by punishing anything that is against that, which is usually femininity. Moreover, the Legion is notably underpopulated and needs to subjugate women to ensure the long-term success of the state. But it goes far beyond the immediate benefits of this sexism. Nothing erodes the stranglehold over sadistic young men willing to die for a fascist cause quite like love. Love disconnects the soldier from his nation and

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[11] *Star Wars: Episode IV – A New Hope*, directed by George Lucas. (1977; San Francisco, CA: Twentieth Century-Fox, 1982), Film.

[12] Suraiya Faroqhi, "*2: The Emergence of an Empire,*" in Subjects of the Sultan: Culture and Daily Life in the Ottoman Empire (London, CA: I.B. Tauris, 2005), 34,

[13] *Fallout: New Vegas*

prevents him from wanting to die. Homosexuality presents the same issue; if the men of the Legion can love each other, they are no longer solely devoted to Caesar. Therefore, the state must criminalize any opportunity to find love and eradicate any possibility of seeing women as human beings. Totalitarianism can only keep people dedicated if it keeps them lonely, fearful, and angry. A large part of what makes the Legion the Legion is this striving for strength and battle and suffering in the name of national improvement and in the name of Caesar. Anything that prevents that from being the primary focus is destructive to the ideological backing and personal dedication that are required to keep the faction afloat.

This seldom works in real life on a national scale, as you cannot really stop people from falling in love. We have seen it used to create elements of the modern-day far right, such as the incel movement. But in historical societies, even ones that did their very best to subjugate women, like in ancient Greece, one cannot simply legislate and propagandize women out of society. Extremely warhawkish nations, like Sparta, which based itself in many of the same dedications to the state as Caesar had, were forced to concede that women were a vital part of society and were forced to value them for the sake of the continued stability of the city-state.[14] Women will always end up being a vital and influential part of any nation, and Caesar cannot prevent that from eventually weakening his control over his subjects. Any expression of gender and sexuality in Caesar's Legion that does not abide by a suicidal masculine loyalty to the state is corrosive to the ideological body of the empire, and Caesar has gone to extreme measures to ensure that this status quo is maintained. History, however, has proved this conviction to be a fool's errand.

Caesar's Legion is a satire of totalitarianism. The Legion is so repugnant that it cannot help but be humorous. Sure, the roads are crime-free, but the idea that a low crime rate can justify any of this is a deeply dark joke within itself. Everyone in the Legion is constantly suffering and is encouraged to make everyone they could even think of caring about suffer too. Caesar has constructed a recursive wheel of agony and pain that cannot be stopped if it can just keep rolling, utilizing the ideology of Caesar to motivate the soldiers of the empire to continue that chain of suffering. What makes the faction so brilliant is that the writers of *Fallout: New Vegas* have created an evil faction that feels like it could make sense. One could hypothetically see how this system might be appealing or even functional in the wastelands of post-apocalyptic America. This satire of empire is fascinating; it engages with so many of the themes common in the discussion of empires and takes them to an extreme where the audience is all but forced to laugh at how unsustainable these ideas that have founded many real-life empires really are. Caesars legion distills so many elements about empire into one undesirable package, and via that package we can examine how the empires of our own time lean on these vile mechanics.

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[14] Aristotle. *Aristotle in 23 Volumes*, Vol. 21, translated by H. Rackham. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1944.

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Kendo as a Feminist Sport: Martial Arts and the Japanese Women's Liberation Movement

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ABSTRACT

Kendo is a modern Japanese martial art derived from Tokugawa Era swordsmanship practices. From the 19th century to today, kendo evolved from an art form to a national sport, to a militaristic indoctrination practice until its present form. Its historical link to samurai culture and militarism and the invented notions of bushido that perpetuate this image invoke a romanticized masculine impression of kendo. However, kendo's modern inclusion of women beginning in the mid 20th century and increasing significantly during the Women's Liberation Movement of the 1970s contradicts this masculine milieu. The testimony of female kendoka and the rhetoric promoting martial arts for women demonstrates that, although women's kendo continues to be patronized today, female kendoka that began practicing during the Women's Liberation Movement of the 1970s view their participation as agentic feminism. Thus, despite the persistence of gender inequality in kendo today, the generation of female kendoka that perceive kendo as a feminist sport pass down their confrontational attitude to future generations through their instruction and mentorship.

Kendo is often described to Western audiences as "Japanese-style fencing" derived from samurai sword fighting and swordsmanship. It is also often described as "traditional" despite its relatively recent invention in the nineteenth century.[1] In modern practice, every aspect of kendo is highly ritualized and formalized. Many practitioners and teachers of kendo hold the understanding that kendo draws from notions of *bushido*, the "way of the warrior" that codified the virtues such as honor, loyalty, and respect as cornerstones of Tokugawa samurai culture and all of Japanese society today.[2] I began practicing kendo at the age of nine. This ritualization was intimidating and difficult to grasp at a young age. Yet, my mother, who began practicing at the age of six, felt that it was necessary to instill in me discipline and respect. For the same reason, kendo has been popular in Japanese physical education classes since the 20th century. However, these notions of bushido as a cornerstone of modern Japanese culture were themselves

[1] Sakaue Yasuhiro, "The Historical Creation of Kendo's Self-Image from 1895 to 1942: A Critical Analysis of an Invented Tradition," *Martial Arts Studies 6*, (2018): 11, doi.org/10.18573/mas.66.
[2] Alexander Bennett, *Kendo: Culture of the Sword* (University of California Press, 2015), xxxv.

an "invented tradition" of the nineteenth century alongside kendo.[3] They fuel ideas of Japanese essentialism that claim that the virtues codified in bushido explain the nature of modern Japanese society. These purported traditions from which kendo claims its origins are also notably masculine and perpetuate the idea that the "Japanese spirit" that bushido embodies is the result of the male samurai who codified it.[4]

However, there are many aspects of the modern practice of kendo that contradict this emphasis on tradition, particularly its inclusion of women. My mother began practicing kendo in Japan in 1974. At the time, the Japanese Women's Liberation movement was in full swing. Many young women, including my mother, witnessed an increase in women's participation in kendo and other martial arts, both in the context of physical education and on a higher level. Now 57, she continues to practice, compete, and teach kendo across the United States. I particularly remember a demonstration that she led at the Japanese Festival in St. Louis when she explained to an unfamiliar crowd that kendo is a "feminist sport" because men and women are able to practice and compete alongside and against one another. In a world where women's sports are often segregated and demeaned, she believes that a level playing field can be found in kendo. To her, there are few physiological differences that give any significant advantage to one sex. This view sharply contradicts kendo's traditional milieu that noticeably excludes women. It also overlooks the fact that even today, the institutions and culture surrounding kendo continue to limit women's roles and advancement. No woman has ever been awarded the highest possible rank, and administrative positions are often filled by men. This discrepancy inspired an inquiry into how the purported masculinity of kendo was challenged by the wave of feminism that took place in the 1960s and 1970s, as my mother began practicing kendo. Essentially, I explore why she and other female practitioners of that generation might view their participation in kendo as feminist agency. From the testimony of female *kendoka* and the rhetoric promoting the participation of women in martial arts in the 1960s and 1970s, women's increased participation in kendo was



Figure 1. Photo provided by Author.

[3] Inoue Shun, "The Invention of Martial Arts: Kano Jigoro and Kodokan Judo," in *Mirror of Modernity: Invented Traditions of Modern Japan,* ed. Stephen Vlastos (University of California Press, 1998), 164.
[4] Carol Gluck, "The Invention of Edo," in *Mirror of Modernity: Invented Traditions of Modern Japan,* ed. Stephen Vlastos (University of California Press, 1998), 278.

a manifestation of the social change promoted by the Japanese Women's Liberation Movement. Although the masculine identity of kendo continues to limit female kendoka, feminist advancements of the 1960s and 1970s enabled more women to confront these socially ingrained and invented masculine traditions through their increased participation and expansion of opportunities for women in kendo.

The Origins And Invention Of Kendo As Masculine

Kendo is an invented and reinvented tradition. While forms of swordsmanship practice were present for centuries, like many other invented traditions of the 19th century, kendo underwent major transformations in the Meiji Era (1868-1912) that standardized and codified it as a hallmark of Japanese culture, heritage, and national identity. This self-image of kendo as a "national sport" sparked further reinvention to preserve and standardize the practice of kendo as a tradition.[5] These "traditions" which invoke images of medieval and early modern samurai culture have shaped and continue to shape modern kendo practice in a fashion that is deeply intertwined with national identity and masculinity. Eventually, kendo became synonymous with Japanese militarism upon Japan's entrance into World War II and, in 1945, upon Japan's defeat, was banned by occupation authorities. Kendo's link to samurai culture and warfare, and the invented traditions that perpetuate this image, invoke a romanticized masculine identity of an imagined past.[6] The images of masculinity present in all stages of kendo's development live on in the collective memory of modern kendo practitioners from the late 20th century to today, even as its militarism was deliberately washed away during the occupation and participation was opened to women.

The origins of kendo provide insight into the imagined past that modern practice seeks to emulate. Schools of martial arts that focused on swordsmanship developed as early as the Muromachi Era (1336-1573), but rather than practicing combat, it was framed more as an art form, even though samurai actually engaged in combat at the time. It mainly consisted of *kata*, or choreographed sets of movements and strikes.[7] With the onset of the peace of the Tokugawa Era (1601-1868), samurai were further disconnected from combat, but the practice of *kenjutsu,* a more codified form of swordsmanship practice, matured and became deeply intertwined with the samurai identity. It still consisted mainly of kata, but incorporated philosophy, spirituality, and a cultivation of the self as central to its doctrines.[8] Thus, the initial development of the practice of swordsmanship was quite detached from soldiery and focused mainly on the aesthetics and philosophy of the practice. The image of medieval and early modern samurai that is often invoked in modern kendo practice aestheticizes a kind of violence that never existed in kendo's origins.

[5] Sakaue, "Kendo's Self-Image," 21.
[6] Kate Sylvester, *Women and Martial Art in Japan* (Routledge, 2023), 56.
[7] Bennett, "Kendo," 44.
[8] Bennett, "Kendo," 57.

However, kenjutsu also holds a long history of reinvention even prior to the Meiji Era. In the late 17th century, kenjutsu was reinvented to resemble a sport through an emphasis on fencing in response to the perceived impracticality of the practice and a desire to reconnect with genuine warfare.[9] The bamboo *shinai* and protective armor that is similar to today's standardized kendo armor came into popular use at this time. The invention and reinvention of kenjutsu is full of contradictions, but all seek a stronger connection with an imagined past. For instance, although the "sportification" of kenjutsu sought to better simulate genuine warfare, it popularized the use of blunt swords and protective armor, which sparked debate over how best to emulate real mortal combat in training. Bamboo swords and protective equipment, in some schools' perspectives, diluted the sparring. Each perspective emphasizes the preservation of a martial past of pre-Tokugawa samurai engaging in genuine combat. The practice of kenjutsu was a method through which men, both of samurai and non-samurai status, could connect with violence and warfare in a society that was increasingly removed from it.

The 1868 Meiji Restoration further disconnected samurai from combat with the dissolution of the samurai as a status group and the adoption of Western-style military forms. Like many aspects of Japanese culture at the time, kendo was intentionally standardized and affixed to the new Japanese national identity. Although the carrying of swords was banned, kenjutsu was repurposed rather than dissolved. In particular, the Meiji government promoted it as a method of physical training for police.[10] The invention of modern kendo can be credited to the establishment of the Dai-Nippon Butokukai, an organization that sought to standardize swordsmanship practices throughout Japan in 1895.[11] This organization was also responsible for the name change from kenjutsu to kendo. Altering the suffix from *-jutsu*, denoting skills and techniques, to *-do,* meaning "the way of," was meant to indicate a deeper philosophical and self-cultivating purpose in the practice of swordsmanship.[12] According to the Dai-Nippon Butokukai, kendo was necessary for the development of one's "samurai personality." In 1926, Hiromichi Nishikubo, Vice President of the Butokukai, claimed, "When one trains in kendo, handed down from our ancestors, one naturally fosters one's bushido spirit and its dignity, and it is natural that one realizes our country's national virtues, such as ancestor worship, loyalty and patriotism, the spirit of martyrdom and sacrifice, and the like."[13] The "bushido spirit" which Hiromichi mentions is an invented tradition of the Meiji Era that seeks to emulate European notions of chivalry to demonstrate the superiority of Japanese masculinity to the West.[14] The Dai-Nippon Butokukai invented kendo through standardization across the nation while claiming ancient descent and an association with "national virtues" that were largely invented by the Meiji

[9] Bennett, "Kendo," 73.
[10] Bennett, "Kendo," 102.
[11] Sakaue, "Kendo's Self-Image," 12.
[12] Sakaue, "Kendo's Self-Image," 15.
[13] Sakaue, "Kendo's Self-Image," 16.
[14] Sylvester, "Women and Martial Arts," 65.

government. These bushido virtues included martial and masculine bravery in the face of mortality. Despite its historical disconnect with mortal combat, masculinity had become deeply ingrained in the practice of kendo and was now institutionally codified as such.

As Western culture was increasingly incorporated in everyday life during the Taisho Era (1912-1926), kendo gained prevalence in youth physical education. It was a useful tool to instill a sense of Japaneseness in a society where youth were raised surrounded by Western culture. Kendo's association with bushido virtues of bravery and loyalty was also useful in a time of increased militarization of the early Showa Era (1926-1989). The Ministry of Education increasingly promoted the incorporation of kendo into the physical education programs of primary schools.[15] Kendo's popularity among older students for extracurricular sports purposes, according to militarists and ultranationalists, led to a deterioration of kendo's philosophical purposes and was the manifestation of the perceived Western corruption of Japanese martial arts.[16] Military and government officials made efforts not only to reemphasize a cultivation of the "Japanese spirit" and patriotism, but also to make kendo more practical for combat. For instance, matches were no longer *sanbon-shobu*, best of three points, but *ippon-shobu*, best of one point, to reflect real combat in physical education settings.[17] While kendo was compulsory for boys in year 5 and above, girls were given the option of participating in *naginata*, another martial art traditionally practiced by women using a polearm weapon.[18] By 1941, all aspects of society, including education, were dedicated to the war effort, and kendo education became completely militarized. Students were essentially trained to fight to the death. The virtues of bushido were construed as solely martial virtues of the nation. With the banning of kendo during the American occupation, its post-occupation revival attempted to sterilize the militaristic values out of kendo, but kendo's role in physical education persisted after the end of the occupation and continues in modern kendo practice today.

With the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers' ban on kendo, the sport of *shinai-kyogi* was created to more closely resemble the sport of Western fencing. All allusions to the Japanese spirit and militaristic rhetoric were absent in official descriptions and documentations to appeal to occupation authorities. Notably, the sport was explicitly promoted for both men and women.[19] This may have been a concession to occupation authorities' push for women's rights, or perhaps the absence of militarism made shinai-kyogi appear to be more suitable for women than militaristic kendo.[20] In either case, for the first time, women were now openly encouraged to participate in Japanese fencing as a sport rather than a martial art.

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[15] Bennett, "Kendo," 130.
[16] Bennett, "Kendo," 132.
[17] Bennett, "Kendo," 161.
[18] Bennett, "Kendo," 144.
[19] Bennett, "Kendo," 169.
[20] Sylvester, "Women and Martial Arts," 4.

Feminism And The Female Body

The absence of women in the development of kenjutsu reflects the gender dynamics of Tokugawa samurai households in which women's actions were highly restricted, while women of other classes were mostly free to work both productively and domestically alongside men.[21] In the Meiji Era, as kendo simultaneously became codified as an embodiment of national martial virtues, so too did the role of women under the Meiji doctrine of *ryōsai kenbo*, or "good wife, wise mother." Although this promoted education for girls, women were institutionally prescribed and confined to child-rearing and domestic labor as a service to the modernizing nation. Women were not legally recognized persons under the 1898 Meiji Civil Code, and this political and social subordination quickly became deeply ingrained in Japanese institutions and culture for the following century. To combat these lasting effects, throughout the twentieth century, diverse versions of feminism emerged with different perspectives and actions on the liberation of women's minds and bodies. These culminated in the Women's Liberation Movement of the 1960s and 1970s, which sparked broader social change through organized collective action. For the purposes of exploring feminist influence on kendo, this research will focus mainly on the liberation of women's bodies, including labor rights, child rearing, reproductive rights, and public participation in sports and martial arts.



Figure 2. A shinai-kyogi match in 1953. Bennett, "Kendo," 169.

Beginning in the early twentieth century, feminists challenged Meiji doctrine intellectually, largely through publications and lectures. In 1911, Hiratsuka Raicho, a highly educated and upper-class early feminist, founded the *Bluestocking* literary journal, in which she established herself and her contemporaries as "New Women" who sought freedom of individual expression in poetic form.[22] *Bluestocking* spoke on a number of gender issues, and particularly examined the role of women as mothers and the question of choice in taking on that role through the discussion of birth control and abortion. Yet, as another early feminist Yamakawa Kikue alludes in a 1912 lecture on women's rights, feminist rhetoric is not enough to dismantle socially ingrained subordination:

[21] Wm. Theodore de Bary, Carol Gluck, & Arthur E. Tiedemann, *Sources of Japanese Tradition, Abridged: Part 2: 1868 to 2000* (Columbia University Press, 2006), 474.
[22] Vera Mackie, *Feminism in Modern Japan* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 45-46.

> There are many men who appear to be allies of women and speak on women's issues and argue for equal rights and equal status for women. But you must not be taken in facilely. Many of them, when they leave their homes, become allies and friends of women, but take a look at their households to see how they behave at home. They turn into tyrannical princes and treat their wives and daughters as slaves.[23]

The New Women, although they attempted to enact political change, such as the struggle for women's suffrage, were largely unsuccessful outside of the library of feminist literature they produced.[24] However, their rhetoric was quite influential in sparking a broader public questioning of Meiji-prescribed gender roles, especially with the dawn of the Taisho Era, and their legacy lived on in the memory of future feminists.[25]

Another contrasting version of feminism of the early 20th century is often not thought of as feminism at all and is often absent from surveys of modern Japanese feminism. Often compared to her American flapper girl contemporaries, the 1920s Modern Girl phenomenon demonstrates feminist agency through bodily action rather than intellectual feminist rhetoric. The Modern Girl, although perhaps exaggerated by media and fiction, was characterized by her transgressions across gender, class, and cultural lines. She smoked, drank, was sexually and physically aggressive, fraternized with men, and consumed Western culture, all in a public setting.[26] However, unlike her New Woman counterpart, her actions were not collective nor highly intellectual. Rather than discuss the life they envisioned for a modern woman, they simply lived it. Among journalists and feminist critics, opinions on the Modern Girl were scattered.[27] Some viewed the Modern Girl as the next generation of Japanese women, while others viewed her as the embodiment of the deterioration of traditional Japanese society. Nonetheless, the modern girl phenomenon of the 1920s provides an intriguing parallel for the second wave of feminism four decades later. The militant action and bodily autonomy that she pioneered would later be intellectually explored and physically embodied in the Women's Liberation Movement, especially through increased participation in martial arts.

While feminist action persisted through the war and the occupation, the next major wave of Japanese feminism would come in the 1960s and 1970s. The Japanese Women's Liberation Movement was largely born out of dissatisfaction with the political agenda of the New Left in post-occupation Japan. Although many women were active protestors in the *Anpo* anti-treaty protest of 1960 and the student protests later in the decade, they held a marginal role within New Left

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[23] Bary et al., *Sources of Japanese Tradition,* 486.
[24] Mackie, *Feminism,* 64.
[25] Ikeda Keiko, "From Ryōsai-kembo to Nadeshiko: Women and Sports in Japan," in *Routledge Handbook of Sport, Gender, and Sexuality*, ed. J. Hargreaves and E. Anderson (Routledge, 2014), 99.
[26] Miriam Silverberg, "The Modern Girl as Militant," in *Recreating Japanese Women, 1600-1945,* ed. Gail Lee Bernstein (University of California Press, 1991), 249.
[27] Silverberg, "The Modern Girl, 240.

organizations, which were largely ignorant of gender issues.[28] The subsequent women's activists, organizations, publications, and demonstrations that arose not only sought greater political and social freedom, but also the liberation of women's bodies. This included sexual liberation, reproductive freedom, and overall freedom from societal expectations of female physical behavior.

Like the New Women before them, the Women's Liberation Movement turned to publications and organizations to discuss and debate feminist ideas. Organizations like the Asian Women's Conference and Agora discussed and debated the forms of oppression that continued to plague Japanese women despite gaining suffrage in 1945. Agora specifically focused on the conflicts surrounding working mothers and the limited ability for housewives to take an active role in society.[29] Several feminist journals also emerged for intellectual and theoretical feminist discussion, and some feminist organizations engaged in small-scale political demonstrations. Tanaka Mitsu, a member of the Fighting Women organization, discusses the liberation of women's bodies in her publications, not only in the context of sexual liberation but also in terms of casual behavior. She reflects on her own trained body language as a result of sexist oppression:

> I had just been involved with the women's liberation movement for only a short time and would generally sit on the floor with my legs crossed. However, when an attractive man walked into the room, I found myself sitting 'properly' with my legs tucked under me. I'm not exactly saying that crossed legs equals 'revolutionary', and sitting properly equals reactionary … but behind my changing from sitting comfortable to sitting properly was (another) self who wanted to be seen as 'feminine' by men.[30]

The Women's Liberation Movement's reflections on the liberation of the body laid the intellectual framework for the physical liberation of women as caregivers, workers, and active individuals. While activists often garnered ridicule from mass media, the mass visibility of the Women's Liberation movement was influential in sparking genuine political and social change in the late 1970s, which contributed significantly to women's increased participation in kendo.[31]

Women In Martial Arts And Gender Transgressions

Women's participation in martial arts throughout the 20th century mirrors the evolution of feminism. The extent to which women saw their participation in kendo as feminist agency depends on the extent to which they viewed their actions as a gender transgression. Early female kendoka of the pre-occupation era viewed themselves as tomboys, a colloquial term to describe women whose personality is explicitly masculine, and sometimes forsake their femininity to embrace this label. They viewed themselves similarly to the Modern Girl, although their gender transgressions were far less scrutinized in popular media, likely because they were so few in number. They did not view their gender

[28] Mackie, *Feminism,* 147.
[29] Mackie, *Feminism,* 151.
[30] Mackie, *Feminism,* 157.
[31] Mackie, *Feminism,* 156.

transgressions as an explicitly feminist gender transgression in the same way that the Modern Girl is not traditionally viewed as feminist. As a result, they were less likely to view kendo as a feminist sport and more likely to view it simply as a sport. However, the context of the Women's Liberation Movement gave women's participation a deeper meaning, and a significant increase in the participation of women is evident in the establishment of various female student kendo tournaments, local martial arts classes for women and girls, and the All-Japan Women's Kendo Competition in 1962.[32]

Besides the highly mythologized female warriors of ancient Japan, typical women have been involved in martial arts since as early as the Tokugawa era, when women of samurai status practiced *naginata,* fencing with a halberd, as a form of self-defense and self-cultivation of womanly virtues.[33] It was a combination of firearms superseding the naginata as the superior battlefield weapon in the 15th century and the association with women of samurai status that branded the naginata as a feminine weapon thereafter.[34] Since then, it has been typical for young girls to be trained in naginata in physical education, although it has never been as culturally dominant or competitive as kendo. Because the femininity of naginata has long been culturally ingrained, women's participation in this martial art was not seen as a transgression across gender lines but a reinforcement of feminine virtues.

Several extraordinary women were documented to have begun practicing kendo prior to the occupation supposedly opening up kendo to women. These women pioneered women's kendo and provided a beacon for aspiring female students of kendo as it became popularized for women. However, they did not necessarily view their participation in kendo as feminist agency, but rather as masculine and tomboyish. Before occupation, participation was largely limited to the daughters of male kendoka. One example of this lived experience is Kobayashi Setsuko, the daughter of a highly acclaimed kendo instructor. She began practicing at the age of five in 1943 alongside her father's male students and her three sisters.[35] Despite having three sisters, Kobayashi described her upbringing as a "male environment" in an interview with a women's kendo magazine, reflecting the perception of kendo as masculine at the time.[36] At the age of 27, she halted her training to raise her children between 1965 and 1975.[37] Upon her return, she continued training and teaching kendo, particularly attracting female students who sought her advice, though not by her own promotion.[38] When asked to reflect on her experiences as a female kendoka, she makes little reference to any unique experiences as a result of her sex.[39]

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[32] Sylvester, *Women and Martial Arts,* 72.
[33] Sylvester, *Women and Martial Arts,* 57.
[34] Sylvester, *Women and Martial Arts,* 62.
[35] Kobayashi Setsuko, "Pioneers of Women's Kendo Interview: Kobayashi Setsuko," *Fine Ladies Kendo Worldwide*, 1 (Spring 2021): 13.
[36] Kobayashi, "Pioneers of Women's Kendo," 6.
[37] Sylvester, *Women and Martial Arts,* 77.
[38] Kobayashi, "Pioneers of Women's Kendo," 8.
[39] Kobayashi, "Pioneers of Women's Kendo," 7.

One exception to the pattern of daughters participating in pre-war kendo, Takano Hatsue became the first woman to pass the seventh-*dan* ranking (out of eight possible rankings) in 1966.[40] She began practicing in 1932 after discovering kendo at a girls' youth group where local adults taught the girls skills and sport activities.[41] As her contemporary Takizawa Kenji describes, "I don't know how Hatsue sensei came to take up kendo, but it is unlikely that girls would have taken up the sport in an organized way … I imagine that she was given a shinai, and was asked 'wanna try?' as this tomboy girl showed full curiosity."[42] As the daughter of a widowed father with three younger brothers, she was the only woman in her family, which her contemporaries believe contributed to her masculine identity.[43] Her extraordinary skill granted her a spot as the only woman in an elite kendo training academy at 17 years old.[44] She continued to train and compete until she passed the seventh-dan examination, during which she sustained a debilitating knee injury, but her achievement was lauded on national television.[45] While these women became role models to future generations of female kendoka, they did not seem to think of their actions as an advancement of women's liberation, but as a manifestation of their own masculine upbringing or "tomboy" nature.



Figure 3. Kobayashi Setsuko at age five in 1942 practicing militant kendo among junior high school boys. Kobayashi, "Pioneers of Women's Kendo," 7.

[40] Sylvester, *Women in Martial Arts,* 76.
[41] Robin Jakuen, "Revisiting a Legend: Takano Hatsue," *Fine Ladies Kendo Worldwide,* Autumn 2021, 53.
[42] Jakuen, "Revisiting a Legend," 54.
[43] Jakuen, "Revisiting a Legend," 54.
[44] Jakuen, "Revisiting a Legend," 54.
[45] Jakuen, "Revisiting a Legend," 58.

In the context of the Women's Liberation Movement, the popularization of kendo for women became explicitly feminist. Although the Women's Liberation Movement was scrutinized in the mass media, women who began practicing kendo in the 1960s and 1970s were still influenced by the mass visibility of the movement at home and the coinciding Women's Liberation Movement in other capitalist democracies. This is reflected by media rhetoric surrounding girls' participation in martial arts in schools. In 1966, *The Japan Times* covered the physical education martial arts activities of a Tokyo girls' junior and senior high school, asserting that "learning the martial arts is not a monopoly of men any longer. Modern young women are taking it up to train themselves physically and also as a means of self-defense."[46] After detailing their training regimen of judo, *aikido*, naginata, and Western fencing, the *Times* mentions that although kendo is the newest martial art to be introduced, it garnered the most participants by far.[47] The nature of kendo as a militaristic indoctrination tool and its long ingrained masculine tradition was still alive in the collective memory of the 1960s. Thus, although martial arts were "opened to women" upon the beginning of occupation, these young women were still aware of their actions as gender transgressions. These transgressions were now performed as a collective in a female setting, such as an all-girls school, rather than as a tomboyish individual. In other words, they brought femininity to the practice of kendo. Within the context of the Women's Liberation Movement's rhetoric surrounding the liberation of female bodies, it is clear that these women viewed their participation in kendo as feminist agency.



Figure 4. Takano Hatsue, often described as "well-built and large in stature" at 160cm tall. Jakuen, "Revisiting a Legend," 53.

Interestingly, a 1973 *Japan Times* article on foreign women in Tokyo's participation in martial arts further demonstrates the influence of the multiple Women's Liberation Movements in other capitalist democracies at the time. The article reads as both a highlight and a promotional advertisement, featuring the testimony of mostly American women in Tokyo participating in a variety of martial arts classes, including naginata and kendo, of which kendo is practiced the most often. However, the

[46] "Accent on Martial Arts for Girls," *Japan Times*, November 16, 1966, 10.
[47] "Accent on Martial Arts," 10.

article claims that in the Edo Period, women would often engage in naginata combat with male kendo practitioners, prompting a Western spectator to ask the open-ended question: "Do you suppose they had women's lib in this country long before we did?"[48] Although the article makes this claim with novelty rather than a historical basis, the reactions of Westerners demonstrate a similar association with the Women's Liberation Movement as female Japanese students. The image of women with naginata sparring men with shinai invokes a sense of explicitly feminine power physically dueling masculinity. The liberation of women's bodies in this context prompts them to compare this action with the contemporary Women's Liberation Movement, which was highly visible in Western capitalist democratic nations.



Figure 5. Foreign women practicing naginata at a martial arts class in Tokyo, 1973. "Martial Arts Popular Among Foreign Women," Japan Times, October 21, 1973, 8.

[48] "Martial Arts Popular Among Foreign Women," *Japan Times,* October 21, 1973, 8.

This influence is made explicit in the testimony from female kendoka of later generations. Maeda Shinko, born in 1949, was not the daughter of a kendoka, but joined her high school kendo club of her own accord. In the first of a series of articles published in the *Kendo Nippon* magazine from 1991-1992, Maeda details how she became involved in kendo as the Women's Liberation Movement took hold in the 1960s. She cites the first All Japan Women's Kendo Championship in 1962 as the beginning of the history of women's kendo.[49] She recalls entering high school and joining the kendo club despite the fact that "kendo was very much a men's sport" with only four high schools in the prefecture hosting female members.[50] Maeda was able to participate in the National High School Kendo Championships, and claims, "These experiences were only possible because of this period," likely referring to the period in which women's kendo and Women's Liberation found their starts[51] After graduation, Maeda entered the academic world, researching kendo and gender dynamics inspired by her experiences of gender inequality as a female kendoka. Maeda has published a library of literature on kendo, including the *Women's Kendo Instruction Handbook,* in which she discusses the various challenges modern women face in kendo and provides guidance for navigating these challenges. In one section, the book focuses on marriage and motherhood as common disruptions in women's kendo journeys.[52] Throughout the book, she emphasizes the fact that women's kendo should harness femininity, both physically and behaviorally, rather than try to suppress it.[53] In an interview with a women's kendo magazine, she states, "Throughout Japan's long history, kendo originated as a male martial art and has been influenced by this historical background more strongly than in other sports. It is therefore a world that is difficult for women to enter, because men have a strong sense that they are supposed to be superior."[54] Although she acknowledges the historical precedent of masculinity in kendo, her persistence and success demonstrate a desire to challenge these precedents for herself and for women as a collective, which is characteristic of the feminism promoted by the Women's



Figure 6. Maeda wearing white armor at the first All-Japan University Women's Kendo Championships in 1967, which she won. Maeda, "Pioneers of Women's Kendo," 7.

[49] Maeda, Shinko, *Women's Kendo Instruction Handbook*, trans. Kazuyo Matsuda (Bunkasha International Corporation, 2025), 29.
[50] Maeda, *Women's Kendo,* 29.
[51] Maeda, *Women's Kendo* 29.
[52] Maeda Shinko, "Pioneers of Women's Kendo Interview: Maeda Shinko," *Fine Ladies Kendo Worldwide*, 3 (Spring 2022): 6-7.
[53] Maeda, *Women's Kendo,* 32.
[54] Maeda, "Pioneers of Women's Kendo," 6.

Liberation Movement. She brings an unapologetically female perspective to kendo and kendo research, evident in her signature white uniform and armor. White is a common color for women's uniforms, and she expresses her individuality and femininity through her more unique white armor. Her explicit acknowledgement and reflection on women's experiences in kendo and her attempts to uplift other women through their challenges differs from the attitudes of the preceding generation and reflects a strong influence of the Women's Liberation Movement during which she began her kendo journey.

Persisting Traditions And Gender Inequality Today

There is much debate among kendo scholars regarding gender inequality in kendo today, the most glaring of which is the issue of eighth-dan. The ranking and promotion system in kendo is meant to be highly standardized, especially now as kendo is being propagated worldwide. Although the ranking system has historically gone to the tenth degree, it is now and forever only possible to achieve up to eighth-dan. However, despite many attempts, no woman has ever passed the examination for eighth-dan. Alexander Bennett, a scholar of Japanese history and male kendoka, argues that it is unlikely for a woman to achieve eighth-dan because the physical power of women decreases at a faster rate than men after the age of 40, when candidates become eligible to test.[55] Kate Sylvester, a scholar of gender and martial arts and a female kendoka, denounces this argument and claims that the lack of female eighth-dan is the result of culturally ingrained conservative gender norms, particularly in the beliefs held by the older male eighth-dan sensei who judge the examinations.[56]

Another significant issue in women's kendo today is the balancing of domestic life with kendo. Women are often expected to quit kendo after marriage and while raising children, which harkens back to the societal policing of women's bodies and the double bind of career and domestic labor.[57] Although this practice has declined in recent years, this issue reflects the persistence of prescribed domestic duties for women. Thus, it is difficult for women to continue practicing kendo as they age and become eligible for higher ranks. However, publications like *Fine Ladies Women's Kendo* and Maeda's *Women's Kendo Instruction Handbook* offer women advice on how to continue practicing through and past child-rearing and careers. These issues reflect the persistence of the invented masculine traditions ingrained in the history of kendo. However, women continue to recognize and attempt to combat these traditions through intellectual discussion and agentic action. The issue of women's eighth-dan will continue to be challenged until it is achieved. Women of my mother's generation instill the values of feminist agentic action in the next generation through their instruction and mentorship, and thus the legacy of the Japanese Women's Liberation movement will live on in a more integrated and equal kendo community.

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[55] Bennett, *Kendo,* xxxiv.
[56] Sylvester, *Women and Martial Arts,* 80-81.
[57] Maeda, "Pioneers of Women's Kendo," 6-7.

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The Right to Read: Literacy, Slavery, and the Fight for Freedom in Early Virginia

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ABSTRACT

In early America, literacy was more than a basic skill; it was a marker of power, privilege, and, most importantly, freedom. While the Founding Fathers celebrated education as essential to liberty, the new nation simultaneously denied it to the hundreds of thousands it enslaved. Colonial Virginia, the birthplace of both American ideals and chattel slavery, makes this tension visible as Enlightenment rhetoric, economic dependence on enslaved labor, and Christian duty collided. Events such as Gabriel's Conspiracy, the Haitian Revolution, and Nat Turner's Rebellion exposed the profound threat that educated people of color posed to the foundations of slaveholding society. Primary sources, including runaway advertisements, racially motivated legislation, and correspondence among colonial elites, reveal how the spread of knowledge was carefully regulated. Although most surviving documents were produced by white authorities, they inadvertently reveal the power attributed with written knowledge. Drawing on both primary sources and recent historical scholarship, this project argues that restrictions on enslaved literacy were not incidental but central to maintaining the ideological and economic foundations of slavery in the Revolutionary era and the early republic.

In early America, spanning the colonial period through the early republic, the ability to read and write was more than a basic skill; it was a gateway to power, autonomy, and freedom. While the Founding Fathers proclaimed education as essential to liberty, the new nation simultaneously denied it to the hundreds of thousands it enslaved. This contradiction reveals a central paradox from the 1760s to the 1830s, in which freedom relied on the subjugation and enforced ignorance of others. Using Virginia as a case study, home to over 40% of the enslaved population in the United States, reveals how Enlightenment rhetoric, economic dependence on enslaved labor, and Christian ideology collided to shape attitudes toward Black literacy.[1] To trace these dynamics, this study primarily draws on documents produced by white Virginians, such as political writings, legislation, runaway advertisements, and trial records. While these sources are deeply shaped by the biases of enslavers and cannot be read as neutral accounts, they provide

[1] Edmund S. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom*: *The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (W. W. Norton, 1975), 5-6.

insight into understanding how power was constructed, justified, and enforced through literacy restrictions. Building on existing scholarship on slavery, education, and resistance, this paper traces how literacy in Virginia became increasingly restricted over time, arguing that it functioned both as a tool of oppression enforced by the white elite and as a means of empowerment for enslaved communities. Repression and resistance converged most dramatically in Nat Turner's Rebellion, where religious interpretation, literacy, and revolt intersected, revealing the profound threat that intellectual autonomy among enslaved Americans posed to the foundations of slaveholding society.

At the heart of Colonial Virginia lay Enlightenment thinkers united under ideals of reason, natural rights, and human equality. However, these notions of human progress fueled a racialized understanding of intelligence that justified the exclusion of Black Americans from education. The Enlightenment's urge to categorize through the guise of the scientific method placed "things, phenomena, and experiences into their proper place,"[2] allowing human beings to be arranged into hierarchical groups. As a result, Enlightenment language became a tool to rationalize restrictions on enslaved literacy. This is evident in the elite perspective presented in Thomas Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia* from 1785. He argued through "suspicion only" that Black people were "inferior to the whites in the endowments of both body and mind."[3] Framed as empirical observation, Jefferson claimed enslaved communities had been observed for a century and a half, and even after "mixture with whites," their alleged inferiority could not be attributed solely to "their condition of life."[4] He further suggested that these supposed differences posed a "powerful obstacle" to emancipation.[5] While Jefferson masked his racism in the language of scientific inquiry, his views represented only one strand of a broader plantation society. Many enslavers did not rely on moral or intellectual justification, but instead on government-supported systems that preserved their economic and social power.[6] Restricting literacy became central to this effort, as preventing enslaved people from accessing Enlightenment texts helped suppress resistance. In this way, Jefferson's arguments functioned alongside a larger system of policies and practices that controlled who could read, learn, and ultimately claim freedom.

In practice, this goal was realized through religious institutions that framed literacy as a means of moral discipline and religious indoctrination rather than empowerment or autonomy. A particularly revealing example is the founding of the Williamsburg Bray School in 1760. Trustees such as Robert Carter Nicholas, an elite Anglican and respected Burgess, doubted the intellectual

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[2] Annette Gordon-Reed, "The Enlightenment in Early America," *William & Mary Law Review* 66, no. 3 (2025): 678, https://scholarship.law.wm.edu/wmlr/vol66/iss3/3.

[3] Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, (Philadelphia: Prichard and Hall, 1787), 141, https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/service/gdc/lhbcb/04902/04902.pdf.

[4] Ibid., 139.

[5] Ibid., 142.

[6] Gordon-Reed, "The Enlightenment in Early America," 681.

capacity of Black students.[7] In a 1762 letter from co-trustees Nicholas and Reverend William Yates to Reverend John Warring, they express how pleased they were "with the Scholars' Performances, as they rather exceeded our expectations."[8] Behind this language lay racial assumptions of intelligence that underestimated the ability of Black children. Further revealing their intentions, they present the school as a charitable effort meant to improve enslaved children's "happiness" through religious teaching, while also making them more "handy & useful" to their enslavers.[9] Thus, the trustees' goals primarily centered around fostering "better" servants while fearing that too much learning might threaten the social order. They warn that expanding the "understandings of negroes" might make them "more impatient of their slavery" and increase the likelihood of rebellion.[10] In response to widespread anxiety and the controversial nature of educating enslaved people, Yates and Nicholas defend the benefits of granting Black children a Christian education through a regulated structure.

Religious frameworks within the Bray School also aimed to provide Black children with a Eurocentric and sanitized Christian education. As part of this system, the curriculum required students to be "faithful & obedient to their Masters,"[11] and they were closely monitored in their behavior, appearance, and daily routines. Yet, even within these constraints, families found ways to use schooling as a means of resistance. Yates and Nicholas observed that parents recognized the value of education and sometimes enrolled children for practical reasons rather than strictly spiritual ones. They note that several enslaved parents removed their children from school "so soon as they began to read," before they could fully benefit from "Principles of Christianity."[12] Enslaved parents strategically sent their children to the Bray School, not to receive religious instruction, but rather to escape plantation labor and learn how to read. In the Bray School's fourteen-year history, it had a significant impact in enabling self-liberation through literacy since "as many as four hundred scholars, if not more, received biblical instruction through letters."[13] Despite this wide reach, enslaved students were granted limited access to literacy for reading religious doctrines, while writing remained largely restricted to free and elite whites, reinforcing racial hierarchies and social boundaries.

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[7] Antonio T. Bly, "In Pursuit of Letters: A History of the Bray Schools for Enslaved Children in Colonial Virginia," *History of Education Quarterly* 51, no. 4 (November 2011): 429–459, https://www.jstor.org/stable/41303896.

[8] William Yates and Robert Carter Nicholas, letter to Rev. John Waring, September 30, 1762, *William & Mary Bray School Records Project*, William & Mary Libraries, https://digital.libraries.wm.edu/robert-c-nicholas-william-yates-bray-associates-september-30-1762.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Bly, "In Pursuit of Letters," 446.

As literacy expanded and print culture continued to grow in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, slaveholders increasingly associated education with rebellion. News surrounding moments of collective resistance, such as the Stono Rebellion, Haitian Revolution, and Nat Turner's Rebellion, now had the ability to spread across plantations via the written word. All led by literate individuals, these events heightened white anxieties that education could foster political awareness and organized resistance. However, compared to reading, writing "was almost invariably perceived by southern slaveholders as intrinsically dangerous,"[14] because it enabled communication, record-keeping, and the circulation of ideas. While reading could be framed as a tool of religious discipline, writing represented a far more threatening form of intellectual autonomy. This distinction reveals how literacy operated both as empowerment and as "a means of social control,"[15] depending on who possessed it and for what purpose. When examining this access to education, it is important to ask not only "what is being read," but, more crucially, "who is doing the writing?"[16] By restricting writing for enslaved people, white authorities sought to prevent students from documenting their own experiences. As a result, the white elite class remained the sole producers of knowledge, print culture, and written records, reinforcing their control over historical memory and intellectual authority.

[14] Jennifer E. Monaghan, "Reading for the Enslaved, Writing for the Free: Reflections on Liberty and Literacy," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 108, no. 2 (1998): 309, https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=31h&AN=44525153&site=eds-live&scope=site.

[15] Ibid., 310.

[16] Ibid., 311.

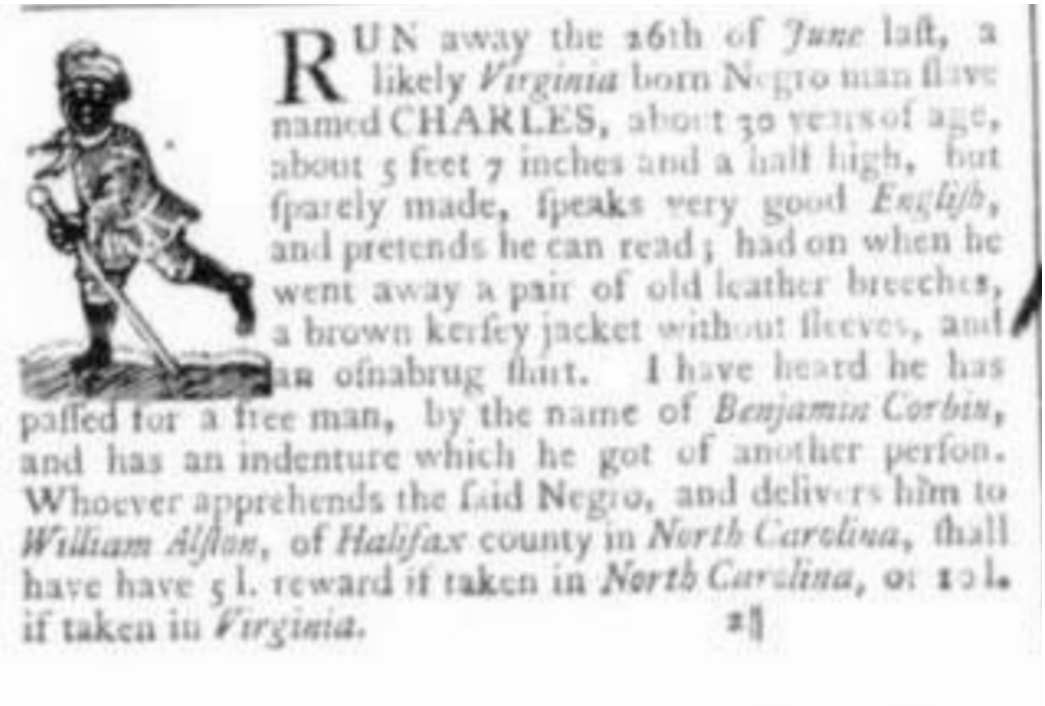

RUN away the 26th of *June* last, a likely *Virginia* born Negro man slave named CHARLES, about 30 years of age, about 5 feet 7 inches and a half high, but sparely made, speaks very good *English*, and pretends he can read; had on when he went away a pair of old leather breeches, a brown kersey jacket without sleeves, and an osnabrug shirt. I have heard he has passed for a free man, by the name of *Benjamin Corbin*, and has an indenture which he got of another person. Whoever apprehends the said Negro, and delivers him to *William Alston*, of *Halifax* county in *North Carolina*, shall have have 5 l. reward if taken in *North Carolina*, or 10 l. if taken in *Virginia*.

Figure 1. Advertisement from the Virginia Gazette, "Pretends He Can Read," August 15, 1766, via History Commons.

Despite white efforts to control the written record, literacy continued to serve as a powerful means of self-liberation. One example is seen in Figure 1, showing a *Virginia Gazette* runaway advertisement dated August 15, 1766.[17] Printed in Williamsburg for Virginia's elite readership, the notice reflects how enslaved people were cataloged by height, age, and physical traits to assert ownership. These descriptions reduced individuals to property that could be identified, tracked, and returned. Notably, the advertisement claims that Charles "pretends he can read" and had passed under a false name.[18] This attempt to redefine his identity and claim literacy symbolized characteristics associated with freedom. Skills such as reading, speaking "very good English,"[19] or forging handwritten travel passes required for Black Virginians communicated intellectual ability and autonomy. However, for enslavers, literacy represented a direct threat to their authority and a potential pathway to liberation, a fear reflected in the appearance of similar warnings in runaway notices about educated individuals. Between 1760 and 1776, approximately 5.8% of 881 advertisements examined from Colonial Virginia mentioned literate runaways.[20] While this percentage is relatively small, its significance lies in how often literacy was singled out as a

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[17] *Virginia Gazette,* "Pretends He Can Read." August 15, 1766. From History Commons, *The Virginia Gazette,* 1736-1780*, https://history-commons.net/artifacts/12118610/the-virginia-gazette-august-15-1766/13012385/view/?page=8.*

[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Antonio T. Bly, "'Pretends He Can Read': Runaways and Literacy in Colonial America, 1730–1776," *Early American Studies* 6, no. 2 (2008), 267, http://www.jstor.org/stable/23546575.

defining characteristic. The repeated emphasis on reading and writing reveals that literacy was feared beyond its practical use, as it disrupted the system of racial hierarchy that chattel slavery depended on. Literacy enabled enslaved people to move more freely, forge passes, and resist white authority. These threats would soon be translated into formal legal efforts to suppress education through the communal spaces where it spread.

The fear of literacy and collective organization became explicit in Virginia's legal response to enslaved resistance, as reflected in the Virginia General Assembly's passage of "An act further declaring what shall be deemed unlawful meetings of slaves."[21] Within the act, enslaved people were prohibited from gathering at night for religious meetings or other assemblies. If an "unlawful assembly" was discovered,[22] local justices could issue warrants on the spot and authorize punishments of up to twenty lashes. Lawmakers justified these restrictions through a moral framework, describing such gatherings as a "considerable evil to the community,"[23] and positioning themselves as protectors of social order, virtue, and the common good. While this framing positioned collective activity as inherently dangerous, it was passed in response to growing fears of rebellion. For instance, one example is the unsuccessful Gabriel's Conspiracy, planned by a literate enslaved Virginian in 1800. Just hours before it was to take place, the conspiracy was revealed, prompting the arrest of more than seventy enslaved men and the execution of twenty-six.[24] In the aftermath of this suppressed resistance, Virginia authorities used moral panic to justify repressing physical gatherings along with intellectual and spiritual autonomy. Nighttime worship and communal gatherings often provided one of the few opportunities for enslaved people to read scripture, exchange ideas, and learn together. Therefore, by directly criminalizing these spaces, the law restricted literacy as well, demonstrating how the state used political power to preserve slavery.

Yet even as colonial and state governments attempted to limit literacy through law and punishment, enslaved people continued to pursue education as deliberate acts of resistance. Beyond acts of self-liberation, literacy also functioned as a tool for community building and collective resistance. Even limited literacy could be used to interpret passes, understand laws, and share critical information.[25] These skills enabled communication across plantations and fostered networks of shared knowledge that were difficult for slaveholders to fully monitor. For instance, at Jefferson's Monticello estate, archeologists uncovered "237 unidentified slates, 27 pencil leads, 2 pencil slates, and 18 writing slates."[26]

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[21] Virginia General Assembly, *An Act Further Declaring What Shall Be Deemed Unlawful Meetings of Slaves* (January 24, 1804), in *The Statutes at Large of Virginia*, ed. Samuel Shepherd (Richmond, 1836), https://encyclopediavirginia.org/11749-ba054100ff77971/.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Michael L. Nicholls, "Gabriel's Conspiracy (1800)," Encyclopedia Virginia, last modified December 7, 2020, https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/gabriels-conspiracy-1800/.

[25] Bly, "Pretends He Can Read," 264.

[26] Ibid.

These findings display evidence of enslaved people "practicing letters in the quarters and probably sharing the skill."[27] Practices were intentionally discreet, with some individuals writing in the dirt as a temporary and easily erasable form of learning to avoid punishment.[28] Such strategies highlight the risks associated with literacy along with the ingenuity and determination of enslaved communities. In this way, literacy became a quiet form of resistance that challenged systems designed to suppress both education and freedom.

The pursuit of literacy and religious knowledge by enslaved people was not only defined by silent acts of defiance but also inspired direct organization that terrified slaveholders. This culmination of education, faith, and empowerment in Virginia became most visible in the Nat Turner Rebellion of 1831. In addition to being the deadliest revolt of enslaved people in American history, Nat Turner's literacy challenged assumptions of Black intellectual inferiority.[29] From an early age, Turner learned to read and write. His desire to learn largely revolved around his interest in Christianity, as "themes of religion and intelligence were intertwined" throughout his life.[30] In fact, Turner's enslavers noted that he demonstrated "a remarkable mind, even as a young child,"[31] a recognition that simultaneously acknowledged his intelligence and underscored its perceived danger. Literacy became a "crucial part of Turner's own unfolding sense of identity,"[32] enabling him to see himself beyond the label of property imposed by white enslavers. Turner instead understood himself as an individual capable of interpretation, leadership, and moral judgment. Furthermore, his engagement with scripture fostered a worldview that emphasized liberation. Unlike the form of religious instruction promoted by the Bray School, where reading was intended to reinforce obedience, Turner used biblical texts to construct sermons advocating for abolitionism. Thus, Turner's literacy combined with his religious foundation "set him on the path to eventual rebellion."[33] Through preaching and ministry, Turner assumed a leadership role within enslaved communities, often speaking during Sunday services and spreading a message that framed slavery as incompatible with Christian morality. This role also allowed him to move more freely in Southampton County, increasing his impact geographically. His sermons were rooted in biblical interpretation and emphasized freedom for enslaved Virginians through rebellion if divinely sanctioned. As a result, his ability to interpret scripture independently and persuade others exemplified why slaveholders viewed Black literacy as inherently threatening.

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[27] Ibid., 282-283.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Charles Terry, "A Rebellious Education: Enslaved African Americans and the Fight for Literacy," (PhD diss., University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, 2022), 2, https://hdl.handle.net/2142/115385.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid., 3.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid.

After the rebellion in August, Turner went undiscovered for three months, and his eventual capture in November 1831 generated widespread attention in print culture. Accounts of the rebellion were published and written most notably by white Southampton attorney Thomas R. Gray in *The Confessions of Nat Turner,* exemplifying white efforts to control the narrative surrounding the uprising. Gray's "Note to the Public" claims to present Turner's words "fully and voluntarily," yet the text is saturated with racialized language that portrays Turner and his followers as "savages."[34] *The Confessions* are cast by Gray as a cautionary narrative, urging that "each particular community should look to its own safety."[35] His control over the text proves that even when Turner's voice entered the public record, it did so only through white mediation, reinforcing elite authority over authorship, interpretation, and historical memory. This central challenge in reconstructing Nat Turner's Rebellion reflects broader themes of bias and power present across histories documented through a racially motivated lens. At the same time, *The Confessions* remain the closest available glimpse into the ideological and religious motivations behind the rebellion. By aiming to separate Gray's voice from Turner's likely ideological and religious motivations, *The Confessions* can be interpreted as evidence of self-determination. Even if imperfectly preserved through white authorship, it offers a glimpse into how Turner himself understood his actions.

The narrative presented in *The Confessions* shows how Turner's religious convictions were closely tied to the strategic planning of the rebellion. Turner "came to believe that he had a calling from God to strike back against the institution of slavery," framing his resistance as a religious duty.[36] He was highly attuned to signs and omens, interpreting natural and celestial phenomena as messages from God that confirmed his mission. In his *Confessions,* he explained that he was prompted "not to wait longer" once "the sign appeared again in the heavens."[37] He began planning for the rebellion through a strategic and intentional design. On August 21, 1831, Turner met with six other enslaved men to finalize their plans, deliberately keeping the group small to avoid detection, further illustrating the organizational capacities that literacy and education made possible. He swore his fellow conspirators to secrecy, likely drawing upon shortcomings in earlier failed uprisings such as Gabriel's Rebellion in 1800.[38] This tactical planning contradicted white portrayals of enslaved people as incapable of foresight or complexity. Thus, Turner's actions revealed how literacy, religious authority, and organization could converge to produce coordinated resistance rather than isolated defiance.

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[34] Thomas R. Gray, *The Confessions of Nat Turner* (1831), Electronic Texts in American Studies, no. 15, deposited by Paul Royster, University of Nebraska–Lincoln, https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/etas/15.

[35] Terry, "A Rebellious Education," 3.

[36] Ibid., 4.

[37] Gray, *The Confessions of Nat Turner*.

[38] Terry, *A Rebellious Education,* 5.

Following Turner's *Confessions,* his fate was quickly determined in the courtroom. Tried on November 5, 1831, before the Southampton County Court of Oyer and Terminer, Turner was charged with "conspiring to rebel and making insurrection."[39] The court also ordered a "sufficient additional guard" to prevent any attempt at rescue, reflecting the broader panic surrounding his influence.[40] Central to that fear was Turner's literacy, which allowed him to articulate religious justification for rebellion that resonated with other enslaved people. In the trial, witnesses repeatedly emphasized that Turner "seemed to command the party,"[41] highlighting that his authority lay in his intellectual and spiritual leadership. The court and its witnesses aimed to undermine Turner's religious autonomy, noting that he "pretended to have had intimations by signs & omens from God."[42] By reducing Turner to a criminal and valuing him "to the sum of three hundred and seventy five dollars,"[43] the legal system stripped him of humanity and intellect. Turner's public hanging on November 11, 1831, thus marked the formal conclusion of the rebellion. However, its legacy continued, as his execution functioned as an attempt to silence literate resistance and reassert control over knowledge, scripture, and authority in the slaveholding South.

From the 1760s to the 1830s, fears of rebellion by the white planter class were prevalent beyond moments of violence, found in everyday efforts to regulate education, movement, and communication. From the Bray School to restrictive laws on Black gatherings and enforced illiteracy, these systems worked together to sustain slavery by limiting both physical mobility and intellectual agency. Christianity, often used by white elites to promote obedience and justify hierarchy, also became a site of tension, most strikingly in Nat Turner's Rebellion. This struggle over spiritual authority was inseparable from literacy, as the ability to independently read and interpret religious texts challenged the moral framework that upheld slavery. Despite constraints, enslaved people continually resisted by using literacy and religious interpretation to build community, assert autonomy, and challenge the moral logic of bondage. The consequences of systematic silencing persist in the historical archive today, where the absence of enslaved voices reflects the enduring legacy of systems designed to suppress them. In this way, early American democracy was not simply founded on ideals of liberty, but on deliberate exclusions that determined whose voices and knowledge would be preserved.

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[39] *Trial of Nat, alias Nat Turner* (Southampton County, Virginia Court of Oyer and Terminer, November 5, 1831), Nat Turner Project, https://www.natturnerproject.org/southampton-ot--trial-of-nat-alias.

[40] *Trial of Nat, alias Nat Turner* (Southampton County, Virginia Court of Oyer and Terminer, November 5, 1831), Nat Turner Project, https://www.natturnerproject.org/southampton-ot--trial-of-nat-alias.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Ibid.

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