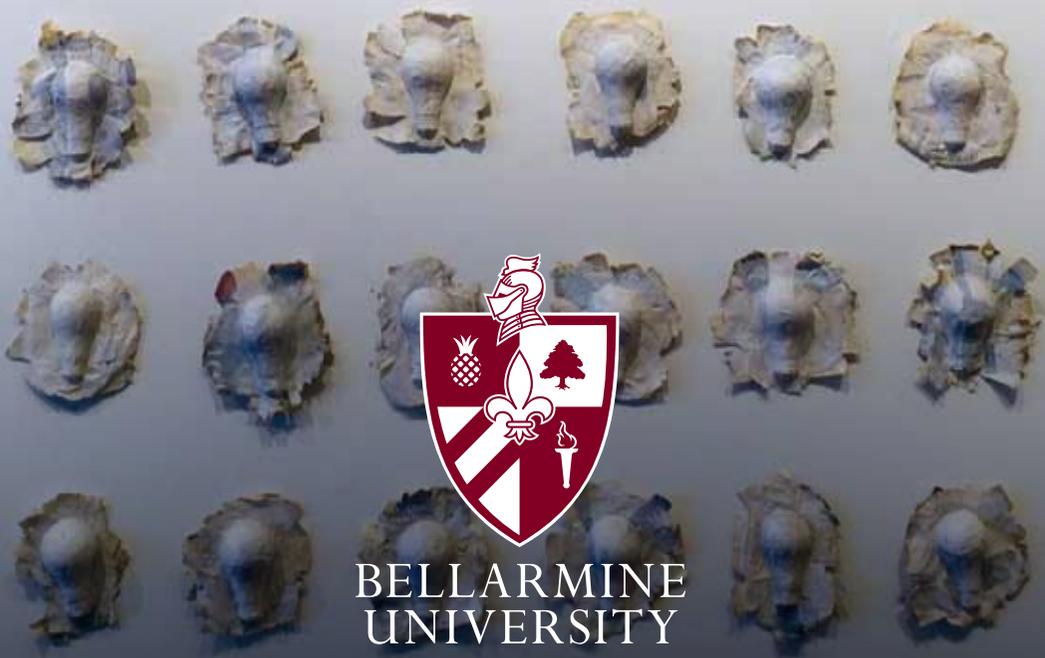




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Thomas Merton, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*

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## INTRODUCTION

### Introduction

*Scholars in Writing: A Journal of Undergraduate Research in the Humanities* showcases student writing that demonstrates interdisciplinary inquiry, original thought, and compelling prose. The journal showcases award-winning student essays from two contests held each academic year during the spring semester. It is published biennially and supported by the Department of Theology, the First-Year Writing Program, and the Office of Academic Affairs.

### A Brief Description of the Theology Department Essay Contest

The Theology Department Essay Contest is sponsored annually by the Department of Theology and the Master of Arts in Spirituality program. Students submit outstanding papers written for any of the theology classes that they have taken while at Bellarmine. Papers are written for class taken within either the fall or spring semesters and can be submitted to the chair of the theology department any time before the deadline for submissions is announced in the spring. All submissions are refereed by faculty members in the department. Winning essays are presented and discussed at the annual theology department colloquy, which is ordinarily planned during Undergraduate Research and Study Week.

### A Brief Description of the First-Year Writing Contest

The M. Celeste Nichols and the Bellarmine Learning Communities Essay Contests recognize exceptional first-year writing completed in *Expository Writing* or the *Freshman Seminar*. First-year writing faculty solicit and submit student essays written in either the spring or fall semesters for consideration. Essays are blind-reviewed by a faculty writing committee, and the most outstanding are selected.

# Paradox of Unity: The Post-9/11 American-Muslim Community

Patrick Griffio

Paradox and irony, while having a clear distinction, are often confused for one another. In the case of paradox, the United States demonstrates this in how its citizens approach civil liberties. For a nation built upon the ideology that all men are created inherently equal, there are several outliers of this philosophy in American history. By believing so adamantly in the liberty of the national community, some individuals were more than willing to sacrifice the minority's voice for the majority. While these targeted groups have been assembled based on a wide range of characteristics—race, ethnicity, and especially religion—the same Americans who have a blurred vision of “liberty” often have a blurred vision of what unites these communities. Ironically, the case of Muslim-Americans following the September 11 attacks demonstrates how the bigotry of one group contributed to the unification of a politically active community that never before existed. The American experience, exemplified in the circumstances surrounding the Muslim community following 9/11, is a product of blurring paradox with irony. By clarifying the distinction between paradox and irony, the story behind the formation of a unified Muslim-American population emerges. The state of the Muslim community today would be far different and far less united had the events that unfolded on September 11, 2001, never taken place.

In order to gauge how extreme the shift Muslim's endured in the public's opinion, it is helpful to understand how the religion of Islam was perceived in American culture prior to 9/11. The best way to categorize the perspective of the general public toward Muslims is simply a general lack of knowledge. The American people had little to base their opinions on. Therefore, when the Muslim community was thrown onto the public stage following the September 11 attacks, there was little foundation in the public consciousness to rebuke false charges of conspiracy or sedition. In fact, there was even little literature on Muslims created by Muslims (Pena 206). This more than anything reflects the general disinterest Americans had toward the religion and its associated ethnicities, with the cultural apathy even spreading to the Muslim community itself. Perhaps a lack of cultural impact and identity is a result of the absence of cohesiveness the group shares. Relating to the misconceptions that Americans too quickly adopted toward the Muslim community, Muslims and Arabs are two entirely different terms (Verbrugge 108). In fact, the majority of Arabs aren't even Muslims at all; they're Lebanese Christians. Prior to

9/11, there was no coalition to unite this ethnically diverse religion into one community, a community capable of presenting itself to the American people. If such a group had existed and presented itself in the same fashion as other minority groups in the American melting pot, perhaps the course of so many innocent victims of discrimination would have been different.

The Muslim leadership, despite what would initially be presumed, acted immediately in condemning the attacks and dissociating themselves with a radical fragment of Islam. Less than a few hours after the World Trade Center was targeted, Yasser Arafat, then a leader of the Palestinian territory, offered his condolences for the Americans lost in the attack (Peek 25). Mohammed Sayed Tantawi, the sheikh of a prominent Cairo mosque and one of the most respected figures in modern Islam, stated that such an act of extreme terror would be punished on Judgment Day. Yet, even while these voices resonated among followers of Islam, their words failed to soothe the ears of the American people. Even leaders of Islam in the United States struggled to make an impact beyond the bounds of an ethnically divided religion. Imam Hamza and Imam Siraj Wahhaj spent a considerable amount of effort broadcasting the peaceful message of Islam and the condemnation of the hijackers who defaced its reputation. From Islamic scholars reasoning the “lack of justification [for] the attacks” to politicians’ staging of White House meetings with religious leaders, American Muslims struggled to fight their newly acquired association with terror (Peek 25). Essentially, what occurred on September 11 was far more than a hijacking of an aircraft, it was a “hijack[ing] of [the Muslim] faith”(Peek 26).

Out of these intense conditions rose a grassroots movement to embrace Muslim identity with the support of other religions, religions that were more positively perceived by the public and that could be used as a vehicle for the message of millions of affected Muslim Americans. During the holy month of Ramadan, many mosques invited local Christians, Jews, and other faiths to break the fast with their members. Shortly after the attacks that fall, a movement began involving hundreds of non-Muslim women across the nation voluntarily wearing the traditional hijab head garment, symbolically offering their support of the religion and its female followers. The group, which identified itself as “Scarves for Solidarity,” assembled in front of targeted mosques to prevent vandalism, to escort Muslim women while running errands, and to mail letters and donations to struggling mosques. While many Muslim Americans acted admirably in standing up for their religion, unfortunately, many others were forced into a weak, defensive stance.

It’s not surprising to realize how many Muslims immediately braced themselves for a public backlash against their religion. Comparatively minor incidents of terror linked to the Muslim community resulted in isolated incidents of retaliatory hatred. For example, the 1996 crash of TWA Flight 800 was quickly linked to suspects of Middle Eastern dissent (Peek 24). The suspects were said to have received harsher treatment under interrogation, yet the explosion on board was eventually found to have been a result of faulty wiring. Such incidents had “become part of the Muslim collective consciousness” even prior to 2001. Therefore, an observable “startle reflex” to the 9/11 attacks was almost to be expected.

Essentially, the startle reflex represented the collective reaction of the few Muslim organizations that did exist before 9/11. Virtually every American Muslim was bound

to a general statement, following something generic like, “American Muslims utterly condemn what are vicious and cowardly acts of terrorism against innocent civilians. We join with all Americans in calling for the swift apprehension and punishment of the perpetrators. No political cause could ever be assisted by such immoral acts”(Peek 25). Muslim Americans had little interest in the motivations of the hijackers, but they had every interest in preserving their way of life. The startle reflex, not surprisingly, was an accurate forewarning of events to come.

Just like the stages of grief observable in an individual person, the nation’s inevitably reached the stage of anger. Statistics collected from the Federal Bureau of Investigation, which publishes data on hate crimes, reinforced the greatest fears of Muslim Americans. After 481 reported incidents of hate crimes targeting Muslim Americans in 2001, the findings “represent[ed] a 1,600 percent increase over the 28 incidents recorded in the year 2000” (Peek 28). When you take into account that the vast majority of these episodes took place in September and the following three months, the sharp increase is “even more staggering” (Peek 28). The first of these attacks to be confirmed as a hate crime involved a man by the name of Frank Roque, who shot a man, Balbir Singh Sodhi, planting flowers outside his gas station (Peek 28). Reflecting not only the issue of hate crime but also the issue of Muslim identity, Sodhi was neither Muslim nor Arabic. A native of India, he fell victim to the misunderstanding of an individual American and, to some degree, the greater American public regarding knowledge of Muslim Americans. This episode wasn’t just a confusion of ethnicities of Islam, but a fundamental misunderstanding of the religion as a whole and what groups it’s made up of. By shouting “I stand for America all the way! I’m an American. Go ahead!” during his apprehension by law enforcement, Roque finalized the line drawn between ‘them’ and ‘us’ (Peek 28).

The most effective tool in showcasing the fragmentation of Islam in America wasn’t physical violence against followers but verbal violence. In the months following the attack, “nearly 80 percent of the Muslims in [a] study indicated they or a family member were verbally harassed.” To believe that these statements came only from strangers of the affected would be a significant misunderstanding. While anonymous insults were more common, “neighbors, acquaintances, classmates, teachers, and coworkers were also responsible” (Verbrugge 64). Racially and religiously insensitive comments included, ““terrorist..dirty Muslim...camel jockey...rag head...towel head...sand roach...and sand n\*gger”” (Verbrugge 64). Ethnic groups in America have historically been targeted by the xenophobic citizens, but after the September 11 attacks, Muslims heard these slurs “much more often and in a variety of contexts.”

The saddest detail of this tale isn’t simply that there were so many Americans willing to be so insensitive but that a group of these individuals had the authority to broadcast their hatred. American popular culture served as a vehicle for these misguided leaders of media, and the environment of entertainment-journalism became one where, “inhibitions against open verbal attacks on Arabs and Muslims in the media were significantly lowered...[and where] the rate of defamation and its intensity steadily worsened” (Peek 116). Little held back conservative commentator Ann Coulter when she used the pen as a sword in her crusade against “a cult of Muslim fanatics” and when she “advocate[d] for the

assassination of international leaders and championed the invasion of foreign countries.” Her public statement was justly summarized in the title she selected for the column, “This Is War.” The following excerpt is but a reflection of the hysteria some media figures took pleasure to exploit:

This is no time to be precious about locating the exact individuals directly involved in this particular terrorist attack. Those responsible include anyone anywhere in the world who smiled in response to the annihilation of patriots...The nation has been invaded by a fanatical, murderous cult. And we welcomed them...We are so good and so pure we would never engage in discriminatory racial or “religious” profiling. People who want our country destroyed live here, work for our lumberman from Idaho...Airports scrupulously apply the same laughably ineffective airport harassment to Suzy Chapstick as to Muslim hijackers. It is preposterous to assume a passenger is a potential crazed homicidal maniac. We know who the homicidal maniacs are. They are the ones cheering and dancing right now. We should invade their countries, kill their leaders, and convert them to Christianity. We weren’t punctilious about locating and punishing Hitler and his top officers. We carpet-bombed German cities; we killed civilians. That’s war. And this is war.

Despite this, there is scholarly debate over the reasoning for Muslims to have fear due to bias against their religious background. The attorney and author Asma Gull Hasan is clear in her beliefs that the, “greatest challenge facing Muslims in America is overcoming negative stereotypes” like the perception “that all Muslims are terrorists” (Verbrugge 35). As a result of being too diverse to “have one issue to rally around,” the greatest challenge of “overcoming [their] public image as terrorists” is a need to unify (Verbrugge 35). In fact, in Hasan’s book, “American Muslims: the New Generation,” she clearly states that this need to say that Muslims don’t pose a threat to the United States is her motivation to write the work. She goes on to explain that the media did in fact embrace the stereotype that every Arab, bearded, foreign looking man or every woman in a head cover is a terrorist (Verbrugge 36). Again, the fact that the media left the question of “[which Muslim group] was responsible...one from Iran, Iraq, or even from the United States” demonstrates the underlying need to unify the ethnically diverse religion. More than any other remedy, Hasan stresses this point.

Of course, there are scholars at odds with the arguments of Hasan, with her opponents believing that a need to unify doesn’t exist. Daniel Pipes, director of the Middle East Forum, argues that the reports of Muslim discrimination have been “blown out of proportion” by Hasan and her associates (Verbrugge 41). He cites the relatively prosperous income of the average Muslim. He highlights that the U.S. military commissioned their first Muslim chaplain in 1993 and now provides halal meals for Muslims during Ramadan. Despite these advancements, examples of progress are still mundane. Even Pipes cannot refuse the connotation Islam carries in a post 9/11 America as he notes when he stated “Muslims are undoubtedly right when they say that Islam suffers a poor reputation in the United States (Verbrugge 46).

With the passing of the Patriot Act, a hastily written anti-terrorism law, the United States reentered a historical cycle that received its namesake back in colonial times: a witch hunt. It was less than six weeks after the terrorist attacks when George W. Bush signed the bill with the support of a public who “had no hesitation about giving great powers to the administration” (Rapley 209). It was an incredibly dense bill, and some critics went as far as to suggest that it was “prepared” and “had been ready before 9/11” (Rapley 208). Missing from the countless pages of increased investigative ability were “checks, balances, and oversights to safeguard traditional liberties” (Rapley 209). Civil liberties took a backseat to national interests, exposing Muslim Americans to “harassment, violence, and even death” (Rapley 209). Senator Feingold was one of few politicians who publicly recognized this classic American storyline of a hysterical ‘witch hunt,’ one isolating the Muslim community. He warned, “We must redouble our vigilance to preserve our values and basic rights that make us who we are” (Rapley 210). Feingold was well aware of what was unfolding. In a society that views overkill as the most certain method of success, extreme powers are provided under extreme conditions; however, these “absolute powers” still demand great oversight (Rapley 213). Feingold listed “the Alien and Sedition Acts, the suspension of habeas corpus during the Civil War, the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II, and the blacklisting of supposed communist sympathizers during the McCarthy era” as ‘witch hunts’ which correlate with the controversy surrounding Muslims after 9/11 (Rapley 213). These individuals are the enemy, the enemy is always the foreigner, and the foreigner is always un-American and treated as a “second class citizen” (Rapley 213).

Muslim Americans were under constant pressure from the government, the media, and the general public, but it was a final push from the radical components of the political right that eventually congealed the group into an organized coalition. A growing group of government agencies and journalists began casting doubt as to the conduct of a handful of Muslim charities, organizations that symbolized the only pre-existing network of support for American Muslims following the September 11 attacks (Verbrugge 101). In December of 2001, the US government took advantage of the recently passed Patriot Act and shut down three separate charities “without formal charges being issued against anyone” and without proof to “substantiate the government’s claims”(Verbrugge 101). Of course, speculation of Muslim charities didn’t stop here. Former CNN correspondent turned terrorist investigator-journalist Steven Emerson held back little during his explanation of the ties between Muslim charities and extremist groups. He claimed that the “most important tactic” employed by terrorist groups was in fact non-profit organizations (Emerson 37). Relating this observation to his belief that the US should abandon its oblivious impartiality toward Muslim organizations, he claimed that these charity groups in fact serve as a “forum of evil” (Emerson 37). Emerson openly suggests sacrificing the liberty of Muslim charities in order to expose the “complex and shadowy nature” of the terrorist networks that those non-profit organizations secretly support. Organizations such as MAYA, a Muslim global relief organization, was said to have “serve[d] as a fundraising opportunity for groups that funnel money to the families of terrorists, perhaps to the terrorists themselves” (Emerson 38). Emerson’s claims would be startling had they not been founded on faulty journalistic investigations and a clearly biased tone. Of course, without

men such as Emerson, the Muslim community's base never would have realized its need to develop from a few vulnerable charities into the politically active coalition that it is today.

The American Muslim community was finally taking shape. Having witnessed firsthand their weaknesses in having only frail charities or volunteers to serve as political advocates, Muslims across the nation began to display their religion more openly, associate with other ethnicities of Muslims more closely, and eventually view their community more cohesively. Ultimately, it was these decisions, not false stereotypes, that serve as the modern face of the Muslim religion in America, a group bound by unity.

The story of 9/11 is one that undoubtedly led to the story of the American Muslim in the post-2001 era. The community that emerged as a result of external pressures applied by the majority and their misshapen views on ethnicity and religion could have been united by no other force. In this case, the distinction between paradox and irony proved crucial. What we view as the "Muslim" community is in fact a conglomerate of various nationalities and religious traditions, but this artificial classification vested the American Muslim with political authority it never before had. The state of civil liberties in America may in fact be a paradox, but the remedy to this was apparently classic irony.

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# Essay on William Cavanaugh's Theopolitical Imagination: Discovering the Liturgy as a Political Act in an Age of Global Consumerism

Tammy Becht

## Introduction

William Cavanaugh's book, *Theopolitical Imagination: Discovering the Liturgy as a Political Act in an Age of Global Consumerism* is a difficult read for the average person not accustomed to new theological ideas. The average Catholic (or anyone for that matter) may have problems grasping Cavanaugh's ideas, yet these ideas could be interesting and challenging to even the casual Christian. The very title of the book requires thought to understand the subject contained within the cover. The word *imagination* coupled with the subject of theology leads one to an opinion of some sorts, perhaps cautionary and suspicious, or perhaps curiosity may be aroused. To add the word *political* just begs for an explanation. In this essay, I will respond to Cavanaugh's theories from the perspective of an average Catholic in the pew every Sunday morning. I believe that for Cavanaugh's ideas to become an impetus within the Church, it is inside the heart of the average Catholic that they must take hold and find validity.

## Chapter 1: The Myth of the State as Saviour

Cavanaugh presents the goals of the nation-state as being directed toward absolute power over the people and firm control over the geographical borders of the nation-state. These goals are accomplished by guiding people to view themselves as individuals with personal rights. These rights include the ability to purchase things and land parcels, as well as the right to defend these properties against invasion or theft by others. Even understanding one's own body as property, but over which the nation-state has power, is also a point of ultimate control enjoyed by the nation-state. This power is brought about by the creation of the "social contract" designed to ensure the idea of justice among individuals. The social contract is described by Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau as the willingness of people to give up certain aspects of freedom in return for aid or benefits provided by the nation-state (17).

I believe that this reality of the social contract has accomplished more far-reaching goals than we recognize. The self-awareness of persons as part of a greater whole is somewhat intact, but we see ourselves as Americans, or Australians, or Italians before we acknowledge any other affiliation. We place the greatest importance on our nationality even before our religious affiliation, while at the same time give lip-service to the thought that we are

ultimately citizens of heaven. Cavanaugh views this arrangement of the nation-state as a failure to produce a truly social existence among persons. “State Soteriology has tried to unify humankind by incorporation into a body of a grotesque sort.” (44) What is created rather is a body that is a “monstrosity of many separate limbs proceeding directly out of a gigantic head.” (44) A very poor imitation of the Body of Christ, this “Leviathan,” or “New Adam” as described by Hobbes is the entity created and accepted by humankind as the social contract which “saves us from each other.”(20) This image suggests that every person sees himself connected only to the sovereign, not to others within the nation-state, thereby making the nation-state the only source for salvation. What is seen and tangible has taken over as the ultimate reality. A God who remains unseen or as an historic figure has no real power to affect change in a world ruled by the nation-state in the here and now.

Because of the state’s power over its citizenry, it is able to exercise violence and war, at times in a show of strength to illustrate what power is actually held by the state. War and violence have the power to bring the nation-state’s own people, as well as the people of other nation-states, into conformity with the social contract through brute force. Cavanaugh goes as far as to suggest that war was a kind of tool used by the nation-state to bring the Church into submission under state authority. (42)

“What was at issue in these wars was the very creation of religion as a set of privately held beliefs without direct political relevance. The creation of religion was necessitated by the new state’s need to secure absolute sovereignty over its subjects.”(22)

The state has failed to save us because of its tendency toward violence in solving conflict. The state can never unify all individuals because it will never be able to produce or point to anything greater than itself toward which its citizens may strive or journey.

Cavanaugh suggests that for the modern Church to be heard in the arena of public policy, what is needed is a radical reformation of sorts in how Christians practice the faith; a *modus operandi* that is beyond the rationale of the state as savior. (46) I believe that a necessary requirement for Cavanaugh’s idea of a counter-politics centered around the Eucharist to take hold is for the Church to take heed of Paul’s advice recorded in his letter to the Romans: “Do not conform yourselves to this age, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, so that you may judge what is God’s will, what is good, pleasing and perfect.”(1) Catholic Christians must decide to first understand themselves as “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people he claims for his own.”(2) We must throw off self-imposed boundaries of ethnic or national heritage for a true citizenship not restricted by geography or any form of self-serving justice. Cavanaugh’s first order of business concerns unity. The Eucharist is viewed as the ultimate gift, freely given so that in Christ humanity is restored to its natural state as having been created in the image of God: “Christ’s restoration of the *imago dei* in humanity is consummated in individuals in the Eucharist, in which our separateness is overcome precisely by participation in Christ’s Body.” (47) The Church must embrace a familial citizenship in heaven by way of adoption as sons and daughters of God through the saving death and resurrection of Christ. We as Church must recognize ourselves as part of a whole without the limitations of ethnicity,

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1 Romans 12.2 (New American Bible).

2 1 Peter 2.9 (NAB)

nationality, language, or of valuing membership according to wealth, ability, intelligence, or experience. Jesus' prayer for unity among his followers must be reflected by the Church as the unity present in the Trinity. We must become one as Jesus, the Father, and the Spirit are one. This invitation must be extended to all peoples of the world regardless of their own ideologies, especially those concerning religion and methods of worship.

I find these ideas challenging, exciting, convincing, and compelling. However, I do not know if the conflict can even be debated peacefully. I understand Cavanaugh's suggestion of a counter politics centered on the Eucharist as I described in the above paragraph. For these ideas to even begin to take root, the doctrine of Eucharist must be agreed upon. The understanding and definition of the Eucharist as the Body and Blood of Christ whereby all Christians are united must be embraced by all Christians in order for Cavanaugh's argument to have meaning and value. Also, the state must be discredited as a savior. At this point in history, this will be extremely difficult to achieve. In this country, we have a federal government that bails out every major industry in financial distress on the heels of promising the same for every citizen. It is difficult to imagine a people who will accept the suggestion that what has been promised by the state is not possible or real, nor should it be expected. Each person must take up the responsibility for his or her own religious education as well as embark upon a walk through history to arrive at Cavanaugh's conclusions. It appears to be preferential to many to just hope in the state for salvation.

## Chapter 2: The Myth of Civil Society as Free Space

Civil society as free space is described as "space that, above all, is public without being political in the usual sense of direct involvement with the state."<sup>(53)</sup> Cavanaugh does not accept the illusion provided by this model of civil society; one of inclusion in the public arena of ideas without critique or suspicion of motive. Cavanaugh sees this as problematic because the state is calling the shots in the arena of ideas. There is a certain "standard" already set by the consensus of the citizens; a set of accepted ideals commonly known as "the way things are". The idea that religion should be kept private is one of those commonly accepted, unspoken truths. The state has done a marvelous job of relegating the Church to the private sector of the public sphere. The analogy of "If a tree falls in the forest and there's no one around to hear it, does it make any noise?" may apply to the idea of the Church being presented a "space" in which to present its ideology. The problem with a "free space" being arranged for the Church is that it manages the dialogue and restricts the Church to the playing rules of the organizing state. The Church's ideology transcends that of the state because its members are from every nation on the planet. The Church is not limited by geographical boundaries of space or even time: "the Church remains of course outside access to the coercive power of the state, and theology remains subject to the bar of what the society can consider 'reasonable.'"<sup>(62)</sup>

Even within the Church there have been created certain "programs" with an aim to form our children "to think and act as citizens" <sup>(67)</sup> of the state. One such program called "Public Achievement" has been enacted in Catholic schools in Minnesota. One of the flaws in Public Achievement is that, in the end, the state is strengthened because the ideology is largely established on the ideas of democracy through building of consensus.

The individual is allowed and encouraged to develop his or her own dreams and ideas called “self-determination,” but each person’s self-determination may be overridden by that of the larger consensus of the public interest. This program has gone so far as to transfer the definition of liturgy as “the work of the people” to that being the definition of *democracy*. Again, the Church is playing by the rules of the state, which will always lead to the state owning the stronger argument of the two. Cavanaugh says that we are defeated at our own game because “it is difficult to conceive of the church as a ‘free space’ when we have been self-disciplined to avoid public Christian language even within our own schools.”(80)

Cavanaugh proposes that the Church is already “a public space in its own right.” (85) Recovering the idea of wholeness or unity within and among Christians is of utmost importance to the ability of the Church to resist the influence and dominance of the state. The ability of the Church to speak truth is its greatest gift. Jesus said that his sheep would know his voice and would thereby recognize truth when it is presented. The idea of the Church as a lost sheep is perhaps an accurate portrayal of our current state of being. I believe that Cavanaugh thinks that the Church has lost its way of navigating through the world as the Body of Christ.

His encouragement is to return to the Augustinian pronouncement of the Eucharist as the only true public thing, offering true sacrifice to God and making the Church into Christ’s Body. (90) The Eucharist as the unifying factor of the Church is where its strength lies. Cavanaugh insists that the Eucharistic reality of the true *presence* of Christ existing in the form of bread and wine is all the Church needs to form counter-politics to that of the state. The Church is challenged to see itself as having been consumed into the Body of Christ as it has received Christ in communion with the whole Church. Each and every member of the Body of Christ, regardless of nationality or color of skin is also consumed into the same Body. If we understand that we all become one as are the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit *within the very same unifying action of Eucharist*, we will come to realize the true presence of Christ in each other as well as in the entire world.

This idea is the antidote to the Public Achievement program because it has the power to help our children envision themselves as part of something far more transcending than the nation-state:

Imagine if Christian students, such as those involved in Public Achievement, were trained to see others not through the lens of self-interest but as fellow members of the mystical body of Christ. Why not tell them that in taking action on the plight of undocumented workers they are not reinforcing the borders of the national territory defined by ‘citizenship,’ but rather building up the body of Christ, which transcends those borders and which all -Christian or not- have a share?(93-94)

Cavanaugh presents a real challenge to the Church to re-create a truly free and public space by *being* whom and what we are as Church, the body of Christ on the earth and in time. Through the understanding that all people are members of the same Body, the lines of separation and divisiveness are erased. Our national citizenships and earthly territorial biases are reordered into a membership in the human family under the direction and governance of Christ who has made us one through the Eucharist.

### Chapter 3: The Myth of Globalization as Catholicity

Cavanaugh describes globalization as a sort of counterfeit catholicity. People, as well as the Church, have accepted the definition of catholic as universal. The problem lies in the understanding of the word *universal*, its common definition being, “relating to the whole world,” which in Cavanaugh’s world does not always mean *catholic*. The existence of fast food chains is one example Cavanaugh presents to illustrate his point. He mentions that Taco Bell is the example of “Mexican” food that is widely accepted as authentic. In fact, the food in Mexico is a far cry from the bland offering found peddled by the little Chihuahua in the advertisements. People, especially Americans, have come to expect constancy in every area of their lives. When Americans pull into a McDonald’s, they know what they are going to receive at the other end of the drive-thru window. In some way, this is comforting to those who wish to live in the status-quo, unchanging world of globalization. I have eaten at McDonald’s restaurants in Japan, Australia, England, and all across America. It is amazing to me that wherever I go, a Big Mac does taste pretty much the same. My universal craving for a Big Mac is always satisfied, but what is sacrificed in the process is the experience of Japanese noodles, Australian sausages, and English fish and chips.

Cavanaugh warns that we must avoid this danger of globalized sameness in our experience of *Catholica*. Cavanaugh says “The *Catholica* is not a place, however, but a ‘spatial story’ about the origin and destiny of the whole world, a story enacted in the Eucharist.”(113) We must not settle for the worldwide distribution of the Body of Christ with the same universality with which we distribute Big Macs at McDonalds or peddle a tasteless burrito at a worldwide Taco Bell. The Eucharist is more than a piece of bread.

Eucharist is the very Body of Christ, his true presence in the world. The *Catholica* is an experience of gathering in all who would claim their space as Church, as the body of Christ to be, live, and act as the Body of Christ in the world. A Body that avoids separation by language, government, or nationality, acting as one unified and redeemed society, as “an organic whole, of cohesion, of a firm synthesis, of a reality which is not scattered but, on the contrary, turned toward a center which assures its unity, whatever the expanse in area or the internal differentiation may be.”(113)

I must say that I have enjoyed this reading as much as I have understood the concepts presented. I am especially attracted to the idea that Cavanaugh presents in regard to the unifying effects of the Eucharist. “Catholic space, therefore, is not a simple, universal space uniting individuals directly to a whole; the Eucharist refracts space in such a way that one becomes more united to the whole the more tied one becomes to the local.”(115) To me, this speaks of the fact that we are called to community by virtue of our baptism (as we are baptized into the community of the Trinity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), and we are also called to live out our Catholic experience within the space in which we live. We need not gather all the assembly of believers worldwide into one common space in order to be Church. We can, according to Cavanaugh, enjoy a truly catholic community through the collapse of spatial barriers (116) brought about by the presence of the Eucharist.

Cavanaugh’s *Catholica* is about the story of the journey, the story being woven throughout place and time as the pilgrim church has traveled. As our mode of journeying has evolved, we have lost the value of the idea of pilgrimage. Pilgrimages are spiritual journeys

that tell the story of the faithful. As humanity discovered new methods of identifying place via geography, we became accustomed to and satisfied with knowing only *where* we are in relation to space; we stopped telling the story of *how* we arrived there. Our appreciation of the journey was abandoned for the convenience of mapping our way through the journey and calculating the time it takes to get from point A to point B. The problem with this is that we are a pilgrim people on the earth with citizenship in heaven. Without the story of our pilgrimage, we do not understand its significance. We run scattered and disconnected because we have no story that unites us with each other. The Eucharist reminds us of who we are as we travel. It makes us aware of our familial ties to all people. Without even moving, we are able to join our brothers and sisters all over the world, indeed even those who have “gone before us marked with the sign of faith” by receiving the true presence of Christ in the Eucharist: “In an economy of hyper mobility, we resist not by fleeing, but by abiding. The community may journey without leaving its particular location, because the entire world and more comes to it in the Eucharist.”(118)

As I read Cavanaugh, I am challenged to see myself as truly part of the Body of Christ. I am a part of the Body of Christ with a unique and purposeful journey ahead. It is a journey of abundance because of my understanding of the all-encompassing and all-consuming power of the Eucharist in those who believe. I am further challenged to go beyond the idea of my voluntary consumption of the Body of Christ, to take Christ into myself, but to realize that through this very action, I too am consumed and become fully present in Christ. Christ journeys with me, and I with him into the world. Cavanaugh describes the miracle of this reality when he writes:

“The consumer of the Eucharist begins to walk in the strange landscape of the body of Christ, while still inhabiting a particular earthly place. Now the worldly landscape is transformed by the intrusions of the universal body of Christ in the particular interstices of local space. Turn the corner, and the cosmic Christ appears in the homeless person asking for a cup of coffee. Space is constantly ‘interrupted’ by Christ himself, who appears in the person of the weakest, those who are hungry or thirsty, strangers or naked, sick or imprisoned (Matt. 25. 31- 46) (119-120)

I understand this to mean that I am no longer free to go to Mass, receive Christ in the Eucharist, and return to my own concerns and ambitions. I am challenged to move beyond my own self-interests to explore where my experiences and talents may be used for others and for the common good of all people. In hoping to share in the divinity of Christ, I must be willing to share in Christ’s humanity. This means that I must see Christ in those around me and become open to the inevitable change my life will reflect as I begin to practice my new understanding of Eucharist.

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# Hope and Healing for Battered Women Who Kill Their Abusive Partners

Rebecca Harpring

Violence is a major issue in U.S. culture, especially violence against women. Unimaginable horror stories of sexual, verbal, and physical abuse have emerged from battered women who have endured years of pain. Some women in such situations become so desperate that they end up killing their abusers as an act of defense and self-integrity. This paper is divided into three sections that will explore the issue of battered women who kill their intimate partners. The first part will discuss the issue of domestic violence towards women and how some women kill their abusers in order to save themselves or their children. The second part is a personal reflection of my encounters while working in a women's prison. The final component is a theological response to the systematic problem of women who are imprisoned for killing their abusers. Battered women who kill their abusers face marginalization from friends, family, churches, and society; however, God calls the human family to accompany these women as they move towards healing.

## **Domestic Violence and Women Who Fight Back**

In a pastoral letter on violence against women, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops states that "Domestic violence is any kind of behavior that a person uses to control an intimate partner through fear and intimidation. It includes physical, sexual, psychological, verbal, and economic abuse." Victims of such abuse feel isolated, trapped, and alone. Domestic violence has been and continues to be a huge problem throughout the world. Elisabeth Beattie and Mary Angela Shaughnessy, coauthors of *Sisters In Pain*, a book on battered women who kill, write that, in the context of the U.S., women are almost always the victims of abuse. For example, in 1997, the U.S. Bureau of Justice reports that out of the 4.5 million violent crimes against women, 95% of the abusers were men. Moreover, one in three female homicide victims is killed by an intimate male partner. Statistics show that women are much more likely to be killed by abusive men than women are to kill their partner in an abusive relationship (Beattie and Shaughnessy iv). Charles Ewing states that a major issue that arises when a battered woman kills her abusive partner is that her fighting back oftentimes is not ruled as an act of self-defense in the court system. Usually she is charged with murder and imprisoned, which perpetuates the pain, guilt, and psychological wounds that result from an abusive relationship. Instead of addressing the need for healing, these women are shamed by society and the court system (Ewing 579).

Many people question why battered women do not leave their abusers. Battered women are stereotyped as being passive victims. If the abuse was really severe, then women should break off the relationship. Even worse, people sometimes wrongly assume when a woman is abused, it is a consequence of her actions. Beattie and Shaughnessy suggest that more emphasis should be placed on asking why men abuse their female partners (4). Because of these stereotypes and manipulation from their abusers, battered women begin to believe that they deserve the abuse. Ewing states that, as a woman's self-worth, dignity, and identity start to deteriorate, battered women oftentimes develop Battered Woman Syndrome (582).

Battered Woman Syndrome results from perpetuated abuse and violence. The cycle of domestic violence has three stages. First is a tension-building stage, second is the abuse stage, and third is the forgiveness phase where the abuser apologizes and rewards his partner for staying. As this cycle repeats itself, the woman starts to feel trapped and helpless as the violence escalates. The abuser manipulates the victim by cutting off resources, including money, outside relationships with family and friends, and freedom to leave the house (Ewing 583). For example, abusers will threaten to kill the woman, her children, or her family if she tries to leave or get help. Threats and abuse leave the woman feeling desperate and constantly endangered. In many cases, women try to seek help by telling a friend or calling the police, but their efforts often prove to be ineffective. When there is no intervention, a battered woman will lose her trust in outside resources and lose her sense of self-worth (Beattie and Shaughnessy xxiv). Feeling that there is no way to escape the abuse, Beattie and Shaughnessy suggest that Battered Woman Syndrome manifests itself as "learned helplessness." Women begin to blame themselves for the abuse and see it as a consequence of their actions, so no matter what they say or do, they cannot escape. Feeling trapped, they become submissive and focus on surviving the moment (Beattie and Shaughnessy xxv).

Beattie and Shaughnessy challenge the label of "helpless victim" for a battered woman. A woman in an abusive relationship learns to survive and cope in the midst of battery, rape, verbal insults, and other horrific circumstances. If a battered woman were truly helpless, she would not survive. Some of the challenges she faces include maintaining her daily routine without drawing attention to the abuse, protecting her children, and trying to find a way out of the relationship without being killed (Beattie and Shaughnessy xxviii). Society must change the way that it views and stereotypes battered women. They should be regarded as courageous, not passive and weak-willed individuals. People need to become more aware of ways to help these women and listen to them when they call for help; otherwise, the violence will continue and possibly result in death of one of the partners.

Ewing asserts that, while it is more common for the woman to be killed as a result of domestic violence, there are an increasing number of cases where the woman has killed her male partner. In fact, battered women who kill usually endure higher levels of abuse than women who do not kill their abusers. Battered women who kill have usually been subject to psychological and intense physical abuse resulting in burn marks, head trauma, broken bones, bruises, genital mutilation, and/or internal bleeding (Ewing 583). Some other common factors for abused women who kill are having a lower level of education and

having fewer available resources whether they are financial or social connections. In most cases, battered women who kill experience intense isolation because the risk of leaving the relationship is too high. Most women do tell someone about the abuse whether it is a family member, friend, coworker, or police officer, but oftentimes people do not believe them or they do not know how to help (Ewing 583). In this sense, battered women who kill are completely marginalized from society, their family and friends, and even their own selves because their identity is defined solely by their abusers.

When battered women are left with nowhere and no one to turn to, they are faced with the threat of death or seemingly endless abuse. They reach a certain point of desperation and are faced with the choice of killing themselves, remaining in the abusive relationship, or killing their abuser. Under such an intense emotional state and in order to survive, some battered women kill their abuser, feeling that there is no other choice (Ewing 588). Ewing states that most battered women who kill try to plead self-defense in trial, but usually these women are found guilty of homicide and imprisoned over periods of time ranging from four years to life without parole (Ewing 584).

Despite reports of abuse and physical evidence such as scars, bruises, and wounds, killing an abusive intimate male partner is usually not regarded as self-defense. According to Beattie and Shaughnessy, the current definition of self-defense within the U.S. legal system acts as barrier for battered women who kill their abusers. First, the law is designed to protect people who are suddenly attacked and decide to fight back. Second, it assumes that the two people are both willing to fight and are of equal strength. Finally, the use of self-defense should be witnessed by others, indicating that the fight would have been public. It is important to note that self-defense in a legal sense was conceived within a context that favors patriarchal norms, ignoring the disadvantages of a battered woman (Beattie and Shaughnessy xxvii).

The experience of a person who is suddenly attacked in public and fights back and the experience of a battered woman who attacks her abuser in his sleep are two totally different scenarios, but they are both forms of self-defense. Ewing suggests that the reason the law does not justify the latter situation as self-defense is because the woman is not under an immediate danger when her abuser is asleep or inactive (Ewing 585). Additionally, the courts often dismiss the presence of Battered Woman Syndrome despite the scientific research by the American Psychological Association to prove that it is a problem (Ewing 592).

Ewing makes a strong case for battered women who kill their abusers as being ruled as self-defense. The law limits the definition of “self” to meaning the physical body. Ewing, however, argues that “outside the law, *self* is commonly understood to encompass not only those corporeal aspects of existence, but also those psychological functions, attributes, processes, and dimensions of experience that give meaning and value to physical existence” (Ewing 586). In other words, a battered woman who kills her abuser when he is not actively threatening her life kills out of defense for her “psychological self.” Usually suffering from Battered Woman Syndrome, she is at a point where she feels hopeless, worthless, and has lost all meaning in her life. The intense psychological pain becomes so overwhelming that she can no longer thrive or function in her current state (Ewing 587).

The current legal definition of self-defense protects people who use reasonable force

against their aggressors. It considers how the majority of people would react in such a situation. Given these terms of justification for self-defense, it is reasonable to assume that many people would kill the abuser if they were placed in the context of a battered woman's experience (Ewing 588). Similarly, the law protects individuals who use deadly force when they are attacked or feel seriously threatened by another person within the confines of the individual's home. A home is regarded as being a place of safety where people should feel secure. When an attacker violates that right, reasonable deadly force can be justified. Once again, women are oftentimes abused in their own homes, but they are not protected by the legal system to use deadly force because usually the abuser lives under the same roof (Ewing 589). Ewing does warn that psychological self-defense should not simply be seen as an excuse for victims of domestic violence to kill, but the circumstances under which a battered woman kills must be legitimate (Ewing 593).

Ewing concludes by emphasizing how a battered woman is alienated from her true self. She lives in a warzone where her dignity, worth, and self-respect are constantly under attack. Facing sexual, verbal, emotional, and physical abuse, she lapses into survival mode, losing all things that give meaning to her life. In a state of constant fear and feeling subhuman, she sees the only way out as ending her life or that of her abuser. Killing her abuser is an act of survival, of liberating herself from the daily hell that she endures (Ewing 590).

### **Immersion Experience Reflection**

Even though I did not get the chance to work directly with battered women who killed their abusers, I did gain some insight as to what life is like behind bars and the struggles that women inmates face. For my immersion experience, I went to the Kentucky Correctional Institution for Women and helped facilitate a Catholic Bible study. I accompanied two women who were regular volunteers in the prison setting. When I first arrived, I saw a large fenced-in area with several buildings. It was not a very attractive place, but it was a little nicer than I had imagined it. After we were cleared to enter, we made our way to the chapel. The grounds on the inside reminded me in some ways of a college campus or a hospital. There were various buildings with connecting sidewalks and picnic tables in the grassy areas. I was surprised to see trees, flowers, and other plants; but surrounding the premises was a chain-linked fence with barbwire on top reminding me that I was in a prison facility.

Once we got inside the chapel, we gathered chairs around in a circle and waited for the prisoners to come (they had to be "counted" first). I felt a bit anxious and uncertain about how they would act, what they would look like, how many would show up, and how they would perceive me. Little by little, several women started coming in and we ended up having a group of 12 including us volunteers. Much to my surprise, there were several young inmates, some who were pregnant, and a few middle-aged women. Most of them were white and looked "normal." None of them seemed to be "tough," like what might be portrayed on TV. Contrarily, most of them were open to share their experiences or were engaged in listening as they processed their own thoughts.

We started the Bible study with a meditation where each person was encouraged to close her eyes and center herself by focusing on her breathing. Once we had a chance

to relax and refocus, we read a few passages from scripture. The two other volunteers facilitated most of the discussion until one girl started to speak. She opened up about how she used to go to church with her grandparents after her mother passed away when she was 15. She was raised going to a Baptist church and a Catholic church, but she didn't feel a strong connection to either. She said she was spiritual, but was really struggling to find a place where she felt comfortable and was not going to be judged. This woman also told the group about her five-year-old daughter whom she had when she was 15. She was pregnant with her second child at age 19, but hoped to get out of prison before the baby was due. I could tell that it was hard to be away from her first child and she felt insufficient as a mother since she was in prison. I can imagine some of the same feelings of estrangement from churches and a yearning to care for her children would emerge from a battered woman who killed her husband. In addition, battered women who kill probably face harsher stereotypes and marginalization from larger society than someone who is imprisoned for a smaller crime.

Another woman also started speaking about how her baby was taken away six months after she gave birth to the child. This woman had been attending a Pentecostal church and seemed to enjoy it, but she had a few problems with it too. For some reason, she believed that the baby had been taken away because of her involvement in Church or that God was punishing her for being a bad mother. I could tell there was tension and some anger towards God, but she did not want to express it. She thought that being mad at God was a sin.

A few other women shared similar stories, questions, and doubts about God and religion. The volunteers assured these women that it is okay to question and be angry with God. We all agreed that it is better to be honest with God than to suppress that emotion. If that tension is ignored, it will hinder the relationship with God. I believe that God meets us where we are and loves us as we are; we don't need to pretend to be someone we are not in order to impress God. While I believe this, I also think that we have to be patient and persevere in prayer. There are times when it seems like God has abandoned us, and these women were experiencing that loneliness and despair. More than anything, these women needed to know that they were still loved by God. God did not send them to prison or "make them pay" by taking their children away. Instead, I believe that God gently invites them to accept God's love and mercy. This is a difficult task for them (and all people) to accept because in accepting God's love, we are also called to reconcile our own shortcomings and failures and help others do the same.

Through my experience at the prison, I was able to see beyond their identity or label as a "criminal." These women were so much more than inmates; they were mothers, sisters, friends, workers, students, and daughters. They have made some mistakes that have consequently landed them in prison. I am glad that I did not know why they were there because knowing their crimes would have probably built a barrier. It felt like more of a hospital or school setting than a prison. As the time went on, I continued to see them as human beings, women like me, than as prisoners. In the back of my mind, however, a bit of curiosity lingered as I wondered what these women were in prison for. I suspected it was mostly drug or alcohol related incidents, but it does not really matter because I cannot judge them for their crimes anyway.

This experience left me with many questions about the criminal justice system as a whole. A crime is an act that society deems as deviant, but who determines what is deviant? If it is the norms of society that shape the laws, then anyone who is raised without a knowledge of the social norms has a higher risk of being imprisoned. In other words, people who are already marginalized from society probably have a higher risk of being incarcerated because they are outcasts and the system already works against them. In the case of battered women who kill their partners, the law does not protect them for defending themselves or their children. After living in a “psychological prison” of abuse for a period of time, they are punished even further by moving to a physical confinement. Even though prisons offer some counseling and religious programs to help the inmates, I question how effective the correctional facilities’ system is in terms of psychological and physical wounds left behind from abuse. Women who suffer abuse and trauma need support, not punishment.

### Theological Reflection

Battered women who kill their abusers need healing and support more than anything. My experience at the women’s prison helped me realize how spiritual many of these women are, but also how excluded they feel by churches. Religious communities have the potential, however, to help these women. Churches can and should act as safe zones and supportive communities for battered women both who kill or do not kill. Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite, the U.S. Catholic Conference of Bishops, and a religious sister who has been involved with prison ministry for many years offer helpful theological approaches to helping battered women. Using their ideas and an example of a support group that was established for battered women who were imprisoned for killing their partners, I will argue that religious communities can offer spiritual support for these women.

Drawing upon Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite’s feminist theology for abused women, I would argue that through Biblical reinterpretation, healing can take place for battered women who kill their partners. Thistlethwaite points out that the Bible can be interpreted in such a way that justifies the subordination of women (Gottlieb 378). Many women are in denial or rationalize the behavior of their abusive partners. From a psychological perspective, this shields them from the reality that they are a victim of abuse. Theologically, it misconstrues the image of God as being distanced, judgmental, and lenient towards men. This image of God is particularly dangerous for battered women who kill their abusers because it makes them feel even more like a criminal in the eyes of God and unworthy of forgiveness. As women move from denial to awareness and begin the healing process, their interpretation of scripture and image of God also has to change towards a more loving, compassionate, and liberating God. Thistlethwaite writes that as healing takes time, rebuilding a new faith foundation can also take time.

Thistlethwaite states that for battered women, the first step in constructing a liberating theology is rebuilding self-esteem. Oftentimes the Bible is interpreted in a way that portrays women as being meek and subordinate to their husbands. If they speak up for themselves, they fall into the sin of pride. Women must learn to look at the Bible through a new lens, which uses critical interpretation. There are several examples from both the

New and Old Testaments that portray God as taking sides with those who are oppressed. For example, many women who suffer from physical abuse can relate to the woman in the Bible in John 8 who was about to be stoned for committing adultery. Jesus forgives her and liberates her from her oppressors, which empowers her and gives her confidence. Even though there are several stories like this one where women play a key role, one has to remember that the Bible itself was written in a male-dominated culture and time period; and unfortunately that culture will always be evident in the text (Gottlieb 380).

The second step is taking control. As women who were abused reinterpret scripture, they must learn to identify with and become one of Jesus' disciples. The Bible states that disciples hear the word of God and do it. Even though the Bible portrays many of Jesus' disciples as men, there are several instances in which women followed Jesus and acted on his word. As women form their role as disciples, it gives them a sense of control through the healing love of Christ. The shift from subordination to empowerment begins to take place as their image of God moves toward liberator (Gottlieb 382).

The final step is claiming anger. There are a few passages in the Epistles that highlight the social order of the time it was written. These texts claim that women must be subject to their husbands. Genesis 2 is also used in justifying subordination of women because woman is made from man. These passages can be a point of frustration because their misinterpretation can often lead to oppression for women (Gottlieb 383). In lieu of these passages, the Bible should be viewed as spiritually inspired work written by humans who live in imperfect societies. Therefore it must continue to be challenged and reinterpreted to be a source of hope and liberation for women who are oppressed. Similar to Thistlethwaite, the U.S. Catholic Bishops also advocate for correct interpretation of biblical texts for battered women.

The U.S. Catholic Conference of Bishops released a pastoral letter titled "When I Call for Help," addressing the issue of domestic violence. They acknowledge that certain passages in the Bible, such as Ephesians 5:22 which says wives must be submissive to their husbands, can be misinterpreted and used to justify abuse against women. Other passages, such as Matthew 6:14-15, which speak of forgiveness of people who sin against one another can also be misused by abusers as leverage for why a woman should stay with her partner after he has mistreated her ("When I Call").

The Bishops advocate for women to be treated with dignity. The pastoral letter also advises clergy members and lay persons to make the church a place of safety for battered women. Priests, deacons, and lay people should listen and believe a woman who reveals to them that she is in an abusive relationship. One should direct the battered woman towards counseling or a place of refuge that will protect her and her children. The abuser must also be held responsible for the sins he has committed. Finally, forgiveness and reconciliation should take place. This does not mean that the relationship must continue, but the bishops emphasize the importance of forgiveness as a step towards healing ("When I Call").

Sr. Mary Schmuck, RSM, who has been involved in prison and jail ministry since the 1970s also notes that as difficult and painful as forgiveness is, it is a crucial step towards rebuilding one's relationship with God, self, and others. For a battered woman who kills her abuser, holding in the anger towards her partner and guilt over killing him will

mentally exhaust her. Clinging to those negative emotions will wear her down and keep her from healing (Schmuck). Metaphorically speaking, it is like having an open wound or a broken bone that can never heal unless one gets proper care. Even though the road to recovery is not an easy process, it is necessary so that the person can continue living. The scars left behind will never go away, but they serve as a reminder for the progress that has taken place since the wound first appeared. In the same way, an abused woman can never forget the pain and hurt caused by her abusive partner, but forgiveness will help her let go of traumatic memories that enslave her.

According to Schmuck, a religious community should act as a support system for battered women, even those who kill their husbands. She says that people are social beings in need of communion with one another. The Body of Christ is made up of imperfect people who rely on each other and God for support. The church must see past the criminal label of people in prison, especially battered women who kill their abusers. Catholic Social Teaching calls the Church to be compassionate towards those imprisoned and act as an advocate for battered women who are unjustly punished for acting out of self-defense. She noted that Jesus himself was a prisoner and was seen as criminal by the society at the time. However, people do not deserve to be stereotyped based on a single act. Everyone is made in the image of God, so each person must regard others as well as themselves as sacred and worthy of love. Love must always precede judgment. Judgment should be left up to God (Schmuck).

Beattie and Shaughnessy's book, *Sisters In Pain*, offers one example of a supportive community that was formed in 1994 specifically for battered women who were imprisoned for killing their partners. Battered Offenders' Self-Help Group (B.O.S.H.) was made up of ten women at the Kentucky Correctional Institution for Women in Pee Wee Valley, Kentucky. In order to join the group, the women had to have been in an abusive relationship, imprisoned for killing their abusers, and be willing to acknowledge the pain she suffered, but also take responsibility for her actions (Beattie and Shaughnessy 4).

This group of women bonded over their experiences of abuse, neglect, and feelings of isolation. As the women began discussing and writing about their experiences, they began to trust each other and restore their self-worth. B.O.S.H. helped these women cope with the anger and guilt they felt over killing their abuser. It gave them a support system, a concept which had been foreign to them when they were abused. This positive support helped them become more autonomous, confident, and self-assured (Beattie and Shaughnessy 5). Eventually the members of this group were granted clemency by Kentucky governor Brereton Jones in 1995. Their stories helped the public gain a better understanding of the experiences of battered women (Beattie and Shaughnessy 25).

Even though B.O.S.H. was not a religious group, it should act as a paradigm for how communities can empower those who are marginalized. The group wanted to inform the public of how they felt about the horrific abuse they had to endure, so they constructed a quilt that depicted different pictures or scenarios representing their abuse. The quilt was more than just a few pieces of fabric sewn together; it represented the reconstruction of trust and self-esteem for these women. It gave them a voice and acted as a vehicle for raising public awareness of the reality of domestic violence. Ultimately the quilt was

something positive that emerged from such a negative and terrifying experience (Beattie and Shaughnessy 9). Richard Taylor's poem, "The Quilting Circle at the Women's Correctional Center in Pee Wee Valley, Kentucky," seems to summarize best what the quilt meant to these women:

Sisters in pain, we piece this quilt  
 From the remnants of our lives,  
 From patches and scraps and cuttings  
 Swept up from creased linoleum  
 And lamentations of dust. From  
 These wads of gathered lint,  
 From these frayed leavings, we sew  
 Tapestries of incest, batterings, and rape  
 That we and our mothers' children  
 Fall heir to. Joined, we must believe  
 They will make us whole.

But no matter what we say  
 About how ritual and talk  
 Promise comfort, promise cure,  
 Survival is the hardest art.  
 Though each garnish square is testimony  
 To mend the tatters of terror and shame,  
 These emblems of abuse only sheathe  
 The teased cotton battering,  
 The unraveling thread.  
 As each piece of the needle  
 Stitches the fragments whole,  
 Believe, O believe, this fabric bleeds (Beattie and Shaughnessy 1).

These stories have painted a picture of the life of a battered woman, revealing the pain she has hidden behind years of unimaginably horrific abuse. Just as B.O.S.H. gave these women a support system, the church should also act as a place where their voices are heard and affirmed. Christian communities can use Jesus' life of marginalization as a foundation for welcoming battered women into their communities. The church must also receive these women without judgment and be a source of hope and reconciliation. Whether it is through creating a quilt or offering a Bible study, Christian communities must welcome all of its members, especially battered women who feel marginalized and unwanted.

In response to their experiences, I offer a prayer of my own that comes from the perspective of a battered woman who kills her abuser. While I do not fully understand their experiences, this prayer is meant to be a statement of solidarity with these women. It is inspired by Psalm 22, a prayer of lament and deliverance, as well as the prayer that Jesus prayed as He died on the cross.

Oh God  
Are you even there?  
Do you hear my cries?  
Or do you turn a blind eye to my pain?  
You who created me 'in your image,'  
Do you not see the bruises, burns, and scars  
That never fade from my body?  
Have even you abandoned me?  
Deemed me as hopeless?  
Left me to rot inside and out?  
Be trampled over  
And tossed around  
In this never-ending cycle?

I am hurting.  
My body aches.  
My mind is taxed with surviving  
In this twisted game of hell.  
Day in and day out,  
I cling to life.  
But I am sorry that I cannot kiss the sweet face of death.

God, I have called for help  
But have received no answer.  
I am faced with gusts of rage  
And inescapable blows in my direction  
And you,  
You remain silent.  
It is the silence that scares me most.  
The not knowing,  
The uncertainty about tomorrow.

Oh God,  
Stand by me in the silence.  
I have no one,  
But you alone.  
When the time comes,  
Give me strength  
To act,  
To be set free.

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# Death for Perfection

Michelle Carwile

*“Until I wake up and the scale reads 100 pounds, I am a failure. The scale reads 100 pounds and I still can’t fit into the size double zero jeans at Aeropostale. This will not do, I’ll get to 95 pounds so I can fit into the jeans and then I’ll be thin enough for the world to like me. If I eat breakfast today I’ll get fat. I have been sitting all day, I need to go run or the 500 calories I had today will end up on my inner thighs. It is ok that I do not have enough body fat to have my period because I am on birth control now to induce my period to combat early onset of osteoporosis. I really need to stop throwing up my food because I heard that it can cause heart problems due to loss of electrolytes... I’ll just do it this one last time though because I had way too many calories... it is never the last time. The doctors said they will have to put me on a feeding tube if I lose more weight but they are just trying to make me fat and steal my happiness. Without makeup I am ugly and no one will want to socialize with me; attractive girls are always more successful in life. None of these girls’ thighs touch in this swimsuit ad; I’ll look disgusting if I don’t achieve the gap. As long as I stay skinny, none of my other failures in life will matter. Please God, make me skinny, make me pretty...”*

Michelle Carwile

These are the thoughts that ran through a girl’s mind every day from the time she was 13 until she was 21 who suffered from anorexia and bulimia. Women as well as little girls are bombarded daily by media showing unnaturally thin and unrealistically flawless women. Yes, unrealistic because most women in advertisements and commercials are photoshopped; we are not even looking at real women. When the media uses models that are unhealthily thin or photoshopped to sell items, they are not only selling the item, they are selling self-worth along with it. According to NEDA, by age six, girls are grasping the emphasis Western society puts on the relationship between beauty and perfection and between the ages of 15 and 24, they are more likely to die from an eating disorder than by any other cause of death. In the U.S., 20,000 women suffer from a clinically significant eating disorder. Most scary is that eating disorders have the highest mortality rate of any other psychological disorder in the U.S (South Carolina DMH).

Luckily, the girl above did not die from her eating disorder. Luckily, she is writing this paper in order to help other victims and to shine a light on the amazing path God has set for them and the beautiful body God gave them. Eating disorders can become addictive, life-consuming, and detrimental to females in their growth with God and the amazing plans God has in store for them as well as all other aspects of their lives. If you'll notice, the self-criticisms going through my mind above all started with "I". That's what eating disorders from body image issues do; they snare the mind into selfish thinking and self-ruin. There is no room for others and no room for God. Almost every area of that person's life is stunted. Body image disorders are one of the leading forms of inconspicuous oppression of women today. Christian women are not immune to it either. In fact, the language often used in churches to describe the sinful nature of the body may give the person more reason to dislike and try to fix her body. This negative language does not express the love that God has not only for our spirit, but also for a body, which is seen through the resurrection of Jesus. Churches need to get involved in promoting healthy body image and educating girls so that girls can grow up to be confident women whose passion is to please God and not society.

When women with eating disorders decide to seek help, it can be confusing to decide who to go to. Some might end up going to the pastor of their church or some may seek counseling. However, according to Biblical Hope, a Christian association for women's counseling, both of these choices may not end up helping the individual recover. Most likely the pastor will be a man and will not fully be able to understand how deep the pressure to be thin and attractive is embedded in women. Going to a psychiatrist will be helpful in that it will give her practical advice. For example, the health effects of eating disorders and ways to occupy and soothe the mind when she is caving in to eating disorder actions and negative body image thoughts. This practical advice may not quite get to the root of the problem though. At Biblical Hope, they employ female counselors who are well-versed in the many issues that women struggle with and who also love Jesus. So not only can they provide the practical advice, they also help women to move their focus away from their problems and towards Jesus to learn what their life is really supposed to be centered around. (Biblical Hope)

Through my own experience, I can attest to this need for both types of counseling. I never sought the help of a pastor or any of my church members, but I did seek the help of a psychologist. Being able to cry and express all my thoughts was a tremendous relief and the tips that she gave me as far as how to divert my mind to other thoughts were helpful but they were not enough; anorexia always consumed my thoughts before I thought about my counseling techniques. It took a major health scare and a second time with my psychologist to rid myself of bulimia and severe anorexia. I was still struggling with wanting to control my weight until I started reading books by others who suffered from eating disorders and most importantly and ironically a book entitled *Kisses from Katie* by Katie Davis who details her new life in Uganda where she is devoting her life to spreading the word of God and helping the least of God's children. Reading this made me realize how selfish I had been, thinking only about staying thin and worrying about how others perceive me from the outside. There are people in Uganda starving and here I am starving myself intentionally,

throwing up food and spending money on clothes and make-up that I do not need all in the name of conforming to the Western view of what women should be to be successful and accepted. This is when I realized that following Jesus was the missing puzzle piece to my recovery. Life is not about me; it's about God, others, then me.

To provide the best counseling to these females so that it does not take a health scare to stop them, education on body image and eating disorders needs to start in the church. Lynne Baab, who is a minister and lecturer of pastoral theology, wrote about a youth group leader, Missy Lein, at a church in Seattle who started a body image workshop for girls in a church. Lein started the program after asking a little girl what she would ask God for and the girl replied she wanted God to teach her to love her body because she didn't. Through listening to the little girl, Lein learned that the girl was struggling with body image because of media she sees every day. Lein then formed a group consisting of adult women and teenage girls. The adult women shared their stories of struggle with body image and how they came to love their bodies as temples of God. The women offer a safe place where girls can open up about the pressures they experience to look a certain way without fearing that they will be shamed or ridiculed for being influenced by such pressures. They have formed a support group in which the girls can be supporters for each other and ignore the constant images of women in ads and billboards and discover how God wants them to view their bodies. A phrase the group says often together is, "Our bodies are for the Lord and the Lord is for our bodies."

Another way in which to teach about positive body image is to show girls in church that they can take action against these oppressive views. Julia Bluhm is a perfect example. Bluhm, a fourteen-year old, decided to start a campaign in 2012 after listening to many of her friends in ballet complaining about their weight. She started it on the Change.org website asking for *Seventeen Magazine* to show one unchanged spread of a girl each month. The petition got 80,000 signatures on the website plus a demonstration outside *Seventeen* headquarters that led to *Seventeen Magazine* promising to never Photoshop any of their models. Julia said that we need to focus on personality, not people's body. Now, the petition is taking on *Teen Vogue Magazine*. Having girls in church youth groups take a stand against societal norms for the bodies God blessed them with is a tremendous start in getting girls to respect their bodies and learn how to do the work of Jesus, who always fought against secular norms. (Hu)

Youth Work Resource is a website that posts youth group activity ideas, with body image being one of the topics. The session presented on body image explores the ideas we hold of ourselves and to look at whom God says we are and is aimed towards both sexes. The first part of the activity invites the kids to sketch a picture of themselves and to write things they like and dislike about themselves including body and talents. Next they are asked that, when they think of themselves, are they first drawn to the things they dislike or like and why they think they are drawn to that one first. Next, the youth group leader points out that we usually tend to like or dislike certain aspects because that is what we have been told or what media tells us. The writers say we have to build up our identity from the right sources, and that starts in the Bible. The site did not allude to many examples from the Bible, but many can be found, such as:

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*“But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature. . . for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.”*

1 Samuel 16:7

*“Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes. 4 Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God’s sight.”*

Peter 3:3-4

*“He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.”*

Isaiah 53:2

The passage from Isaiah describes Jesus as one who could not attract our attention by his looks. Those who followed Jesus though were soon attracted to him because of the wonderful things that he did for people. Other images the Bible has that are transforming are when Jesus washes his disciples’ feet, showing love for one’s body. (Chorn)

From my own experience, people who are trying to help others with a body image and eating disorder must also watch out for passages that might invoke shame such as:

*“Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised.”*

Proverbs 31:30

Passages such as this convey scolding; this is not what people need to hear from the Bible as it does not help them connect with their body in the spiritual since that God can offer such as in the passages above it. If people feel that the only thing they will hear from the Bible is judgment, this will be a turn off; they need to know the God that loves their bodies.

Next the group plays a game in guessing which celebrity images are photoshopped to show the reality behind these women we so often compare ourselves to. Next they read passages in the Bible such as Luke 4: 1-13, which tells how Jesus was tempted by the devil when the devil told Jesus that if he worshiped him, he would have all the glory in the world. Jesus refused and quoted the Bible, “Worship the Lord your God and him only.” The website did not explain the relationship of this verse to negative body image, but it might mean that by conforming to what society says is perfection, like thinness and fashion, is serving the secular society and self-interest, not the Lord. Next they are to read John 8: 32, “and then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free”, and discuss this in groups. Then they meet back up, and the youth leader explains the relationship of the passage, which is that the way we learn to view our bodies from media is not the way God intended us to view our bodies. (*Self-Image/Body Image/Identity*)

Another inspiring website, The Gospel Coalition, posted an article about body image and women. Within it they referenced an experiment the Dove Campaign For Real Beauty did in which they hired an artist to draw women as they see themselves and as others see them without seeing the women for himself. The sketches done from comments made by a woman about herself ended up always being sad and rough-looking whereas the sketch made by the description a woman or man made about another woman were always happier and softer-looking sketches. It revealed how rough we are on ourselves when it comes to body image due to the unrealistic bodies media portrays. This is an eye-opening resource for churches to show to a group. (Carter)

This type of group session would be very effective since it helps the youth members realize they are not the only ones struggling with negative body image and that media is at fault. They also begin to realize that viewing their body as for God, and not the secular society, turns their thoughts from negative self-destructive thoughts, to empowering and positive thoughts. Churches can also access other resources online from testimonials of those who have struggled with eating disorders and how learning to view themselves through God's eyes helped them. These web sources are also great for finding Christian books that the church youth group can recommend to those with eating disorders or use in study. One such book is called *The Religion of Thinness* by Michelle Lelwica, a professor of religion. This is a great resource because not only does she study spiritual aspects of body image but she also suffered from bulimia and anorexia for three years until she also began to have her own health scares. In the book, she writes how the pursuit of thinness has taken the place of the pursuit of God and what cultural factors have stolen away women from their path with God. (Lelwica)

In 2010, Lelwica did an interview with John Shorb who works for the magazine *Christian Reader* discussing her spiritual perspective on body image. Lelwica puts emphasis on Christianity's teaching of Incarnation and the divine becoming human. She says many Christians have forgotten about this teaching and view the body as separate from God. Reiterating the concept that our bodies and not only our minds are of spirit as well is a critical teaching for those with eating disorders. The body is not a secular thing for society, separate from the mind, it is a divine thing meant to use for God. Church teachings on how the body leads one to sin and must be controlled also feeds in to the body image issue of needing to control what one looks like. She says that historically and presently women have been viewed by church and society as more bodily and sexual. As society conveys the message that the most important aspiration for women should be to be attractive, more energy is spent on fixing ourselves. She notes, just as I did with my own experience, that this cheats women out of the more fulfilling part of ourselves, which is growth and self-discovery of what makes us unique individuals.

Lelwica talks about how the first step is moving out of denial, which is difficult because women are often rewarded for their eating disorder when they receive compliments for being so thin since that is what society aims for. This is exactly why mine went on for so long, but what I did not realize was that this behavior is not rewarded by or pleasing to God. From my own experience of some of the helpful resources to quicker recovery, being in a group of women talking about negative body image and eating disorders is a key to help-

ing one move out of denial. This is because talking about the issue openly normalizes the eating disorder and low self-esteem so women are not as ashamed and also begin to realize how illogical their actions are. A Christian group is even better because then women will be addressing spiritual needs that are being denied through obsession of thinness. (Shorb)

In the interview, Lelwica also addresses how churches should be involved and what they should do. Realizing that body image disorders are a spiritual disorder and are serious is the first step. The church needs to debunk the morals and images in society that compete with that of the church and admit to this. Lelwica points out that the church will need to not only discuss negative societal influences but also the negative body views in the Bible and pull out the positive body messages. Passages about Jesus are key, because in many of the passages Jesus is always viewing societal norms with a skeptical eye. Teaching women to look at what society is telling them is the path to perfection versus what Jesus is telling them is helpful Lelwica states. (Shorb)

One might think that there are only a few stories in the Bible that one can refer to that might help with positive body image. Getting ahold of resources that explore positive body image and bodily respect in relation to one's spirituality is crucial for church groups. *Honoring the Body* by Stephanie Paulsell is a mind-changing resource. Paulsell directs the book towards readers who have struggled with weight gain and body image so it is definitely going to be relatable for the reader. Like Lelwica, Paulsell also says that the incarnation of God through Jesus and then the resurrection of Jesus' body reveal that God not only cares about our spirits, but our bodies as well. Also similar to Lelwica, Paulsell notes the practice of referring to oneself as bodies of Christ instead of spirits of Christ. By using this symbol, early Christians recognized that it is through our bodies that we honor God through activities like taking care of the sick and poor. There is no separation of Spirit and body—they are one, and Paulsell distinguishes the difference as either thinking that we inhabit a body or that we are a body. Those who believe they are their body are much more likely to respect their body as God given.

An analogy that Paulsell first illustrates to paint a picture of what honoring the body looks like and can feel like is with bathing. She tells the intimate story of a daughter who would sit in the bathroom and talk with her mother while she bathed. The daughter noted how her mother took much effort in drawing the perfect bath and to wash herself with great care as if enjoying a delicate gift. When her mother had grown too ill to give herself a bath and her body had seemed to betray her, she and her daughter still honored the body as a prized possession, not just a shell. The mother still wanted to make sure her body was clean and her daughter made sure to give her the long and intimate bath the mother always gave herself and had once given her. This may seem like it has nothing to do with a body image and eating issues, but as a former sufferer from these issues, reading this made me make that connection of thinking of myself as a body.

Another helpful topic Paulsell covers that helps with the body image issue is with clothing. She covers how clothing is used to symbolize so much about us and says to ask yourself, "is your clothing setting you free or restraining you?" (Paulsell 67) In other words, is your clothing an expression of your true self, or is it what you think you have to wear to be liked? I apply this to my anorexia for the pursuit of thinness. Am I restricting

in order to get to a healthy weight or am I restricting to be ridiculously thin like all the models in the media, which drains me of all energy, mentally and physically, to obtain. She uses passages from the Bible that praise the body such as from Psalm 139:14 when a psalmist sings, “I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made!” to also teach how God wants us to view our bodies. Her references to challenges we face with media trying to “perfect” our bodies is helpful. She shows that our body has become more of a project to us in our pursuit to achieve the perfect butt or abs, and instead of exercising and nourishing oneself in a way that rejoices the body, it is done in a mindset that our bodies are not good enough. It is almost as if we are punishing ourselves instead of rewarding ourselves with these same daily needs of exercise and food.

The books and websites mentioned above are fantastic tools for the church to use to combat body image issues, prevent eating disorders, and increase self-esteem. It undeniably needs to become the church’s responsibility to help the females of their church develop positive body image and also take action in the community to help all others who are sufferers. The church needs to admit that the morals and beliefs system that society is teaching women has become more powerful than what the church may every now and then mention about loving the body. Many women may go to church only once a week, but it is probably safe to say that women are targeted by media almost hourly. So, forming special groups aimed towards promoting positive body image and discussing issues like anorexia and bulimia is crucial. Eating disorders kill and body image issues can fog the mind, making it impossible to see what God sees and felt when making our body and what God intended us to use it for.

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# The Social Gospel: Christianity and Socialism in America

Blake Reichenbach

In modern media, religion and politics are most often blended together when speaking of the “Christian Right,” which found its legitimacy in 1976 when an evangelical, Jimmy Carter, was elected as president. From there, the Christian Right solidified in the 1980s and formulated a specific political agenda that was based in a traditionalistic interpretation of the Christian faith. Today, it is within conservative circles that we mostly see the integration of religion and politics, stemming from this political movement (“For the Kingdom of God”). However, politics and religion have been intertwined throughout American history, including a rich history of Christian socialists. In fact, from the late 1800s, Socialist thought has informed Christian practice and social implications through the concept of the Social Gospel but is often intentionally ignored and undermined by the dominance of conservative thought in American Christianity that finds itself at odds with Socialist thought. The religious discourse that comes out of socialist ideology has been a shaping factor in the society of the United States from before the onset of the twentieth century but has consistently faced hurdles of tradition and has been subject to fluctuate in prominence with the strength of the economy and Americans’ faith in capitalism.

According to the Britannica encyclopedia, the Social Gospel has historically been assigned the definition of “a religious social-reform movement that was [...] dedicated to the betterment of industrialized society through application of the biblical principles of charity and justice,” and it has acted as a catalyst of societal reform. Proponents of the Social Gospel—such as priests, pastors, and rabbis—have sought to awaken a social conscience within their parishioners by seeking to encourage the application of religious tradition to modern issues of social inequality. In fact, during the peak of the Socialist Party of America in the first three decades of the twentieth century, members of the Socialist Party “insisted that only an end to Capitalism would usher in the Kingdom of God on earth,” because they believed that socialism was the true embodiment of Jesus’ teaching within the Gospels, and that it would lead to the emergence of a new, universal religion that would supersede prior religious tradition (McKanan 1). Practitioners of the Social Gospel held that inequality was inherently dangerous to society because it betrayed the principles of love and morality that were presented by Jesus and created a system of class conflict, and that inequality would eventually place too much strain upon societal structures for them to be maintained.

One of the notable theologians who wrote extensively about the concept of the Social Gospel was Walter Rauschenbusch. Though his book *Christianity and the Social Crisis* was originally published in 1907, many of the social issues Rauschenbusch addresses from the perspective of the Social Gospel are still relevant to modern society, and successive theologians and scholars have approached the same issues of inequality and disparity from a modern perspective. Rauschenbusch treated issues of land ownership, class exploitation, wealth disparity, and moral degradation as symptoms of the inherent inequality that stems from capitalism. Rauschenbusch, similar to the position taken by most socialist and Marxist scholars, posits that pure capitalism operates as a system of exploitation in which the ruling class has an “eye for profit that [is] keener than their ear for the voice of God and humanity,” and that this creates distinct social classes because, “as capitalism grows, it must create a proletariat to correspond” (182, 204). In his criticism of the capitalist system, Rauschenbusch explains that because capitalism enables a controlling class to exist, then the working class becomes a means of maximizing profit rather than a collective group of individuals. From this, the working class, environment, and political structure are merely tools to be used by those who already have the power to use them; once put into a position of desperation and undesirable conditions, not only have the morals of those who created such conditions been degraded, but those who have been degraded are more likely to be reduced to vices such as illegal operations or alcoholism to cope with their condition.

Like other Social Gospelers, Rauschenbusch believed that a system that was structurally designed to subjugate the poor to the profit of the wealthy was contradictory to the scriptural message of the gospels of the New Testament. For instance, it was irreconcilable to Social Gospelers that a society could claim to be a Christian country when labor conditions ensured that the poor could not accumulate wealth and were constantly on the verge of destitution. Such socioeconomic patterns did not match up with verses such as Mark 12:32, which says “The second [greatest commandment] is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” For the Social Gospelers, the gospels presented a message of respect for humanity, and therefore, a hopefulness in human equality—the gospels encouraged treating the symptoms of poverty, and by extension, opposing establishments that made poverty a necessary part of society.

Much of the issues that are debated in modern politics echo the same issues that are scrutinized by the Social Gospelers, but the continued prevalence of the matters should not minimize the impact of the implications of the Social Gospel. Most historians attribute the efforts of the Social Gospelers to being a part of bringing about the Progressive Era of American history, shaping some of the goals and outcomes of the New Deal, and some scholars suggest that the Social Gospel was the primary means by which American sociology was born. It was also a crucial component of the evolution of the American Christian church. Earlier church teachings that emphasized the salvation of the individual soul as the ultimate outcome of religion were not capable of dealing with rising forces like industrialization, urbanization, or immigration; the Social Gospel, by focusing more on the application of the religious principles of justice and charity to society as whole, was better suited to accommodate discussion and the addressing of those issues. As a result, in several Christian circles, churches began to recalibrate (not abandon older teachings

altogether, but rather to refine them and view some components as fluid rather than rigid) their teachings so that they could better account for the modern social issues that did not fit the historical contexts of the scriptures' original writing—among other things, some protestants began to consider scientific advances to be compatible with faith and the idea of the “Kingdom of God” evolved from the Calvinist notion of being God’s election of select individuals to being an earthly utopia where God would be sovereign (Williams and Maclean 342).

Despite the growing efforts and influence of the Social Gospellers, modern political and social discourse in America has a tendency to ignore the legitimacy of ongoing socialist efforts in the country. Once the Socialist Party of America began to decline from its peak at around 1934, it has consistently been ignored by most, and even vilified by American fundamentalists. Along with the socialist movement, the Social Gospel has also been too often overlooked because of its origin in socialist ideology. During the Great Depression, the Socialist Party attracted between 5 and 25 percent of mainstream Protestant clergy to its membership and garnished over two percent of the popular vote in the 1932 election, which boasts the highest rates of popular support of any socialist movement in the United States (McKanan 757, 752). However, the Socialist Party was fraught with divisions over the inclusion of Marxist communists and issues such as pacifism, which began to fracture the party at the same time that the New Deal ushered in many of the main societal changes for which the Socialist Party called (McKanan 774). Under the New Deal, America adopted programs such as the Public Works Association and Social Security, which helped to create a sense of entitlement to jobs and used collectivism within public policy to provide for some of the most needy (Harvey 87). Through this program, the main concerns of the Socialist Party were met—tax funds and collective action was being used to make sure that those with the most need were not left to fend for themselves but had social protections built into the legal code to combat destitution. After seeing such a success realized in American society, the party lost much of its momentum. On top of that, in subsequent decades, socialism would be misconstrued to have ties to the evils of fascism associated with World War II Germany; a few more decades and the United States would enter into conflict with the Soviet Union and the period now known as the “Red Scare” would further diminish the role of the socialist party within the United States, and thereby the Social Gospel. Finally, this mentality would shape the leadership of presidents such as Reagan who would call for a return to tradition in patriotism and economics and herald trickle-down economics as the champion of the free market, rather than a reinforcement of the inequality created by capitalism.

However, current economic trends suggest (and ongoing policy and events seem to affirm) a reemergence of socialist thought within the United States, if historical patterns are to repeat themselves. The Socialist Party of America that gave birth to the Social Gospel was propelled by two major events—the recession of 1893 and the Great Depression, which cast doubts on the viability of capitalism to support a society, when people were able to see that the communist Soviet Union was able to escape such economic hardships. During these periods, as in other times of economic recession such as today, not only did people call the stability of capitalism into question, but the importance of a Social Gos-

pel becomes more clear. Socialism and the theology that stems from it are able to visibly converge during times of economic crisis; Socialism emerges as a potential solution to empowering the destitute, and the Social Gospel emerges as a force in spirituality that posits that “Jesus had not taught a specific social program, but instead enunciated broad spiritual principles that had to be translated within the context of each era of society” (McKanan 764).

Programs such as socialized healthcare being at the forefront of present political discourse suggest that, just as during the Great Depression, the Great Recession has the potential to usher in a reemergence of policy that draws upon socialism as a means of economic recovery. In fact, Philip Harvey with the Rutgers School of Law proposes to incite a revival of New Deal economics among academics and policy makers as a more effective means of economic recovery than the budget cuts and tax breaks that have dominated the last eighty years of economic policy. Along with a reemergence of the type of policy that the members of the Socialist Party of America called for at the onset of the twentieth century, there is also a rise in progressive Christianity that seems to have the potential to develop into a collective of thought similar to that of the Social Gospelers. In fact, the Public Religion Research Institute conducted a study in 2013 to gauge Americans’ economic values in relation to their religious identities, and in doing so, found that the greatest percentage of religiously identified Americans are now, coming out of the wake of the Moral Majority of the 1980’s, considered to be religiously moderate rather than conservative, and younger generations are steadily being classified as religiously liberal (Jones, Cox, et al).

Despite limiting factors within American society, such as fundamentalism and global conflicts that undermined the validity of socialist influence among the general public, from before the onset of the twentieth century socialist ideology has been influencing society to varying degrees depending upon the strength of the economy and Americans’ faith in capitalism. The application of the biblical principles of justice, charity, and equality has been an influential force in religion through figures like Rauschenbusch and has subsequently had an impact upon social policy. As the prominence of such ideologies are in flux and not limited to a specific point in time, we are currently in an era of doubt about the functionality of the free market system and could potentially see the rebirth of the Social Gospel movement in the form of collectivist law and religious outreach.

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# The Internet and Western Culture as Distortive Powers

Carolina de Legarreta

A false impression is hard to retract, and when it is introduced through the Internet, it can spread like wildfire and lodge itself into the viewer's brain before it is ever corrected. When the short film *KONY 2012* was uploaded to YouTube last March, it introduced a name previously unfamiliar to most Americans: Joseph Kony. Using special effects with themes of social media, the video illustrates Kony's reign of terror in Uganda, a terrorist responsible for creating an army of child soldiers and attacking civilians for many years, who remains at large. The video aimed to capture people's attention and to help the organization behind it raise money to stop Kony. While using the Internet to spread this kind of message showed innovation, this activist effort gave way to the misrepresentation of a country already shrouded in wrongful assumptions. As the single source for most of its viewers' knowledge on the subject, *KONY 2012* was responsible for shaping public memory of Joseph Kony as well as the civilians affected by his deeds. The video was meant to inspire viewers to take action, and so ideally, it had to tell the story as accurately as possible. However, *KONY 2012* failed to address Uganda's cultural context and political environment, issues that must be acknowledged in order to achieve permanent social change in Uganda, and Africa in general. A country's infrastructure problems cannot be solved with monthly donations; we must get to the core of the issue and, occasionally, let that country learn from its own mistakes. In the end, *KONY 2012* caused Americans — particularly white teenage females — to continue to endorse the view of Africa as a helpless region that cannot hope to succeed without the intervention of the West, a concept that will ultimately discourage any real progress in Africa.

*KONY 2012* lasts nearly thirty minutes, and its basic goal is to introduce viewers to the deeds of Joseph Kony and his Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), as well as to encourage involvement with Invisible Children, the non-profit organization responsible for the release of the film. As the video explains, Joseph Kony is a Ugandan man who kidnaps children and forces them to wield weapons and often to kill their families in order to redirect their loyalty to him. Perhaps even more shocking is that, according to the video, Kony has no known cause; despite the religious connotation of his group, he has absolutely no affiliation with religion and seems to work only to terrorize. Kony has been at large for decades, and his arrest has been warranted by the International Criminal Court (ICC) for his crimes against humanity. In fact, according to *KONY 2012* filmmaker Jason Russell, Kony is at

the top of the ICC's list of worldwide criminals ("KONY 2012"). The video has now accumulated nearly 100 million views on YouTube alone and has been shared on several other social networking sites such as Twitter, Facebook, and Tumblr. Since its release, Invisible Children has received an influx of donations as well as pledges to take action; in fact, shortly after the video's online publication, the organization's website crashed due to heavy traffic (Nibbe "Invisible Children"). *KONY 2012* erupted onto the online scene and opened many people's eyes to an issue to which they had been previously blind. The public memory of Uganda that was encouraged by this video would prove to be dangerously skewed and fragmented.

In order to explain the issue of Kony and the LRA within the time constraints, Russell staged a conversation with his young son Gavin to explain to him and the audience simultaneously who Joseph Kony was. Because Gavin cannot fully understand the extent of Kony's deeds, Russell uses uncomplicated language to describe the situation: he and Invisible Children are the "good guys" who want to stop the "bad guy" from hurting children like Gavin. This is undeniably a worthy and noble cause, but the presentation of these events from the point of view of a toddler only provides a piece of the puzzle. As Nigerian author Teju Cole explains in *The Atlantic*, "militarization of poorer countries, short-sighted agricultural policies, resource extraction, the propping up of corrupt governments, and the astonishing complexity of long-running violent conflicts over a wide and varied terrain" ("The White-Savior Industrial Complex") have all contributed to the social climate that has allowed Kony to take power. Since the video glossed over these major concepts, it became an inaccurate conceptualization of a complex war that had been plaguing an already unfamiliar country. Predictably, the video caused much confusion over just what the LRA had done, and it spurred the misguided actions of viewers — mostly young people — that did not address the central problems in Uganda and surrounding areas. The video showed Uganda through the biased lens of a Westerner, which caused many misconceptions among viewers that led to potentially damaging views of the country as a place that needed salvation through the more knowledgeable United States.

When it was first released, *KONY 2012* shocked Americans with the onslaught of brand-new information presented in such a dramatic way. Unless there was reason to be invested in Uganda's political standing, it was unlikely that the average viewer was familiar with the issues raised by the video. In fact, before the video's release, the name Joseph Kony was quite unknown to those living in the United States, but *KONY 2012* obliterated that particular unawareness. Amy C. Finnegan of the Center for Learning Innovation at the University of Minnesota-Rochester recently launched an ethnographic study of those who volunteered with Invisible Children after watching *KONY 2012*. One of the girls Finnegan interviewed expressed a widely felt distress when she confessed her ignorance to "this conflict that [was] happening for 30-something years" ("The White Girl's Burden" 33). Indeed, many people were deeply moved by the video's content, and because the issue seemed to be largely ignored before, they felt compelled to share the message by spreading the video throughout the Internet.

Not only were people greatly affected by the video, some even felt guilty because they had not known before, and even because of their privileged position, which was such a

contrast to the children depicted in *KONY 2012*. Finnegan interviewed a college student named Jenny about her motivation to get involved with Invisible Children. She showed this same sentiment through Finnegan's questioning, saying, "I just don't feel comfortable going through my life, living my life as if those things aren't happening; I just don't feel like I have a right to live a normal life if other people aren't" ("Behind Kony 2012" 148). When confronted with the story shown in *KONY 2012*, Jenny, and others like her, realized how different their situations were, and they felt a certain obligation to get involved.

Whitewashing the entire topic is a definite sin that *KONY 2012* commits, as evidenced by the clear target audience. Jason Russell can be seen leading hordes of white American teens wearing t-shirts with the Invisible Children logo emblazoned across their chests. The video includes footage of Invisible Children representatives speaking at high schools, and those same students show up in later clips marching alongside their peers to raise awareness about Kony. Amy Finnegan gathered demographic information about those involved with Invisible Children, and her findings revealed that it was mostly "young, privileged, evangelical Christian, female Americans" who were inspired to join the movement ("The White Girl's Burden" 31). This concentrated group is perfectly poised to take the kind of action Invisible Children demands: often their parents have enough influence in the community to assist in fundraising, and their like-minded peers are inspired to help simply because everyone else is.

Because *KONY 2012* was produced by white Americans, the video clearly presents a Western perspective of the events captured. This reinforces the depiction of Uganda as a country dependent on others—namely, the United States—for aid. The seemingly superior narrators provide the background for a country of which they are not completely knowledgeable. Neither the filmmakers nor the viewers grew up in Uganda, and none of them have encountered firsthand exactly what has happened. In the 1980s, Kony called for the overthrow of President Yoweri Museveni and began mobilization for the LRA; he led attacks on civilians for over twenty years until government retaliation forced him to essentially flee Uganda in 2006 ("Joseph Rao Kony"). The video fails to address any of this historical context, which inhibits viewers from comprehending the intricacy of Uganda's social and political situation. Such holes in the story presented further contribute to Uganda's misrepresentation. Clearly, the video was made by foreigners for foreigners and, according to Finnegan, it paints a picture "in which Africa remains an object to be manipulated by outsiders" ("Beneath Kony 2012" 138). The filmmakers show no respect for what Ugandans have gone through because the events have been distorted, and they have taken it upon themselves to tell a story that is not completely true without providing sufficient testimonial from Ugandans themselves. At one point, Russell suggests that a goal of Invisible Children is to "strengthen US military support to Uganda, both in funding and through personnel such as the US military advisors sent to the region in 2011" ("Beneath Kony 2012" 153). With this suggestion, Russell encourages the continued use of militant force in Africa; again, this would be America stepping in to solve an African nation's problems. A stronger government would provide a more united front for Uganda, and as such, this is where the focus should be redirected instead of increasing the gun power.

Of the thirty-minute video, only about five minutes is devoted to Kony's actions and explaining the background of the LRA. This imbalance shifts the focus from the prescribed victims of the situation to the viewers themselves. Rather than expand on the situation at hand, the video immediately transitions into an urge to take action, and even then, the action does not actually require much effort. A mere click to share the video or to donate to the Invisible Children organization is the only assignment viewers receive, and not much information is provided about what Invisible Children will do with that money. Russell seems to prey on the passivity of teenagers surfing the web by encasing his mission with eye-catching visual effects and the promise of making a difference through a simple task.

Since teenagers are the main target with this video, clearly there had to be some element that would make it relatable, and that is where social media comes in. Social media provided most of the success for this campaign, both for distribution and for effectiveness. Invisible Children clearly intended for the video to be shared online, seeing as that is where the video is located. Russell even used elements of social media within the video: when he presents the testimonial of the young man that inspired his quest, Russell uses screenshots from a Facebook timeline to represent the journey of the project ("KONY 2012"). Invisible Children has a well-established place online, and it is through this strategy that so many young people were able to receive the message. As Finnegan states, "more than a dozen films, as well as hundreds of trailers, short videos, and podcasts" were released by Invisible Children to capture the attention of the public ("The White Girl's Burden" 31). True to its word, Invisible Children had succeeded in making Kony infamous, at least for the time being. Had it not been for the Internet, the message would not have reached so many people in such a short amount of time.

Nevertheless, the use of social media while shaping public memory can cause misconceptions and biases to form. Accessibility to the Internet has become a reality for a majority of the world, even more so within the borders of the United States. No longer are historians and museum curators the only people who produce commentary on social history; there are no required credentials for a blog post or even a status update. Anyone who is willing can open a browser window and put his opinion out there:

"Instead of only official accounts disseminated by mainstream media and the government, all kinds of stories can now become a part of an evolving patchwork of public memory. Formerly limited in time and space, ephemeral gestures can be preserved in still and moving images, ready to be viewed and replayed on demand. Previously banished to dark storage rooms, mementos left at memorial sites can be displayed for all to see. The boundaries between the official and the vernacular, the public and the private, the permanent and the evanescent will cease to matter, for all stories and images will be equally fit to represent and comment on the past" (Haskins 405).

Ekaterina Haskins points out that an official entity—whether it is an established newspaper or a government agency—no longer monopolizes the ability to share information with the public. With the Internet, organizations such as Invisible Children can release

its message and reach hundreds upon thousands of people without any kind of established authority. At the same time, all those individuals who have received the information can add their own opinions and distribute it through their own devices, until eventually the end product can have very little in common with the original idea. Because Russell used such a popular medium to publish *KONY 2012*, he had a responsibility to make sure his message was as complete and accurate as possible, especially with the knowledge that strangers bearing no affiliation to Invisible Children could anonymously comment with their own thoughts and ideas, contributing even further to the public memory of Kony. Rather than fulfill his duty, though, Russell and the Invisible Children constructed the image of Uganda as weak and incapable of helping itself.

The use of social media to promote activism has led to the oversimplification of complex issues. The perception of these issues then becomes skewed, leaving Americans to act on issues they do not fully understand in ways that do not even come close to solving the real problems. In the case of *KONY 2012*, filmmaker Jason Russell chose a lens that would pique the interest of his audience, which would later produce a fractured and damaging image of Uganda. To have such a pitiful representation of Uganda, and Africa as a whole, is detrimental to the continent's future; if we constantly feel superior and more capable of solving its problems, its inhabitants will never learn to stand on their own feet and will only encourage our sense of entitlement and arrogance towards other countries. The instantaneous nature of the Internet produces sensations that will be viral one minute and irrelevant the next. As much of a splash as *KONY 2012* made upon its release, the general public had moved on to the next tragic headline within a few weeks. Such examples of public memory are fleeting. With such a fickle audience, the message is lost almost immediately, and whatever fragments remain of the story told by *KONY 2012* are mostly inaccurate. The Internet houses enough lies to have this video come along and shape the opinions of so many with such a disjointed tale. The world deserves to know the whole truth, and Ugandans deserve to have that truth shared, so that the country can be shown in its true light and understood for what it really is, rather than what the white man perceives it to be.

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# The Prevailing Discrimination against Sinti and Roma in Europe

Tanja Berger

Many articles published in European newspapers during the last weeks displayed headlines such as “Blonde Angel Kidnapped by Gypsies” or “Stolen by Gypsies,” referring to an incident in Greece (Dunlop). The police were tipped off that there was a blond, blue-eyed girl with light complexion living with a Roma family, which led to the conclusion that this little girl Maria could not possibly be the couples’ child. The law enforcement officers took the child away from the couple she was living with, prompting a worldwide media outrage about the case. Later, a ‘Gypsy’ family in Ireland was also separated from their child because of similar accusations.

How is it possible that children are taken away from a family, solely because their appearance does not resemble the looks of their parents? And why are newspapers reporting about ‘the Gypsies’ in such a harsh and discriminating tone full of prejudice? Astonishingly, these headlines were written in Europe, a continent that perceives itself as tolerant and open, emphasizing human rights and anti-discrimination laws. Liégeois notes, in collaboration with the *Council of Europe and Roma*, that ten to twelve million Sinti and Roma living in Europe today face broad discrimination, unlike any other minority (19). In the context of this causal analysis, discrimination is defined as “the unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people” (Oxford Dictionaries). In September 2013, the French Interior Minister Manuel Valls made a statement showing the extent of discrimination against Sinti and Roma by proclaiming that “the majority [of Sinti and Roma] should be delivered back to the borders. We are not here to welcome these people” (BBC News Europe). With this statement, he is in line with other European politicians and the public opinion of Sinti and Roma as being lazy bloodsuckers of social systems, not having a place in Europe’s societies. The ‘Gypsies’ are broadly viewed as unorganized, dirty, superstitious, untrustworthy, and insidious by mainstream society.

In an interview with Melissa Block, the host of NPR’s radio show *All Things Considered*, history professor Dr. Jennifer G. Illuzzi describes the ‘Sinti and Roma,’ colloquially also referred to as ‘Gypsies,’ as an ethnic group that has its roots in India. After migrating to Eastern Europe in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, they faced slavery and discrimination, forcing them to travel towards other parts of Europe in hope of better living conditions (Block). The question of why this group is so strongly discriminated against in European countries is complex, with many different causes. Looking at the developments in Euro-

pean history since the 1500's and the psychological and social functions Sinti and Roma involuntarily fulfill in Europe's societies, we can, though, establish patterns ultimately culminating to the stereotypes of Sinti and Roma that have been engrained in the collective memory of Europeans.

The most eminent and direct cause of the widespread discrimination against Sinti and Roma are the stereotypes that have been established over a long time frame in European history. While there are many such prejudiced notions about the ethnic minority, two are particularly of interest looking at the recent incidents of alleged child abductions by Sinti and Roma.

In the first place, the 'bad seed idea' has been used for many decades to justify the prejudice of 'Gypsies' being prone to commit crimes. The minority has been criminalized based on the concept of them being 'born criminals' (Widmann 26), which justified, inter alia, the genocide of Sinti and Roma during the Nazi Regime in Germany. However, unlike the shift in discrimination against Jews after World War II, the idea of biological criminality in Sinti and Roma prevailed long after; Widmann notes that jurists' and police officers' educational material contained the concept of genetically crime-prone Sinti and Roma until the 1970's, when sociological causes of crime increasingly gained influence in the law enforcement community (28).

In addition to the 'bad seed idea,' the concept of 'blood liable' is indirectly referenced in many media reports covering the alleged abduction cases. Originally emerging in the context of discrimination against Jews, the concept of a minority abducting blond, blue-eyed, Christian children and using their pure blood for rituals has been stuck in the cultural unconsciousness of many Europeans since the middle ages (West). The only difference was that this time, the conception was not related to the Jewish community, but to Sinti and Roma. It is not socially accepted in Europe anymore to use such concepts with minorities, especially Jews, but because of reasons analyzed in the following paragraphs, Sinti and Roma are an exception in the cultural code of the 'socially accepted range of opinions.'

The stereotypes about Sinti and Roma are clearly direct roots of the discrimination against them. To gain further insight into how these prejudices arose in connection to Sinti and Roma and subsequently made discrimination against them more acceptable than against other minorities, it is helpful to examine the next lower level and analyze the underlying historical circumstances. During the 'Western Civilization Process,' Europe underwent two major transformations that restructured the continent's societies in terms of political and economic organization. Politically, the change started in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, when national instead of territorial states were constructed for the first time and continued to form in the following centuries (Winckel 14-16). Slowly starting during the same period of time and rapidly picking up in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the continent shifted from agrarian to industrial societies, transforming the composition of the economies drastically; the Industrial Revolution was born.

The establishment of national states constituted the first elementary change in Europe's societal structure contributing to the discrimination of Sinti and Roma (Winckel 16). The era facilitated the emergence of the ideology of nationalism, ascribing every individual's affiliation to a country. Yet, the creation of citizenship did not extend to the

Sinti and Roma. Even taking into account that many of them stayed in the same location for generations—as long as the discrimination against them was not posing an imminent threat—they were still perceived as ‘travelling people’ who questioned the new established boundaries between countries (Winckel 17). In fact, they questioned the whole system of national states through their behavior, forcing ‘national citizens’ to acknowledge that the borders newly applied to them might not be as static as they were told.

The newly created nations required somewhat homogenous populations in order to legitimate their boundaries. “Inclusionary thought patterns fostering [national] identity” as well as “exclusionary thought patterns” allowing citizens to identify against other groups of people emerged out of the desire to create a feeling of unity in those nations (Winckel 16). French people live in France, speak French, and practice French culture, whereas the others, the foreigners, come from other places, speak an awkward language, and practice an odd and mysterious culture. They are Sinti and Roma, and Frenchmen are nothing like them. It is much easier to say ‘we—the French—are not like them’ than having to define ‘what we—the French—are actually like,’ for example what French culture truly consists of. This practice of ‘identifying against’ is not limited to Sinti and Roma, yet it plays an important role.

In the same historical period in which this political shift occurred, the development from an economy dominated by farming and manufacturing towards industrial production required the rise of a new work ethic, including more discipline and the rejection of idleness (Winckel14). Starting during the Industrial Revolution, only those members who contributed to the economic well-being of society were seen as having the right to be a part of the community. The notion that the poor are self-inflicting their situation by not complying with the new societal norms gained influence; it became common knowledge that the unemployed are just too lazy to work. Winckel observes that, ultimately, the weakest and most foreign group of poor was targeted: Sinti and Roma (15).

For the most part, Sinti and Roma stayed to themselves, refusing to work in the newly introduced industrial production the majority of people participated in. They stuck to small trade, occasional jobs or daily labor, mainly helping out on small farms or in little crafts shops to make a living. Sinti and Roma were perceived to be not disciplined enough to follow strict working hours in a factory and unwilling to support the majority’s effort towards economic well-being by boycotting the Industrial Revolution.

This victim-blaming perspective persists in various forms and cultures even today, as can be observed in political discussion in the United States concerning ‘the culture of poverty.’ Similar to the view of Sinti and Roma in Europe, some Americans argue that African Americans are unwilling to work, undisciplined, and self-inflicting their poverty through a culture of crime, dysfunctional family structures, and welfare dependency (Massey, Denton 157-159).

Yet, apart from the historical context of discrimination of Sinti and Roma, the psychological and sociological aspects of the topic are important contributors to the stereotypes the ethnic minority faces today. As functionalist sociologists would put it, the Sinti and Roma are fulfilling functions in Europe’s societies and for European individuals, which force them to play a role that disadvantages themselves, but, controversially, benefits Europe as a whole.

As common with many minorities, the dominant group in Europe utilizes Sinti and Roma as scapegoats. Winckel claims that citizens desire to follow their society's norms, while they also wish to rebel against it. "To release this cognitive tension, the citizens turn rebellious against the official bogeyman and simultaneously obey the governmental authority" (Winckel 20). Hence, in a way, Sinti and Roma are targeted to satisfy the people's need for rebellion, giving them the possibility to do so without having to target the government, which—unlike a powerless minority—has authority to issue repressions. In terms of analytical psychology, this phenomenon is generally referred to as 'displacement;' it is a (possibly unconscious) defense mechanism used by individuals to be able to release inner tension while avoiding the original, more dangerous target.

Since the argument of displacement is readily applicable to almost any minority, Winckel suggests turning to a more in-depth psychological diagnosis of the issue: 'projective identification' (20). The members of the majority identify with the presumed lifestyle of Sinti and Roma, projecting their own desires into the image of the 'Gypsies' life.' The public's romanticized view of the life of Sinti and Roma emphasizes freedom, autonomy, and travel. All these conceptions reflect desires of the majority group in Europe, who oftentimes cannot follow those desires to the aspired level. Believing though that there are these 'Gypsies' who do all that the citizens are deprived of through having to comply with societal norms, leads the citizens to reject them (Winckel 21). By degrading the 'people enjoying endless freedom,' the majority population can avoid asking itself why their society is forbidding them to live such freedom.

Shifting the focus from the individual and its defense mechanisms and 'projective identification' to the society as a whole, the function of Sinti and Roma as defining societal boundaries becomes apparent. In the European culture, the values of education, work dedication, and assimilation are popular and broadly accepted. The stigmatization of Sinti and Roma as a group that is dishonoring those values, and the discrimination against them, strengthens the importance ascribed to these societal norms. In a way, it serves the purpose of showing what happens to you if you do not comply with what is expected of you: you will be an outcast.

Despite the readily apparent discrimination Sinti and Roma face, it is of importance to acknowledge that many Europeans understandably argue that Sinti and Roma demand integration and inclusion in governmental services and social benefits, yet often refuse to send their children to school or participate in society in many other ways. Furthermore, it seems to me personally like the attitude towards Sinti and Roma is slowly changing, at least in the German area in which I grew up. For the first time, a memorial was held for the Sinti and Roma victims of the Nazi Regime in my hometown last summer. Many people participated, even though most did not have personal connections to the ethnic minority, leading me to the conclusion that Europeans, or at least Germans, are becoming more accepting towards Sinti and Roma as a part of society.

One might argue that, the fight against human trafficking, especially in the context with women and children, was a major factor contributing to the responses to the alleged child abduction cases mentioned in the beginning. The police were being self-assertive, the news reports were numerous and often aggressive, and the public attention the case

solicited was immense. While the suspicion of human trafficking might have played a certain role, I argue that this connection would not have been made as fast or as firmly if it would not have been a Sinti or Roma family. In my opinion, Sinti and Roma are falsely perceived to be associated with the rise of prostitutes in Central European red-light districts, who come from Hungary, Belarus, and other Eastern European countries. As experts assert, many of those young women are in fact victims of human trafficking or at least vulnerable to exploitation (“Ausbeutung und Ausgrenzung”), but to draw a connection between that issue and Sinti and Roma lacks any reasonable justification. Just because Sinti and Roma living in Central Europe at some point of their migration path, centuries ago, crossed Eastern European countries, does not automatically give the right to generally suspect them of human trafficking.

In conclusion, the historical context, as well as psychological and sociological positions assigned to Sinti and Roma, has been fostering the emersion of stereotypes in Europe’s culture, which in return are the basis for the widespread discrimination against Sinti and Roma. Ultimately, these stereotypes make news reports, such as the ones mentioned in connection with the alleged child abduction cases, possible in a self-declared ‘tolerant and open’ Europe.

I suggest that the fact that it was a Sinti and Roma family who was accused of having abducted a child influenced the police investigation, the media response and the public outcry. Members of the majority culture or other ethnic minorities such as Algerians in France or Turks in Germany do not have the historic background and social or psychological functions in those societies as Sinti and Roma do and are therefore less vulnerable to racist actions like the separation of families and their children solely based on different appearances. Only the unique position of Sinti and Roma in society allows politicians, police, and media to show such attitudes without being rebuked like they would have been in connection with other ethnic minorities. For example, the media constantly focused on the ‘Gypsies,’ not ‘a family’ or ‘members of a minority’ as suspects of child abduction. In addition, the incident in Ireland, occurring only shortly after the Greek case, was also targeting a Sinti and Roma family, which indicates that there was and is the public perception that ‘it is *the Gypsies* who steal children.’

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# Tupperware: More Than a Plastic Storage Container

Heather Kissel

It has been estimated that ninety percent of American homes own at least one piece of Tupperware (Clarke 1). Very few products are this omnipresent, and even fewer are so intertwined with the history of American society since the 1950s. These seemingly innocuous plastic bowls not only improved methods of food storage and allowed for the rise of plastics in American homes, through the policies and history of the Tupperware company they also became and remain symbols of consumerism and gender inequality still present in America today.

Even in the first days of its development, Tupperware was created with consumers in mind. Earl Silas Tupper, the inventor of Tupperware, was obsessed with the idea of becoming a millionaire and constantly invented new and unusual products, including a “Dagger Comb” and “No Drip” ice cream cone, in hopes that one of them would allow him to accomplish this goal (Kealing 10). During World War II, Tupper noticed the many positive elements of polyethylene, a black waste product of smelting used by the armed forces to protect weapons from the elements as it did not give off odors or chemicals and was resistant to the elements, unlike other commercial plastics of the time (Kealing 21). Tupper recognized that these properties made polyethylene perfect for food storage in the newly popular refrigerators of booming post-War suburbs, so he designed a way to refine black polyethylene into translucent Poly-T, which he called the “material of the future” (Kealing 22). Upon creating his first functional Tupperware bowl, Tupper envisioned the complete “Tupperization” of the American home. He believed in the future of plastics and the “transformative power of consumerism” described by the New Deal during the 1930s, which put forth policies that stressed mass consumption as the means to secure America’s future prosperity (Clarke 199). With so much emphasis on consuming, he felt there was no way he could not succeed, especially with such a superior product that could be made in a myriad of different colors and models.

However, despite Tupper’s hopes and fantastic reviews of Tupperware by magazines and store displays as a modern and attractive answer to every housewife’s food storage needs, it languished on retail store shelves (Bax 171). Fortunately for Tupper, there were two salespersons in Florida who firmly believed in the success of Tupperware if the products were demonstrated properly—many housewives were unimpressed with the product simply because with the lack of instruction given by the stores, they could not get the

lids to fit properly, and therefore could not understand the power of the vacuum seal in preventing spills and keeping food fresher longer (Bax 172). Brownie Wise and Gary McDonald adapted the home-party sales format they learned while working for Stanley Home Products to demonstrate Tupperware, helping the product into suburban homes while capitalizing on the sexism on the 1950s, thereby starting the process of making Tupperware a symbol of gender inequality (Kealing 25). Because women were expected to stay in the home during the 1950s, a home-party sales format catered especially to them, as it gave them a social activity during the lonely days in the suburbs while their husbands were at work and their children at school. Even in the description of “The Patio Party Plan” in the manual given to all Tupperware salespeople, the term *hostal* was exclusively used when referring to the salesperson, further demonstrating Tupperware’s target audience (Kealing 38). The format of the party itself also aligned with the idea of the traditional female role, as the hostess was expected to invite family and friends over to her house, entertain them with ice-breaker games, serve them homemade refreshments, and then proceed to demonstrate the products and explain their potential uses as used in her own home (Vincent 179).

Tupperware’s capitalization on gender inequality was not entirely negative for women who worked for the company though. After World War II, many women who joined the workforce to help with the war effort were forced back into the home against their desires, as society, churches, and even educators scorned them for supposedly neglecting their children and taking jobs away from “heads of families” (Bax 173). Women were sent a clear message that only during war time is Rosie the Riveter needed; in peacetime, only June Cleaver is desired. The Tupperware sales format allowed women to continue working, or even enter the workforce for the first time, in an acceptable manner as they were able to earn money in the home and, as stated by a *Salesman’s Opportunity* magazine, not shirk “their most important job of wife and mother” or become the undesirable “career-woman type” (Kealing 86). The supplemental income earned by wives selling Tupperware was especially lauded by their families, as it allowed money for the “extras,” such as the new appliances, cars, and leisure items desired by all suburbanites as “‘rewards’ for their hard work and ‘status symbols’ for social mobility” (Bax 174). The 1950s suburbanites defined themselves by their possessions—they were the largest and most homogenized consumer group—and their consumerism helped fuel the post-World War II economic boom (Kealing 87).

Tupperware played on this desire for “extras” when attempting to recruit new saleswomen. According to an interview with Jean Conlogue, a retired Tupperware distributor, when trying to recruit people, they “tried to fill a need for something they wanted. . .and then map out for them how many parties they would have to hold in order to get whatever it was they wanted” (*Tupperware!*). However, no matter how many new saleswomen were recruited, the number of women in leadership positions remained stagnant. The highest position a woman could hold alone in the Tupperware company was that of a salesperson. If she was promoted to distributor, she shared this position with her husband, and beyond the level of distributor, all executive positions were held by men besides Brownie Wise (*Tupperware!*). Despite frequently being cited as saying, “If we build the people, they’ll

build the business,” Wise seemingly had no desire to change the lack of female executives, as she was quoted in an interview saying, “if there is going to be a prima donna on this staff, I’m it and I’m the only one,” demonstrating she took no issue with Tupperware’s perpetuation of gender stereotypes (*Tupperware!*).

This was particularly important because Wise promoted herself as an example of what was possible for women if they sold Tupperware and they believed her, especially after she was the first woman to appear on the cover of *Business Week* (*Tupperware!*).

Wise not only perpetuated a myth that women could reach her same level of job position by selling Tupperware, but that they could become extremely wealthy as well. With her earnings from Tupperware, Wise purchased the largest home in Kissimmee, Florida, not far from the new Tupperware Home Parties’ headquarters (Kealing 83). Wise used her home as a location for dinners during distributors’ conferences and mentioned it in her books and speeches about her success to subliminally encourage increased sales by showing sellers the lifestyle within their reach if they worked hard and sold as much as possible (Kealing 93). To even further increase sales and use the consumer culture of Tupperware’s suburban supporters to the company’s advantage, Wise devised the plan of the yearly Jubilee, in which the top saleswomen were invited to the Tupperware Home Parties headquarters for the chance to learn new sales techniques, meet other Tupperware ladies, and participate in week long festivities (Bax 176).

The Tupperware Home Parties headquarters where the Jubilees were held was like the Disneyland for plastics. Wise planned for it to become a world-class tourist attraction and made it a place where saleswomen’s dreams came true—not only were there shows and activities, such as Brownie “blessing” the reflecting pool with polyethylene pellets or demonstrating how to make a wish by placing a coin in a two ounce Tupperware container and throwing it into the wishing well, there were plenty of prizes (*Tupperware!*). For the first Jubilee, over \$46,000 worth of prizes, including mink coats, toasters, diamond rings, and miniature Cadillacs to be traded for actual cars, were buried in the ground in the “Forest of Spades” to be dug up by the Tupperware sellers as part of the theme for that year: “Gold Rush” (Bax 176). These gifts given at the Jubilee, along with the gifts regularly given as part of the reward system for Tupperware dealers in which all party hostesses received increasingly desirable gifts depending on the amount of orders made at their parties, “transformed commodities and their consumption into meaningful and collectively understood displays of affection and worth” (Clarke 200). Furthermore, Tupperware’s elaborate displays of conspicuous consumption through these practices demonstrated to its followers that consumption is a valued and culturally based activity (Clarke 200). The large brass plaque that greeted visitors as they entered the headquarters furthered affirmed this idea, as it read, “Dedicated to Tupperware Dealers, Managers, and Distributors, whose sincere regard for the consumer public is reflected in the purposeful progress of Tupperware Home Parties Incorporated. Their accomplishments have proven the soundness of their philosophy that greater growth brings greater service” (Clarke 199). By emphasizing their regard for the consumer public, the Tupperware company presented their product as a symbol of consumerism.

However, Tupperware as a symbol of consumerism cannot be separated from Tupper-

ware as a symbol of gender inequality, as demonstrated by other activities at the Jubilee. The most notable event in regards to the lack of gender inequality was the graduation ceremony from the “Tupperware College of Knowledge”. After spending weeks in seminars on such topics as sales technique and public relations, during the Jubilee the women were granted a candlelit graduation ceremony where they received an actual diploma from Brownie Wise (Bax 176). This was particularly meaningful to the Tupperware ladies, as many had not finished high school, and if they had gone on to college, because of the intense social pressure in the post-War era to marry young or risk being an old maid, they did so merely to find a husband with a degree or marketable skill (Collins 405). Women had no reason to focus on obtaining a degree because they were expected to be wives and mothers and Tupperware used this lack of equality to their advantage by offering their saleswomen a chance to receive recognition for their intelligence rather than just their domestic skills in return for increased loyalty.

Unfortunately, no matter how loyal Brownie Wise made the Tupperware ladies by creating programs and rewards to cater to their desire for consumer goods and equality, she could not make the Tupperware company loyal to her. In a move that solidified Tupperware as a symbol of sexism in the 1950s, Brownie Wise was fired from Tupperware Home Parties because Earl Tupper desired to sell the company, but felt he could not successfully do so with a woman in such a high position with such control over the salespeople (*Tupperware!*). After her dismissal, Wise was completely erased from Tupperware’s files and all reminders of her were removed from all Tupperware properties; today she is not even mentioned in the heritage section of the Tupperware website (*Tupperware!*). Even more unceremoniously, she was offered a \$30,000 settlement, while Tupper received \$16 million for the business she had built from his product (Bax 176). Just like the majority of women who worked during the war only to be forced back into the home, Wise was allowed to work only when there was a necessity. When the crisis was overcome, she was forced out despite her desires and skills.

Brownie Wise’s entire history with Tupperware demonstrated how Tupperware was a symbol of consumerism and lack of gender equality in the 1950s, but Tupperware remains a symbol of these issues today. This is displayed by the company website, the new success stories used to recruit salespeople, and the current sales format of the company. On the company website, besides the picture of Earl Tupper, every picture is of women (“Heritage”). Not a single picture depicts a man selling or using a Tupperware product, clearly demonstrating Tupperware is clinging to its identity as a symbol of gender inequality. Perhaps even more striking, the success stories Tupperware now uses to encourage interest in careers in their company describe women leaving demanding professional positions in order to spend more time with their families while still supplying income—they have “the best of both worlds: a rich income and a rich family life” (Vincent 191). By promoting their career opportunities in this manner, Tupperware is stressing that the family should still be a modern woman’s main concern, rather than a fulfilling albeit demanding career. This perpetuates the 1950s idea that a man’s career is more important than a woman’s, and this same idea is reflected in the cultural attitudes of Americans, because even though men have increased the amount of time spent in the kitchen and with childcare, women

still manage 92% of domestic chores (Green). Lastly, Tupperware has remained not only a symbol of gender inequality, but of consumerism by adapting their sales format to the modern market. Tupperware today is not sold exclusively through the home-party sales format, but in mall showcases and online, with a virtual party option, as part of “Tupperware’s continued responsiveness to consumer needs” in this “information age” (“Heritage”).

However, no matter the “need” or the “age” to which Tupperware has adapted, it cannot escape its past, as it is so much a part of its success. Tupperware is undeniably a symbol of consumerism and lack of gender equality—it rose out of the New Deal’s push for increased consumption on the shoulders of women stuck in a sexist suburban environment—but by capitalizing on the very things it symbolizes, Tupperware made itself a household name and gave women opportunity and recognition in a time when they received little of either. The company’s current policies and marketing strategies still affirm the values of consumerism and traditional gender roles, but these are a reflection of the American society of which it is a part. American society is as connected to Tupperware as the lids of Tupperware are to their containers: even after sixty years, the seal is still tight.

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# Conquering Regret on King Arthur's Seat

Molly Stoddart

Looking up from the bottom of King Arthur's Seat, anyone would feel small. The rocky ledge rises 800 feet above the ground, out from the middle of the mountain, at a gentle slope that overlooks the labyrinth of cobble roads and stone buildings that is Edinburgh. A hill, covered in grass as thick and soft as lamb's wool, goes halfway up and then abruptly changes into a rocky cliff.

It was the beginning of the summer before my senior year, and I stared up in a speechless sort of awe; a couple things crossed my mind. First, I'm not in Kentucky anymore, and second, how on earth am I going to make it up there? I felt the familiar knot in the pit of my stomach tighten and my thoughts turned to home. The Stoddart house, which used to be full of jokes about "bum-biters" and "Molly the shrimp," had become a house of scared silences and tense arguments the past few years. My brother, sister, and I tread softly around the house. We were always tensely waiting for the next outburst from parents who were both good but had grown steadily apart the last three years. Eventually, it had grown to be too much and my dad moved out.

I worried. *Was my mom still in her room crying? Was Ellie taking care of Frankie? Was my dad still lonely in his apartment? And, why can't I help the whole situation?* The cool breeze playing with my hair and tickling my nose brought me back into the present. I took a steadying breath and started the hike to the top accompanied by a few classmates and teachers.

The path twisted in a long narrow U around the base of the cliff at a steep incline. Within minutes, I was breathing heavily and had a sharp stitch in my side. However, to my pleasant surprise, I was not lagging behind the group but rather leading the steady march. The knot in my stomach loosened as I walked, but my thoughts were still plagued with "what ifs." What if I had kept the house cleaner, or not done such expensive activities, or had encouraged more family time? Could I have kept my parents together then? Again, air pulled me back to the present because the mild chill felt nice on my skin, and though I was breathing hard, my lungs rejoiced at the fresh mountain air.

Halfway up, we hit a sharp curve and the grassy path vanished into the rocky side. We were faced with a couple choices: turning and going back to the bottom or making up a path with the basic assumption that up was the right direction. After a few moments of discussion and encouragement to the tired, we forged on. I led us between rock pillars smooth from years of battering from the rain and wind. The ground changed from grass

to stone. At times the way up was so steep that my fellow hikers and I needed help from the person behind or in front of us to get up. I thought back to happier times. I could see my parents holding hands in the car while my dad drove and remembered sitting between them at birthday dinners. I remembered the squish of being in the middle of a sandwich hug. Slowly, the cliff stretching up on our left, a collage of off-whites, gingerbread browns, and smoky blacks, grew shorter as we ascended. The knot in my stomach vanished and I was able to confidently go forward, though I had never led a hike before, much less a hike up a mountain.

Finally, the top was in sight and something inside me sparked. The rocky ground swiftly changed back to the fluffy green grass. Small yellow wildflowers with four small petals as bright as stars and soft as velvet sprinkled the grass. My feet and legs couldn't contain their triumph and I ran, skipped, danced to the top. Spinning, trying to take in the surroundings, I not only saw but also felt the magnificence of the land. The sky was a bright blue with wisps of clouds around the bright sun. Straight ahead the city lay before me and power and wonder were coursing through me. I felt I knew what God must have felt like staring down at the earth for the first time. To the left and right a checkered board of fields stretched out until it turned into distant hills. Tucked under the other side was a small town with pastel buildings and the sea in the distance.

I stripped my shoes from my feet and just stood with my eyes closed. The cool damp grass twisted around my feet, the smell of fresh air filled my nose, and the small sounds of the city and wind died away. A few moments passed. A few moments left of mourning for the life I had known before the last year had occurred. The stab of longing for one more family dinner, one more movie night, one more vacation or holiday hit me as my chest tightened for the last time. I squeezed my eyes tighter and clenched my toes into the soft ground. Taking a deep inhale and exhale, I loosened my toes and wiggled them, entwining them in the blades of grass. I set my shoulders back and relaxed my eyelids. The sun shone gently, and I could feel its warmth on my face as it countered the cool breeze.

Opening my eyes and looking once more over the country I felt the guilt, sadness, and hopelessness of the last eight months lift from my heart and my shoulders. I stood a little taller and lifted my head. I couldn't fix the problems my family was facing, or go back and change the past. Even if I could, it probably wouldn't make a difference. I could, though, enjoy the family I had. I could make my dad feel loved and needed, my mom safe and secure. The wind picked up, and once more my hair was whipped into my face. I spun once more trying to prolong the moment. Laughter burst from my lips, and I threw my hands into the air.

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# To Dream the Dream: Rights to Life, Education, and Peace for the Iraqi People

Hunter Smith

When I first attended a meeting of the English Conversation Club, I talked to a pair of Iraqi women. Both had been in America for only about 3 months and could not understand much of what I had to ask them (I could not even get their names, as they did not have name tags and could not understand when I asked what their names were). I will never forget what they told me when I asked them why they had come to America: “because Iraq is always on fire.” It is not hard at all to understand what they mean when they say this. They obviously referenced the insurgency and the acts of terror the insurgents committed on a nearly daily basis. It was hard to talk to them, and not just because they did not know much English. I could sense apprehension, no doubt due to the fact they were talking to Americans. To say Iraq and America have had strained ties with one another for the last decade and a half would be a monumental understatement. You may as well say that relations with all of the Middle East are characterized as tense at best. Iraq has a special tie with America, though, through the Iraq War. This conflict has a muddy history, with its official start in March 2003 (Fawcett 325). Actual conflict against genuinely organized forces ended with the execution of Saddam Hussein, the long-time dictator of Iraq, though conflict with insurgents would go on all the way up to 2011, upon withdrawing forces. What makes this conflict even more difficult to understand is its effects on the Iraqi people. Though democracy had supposedly taken hold in the area, Iraq certainly did not have the outward appearance of a democratic nation. People have fled the nation in droves to gain access to basic human rights, such as education, freedom from bodily harm, and peace of mind. While some people in Iraq have these rights, they are not easily accessible to all (an issue largely perpetuated by the ongoing conflict that originated in the Iraq War), which causes the immigration and seeking of refuge that we observe.

The effects of the war itself are profound in Iraq. Thousands are dead after the withdrawal, most of which are Iraqis. The dying continues on a daily basis, as radical Islamic militants terrorize the nation. Iraq was a relatively strong power prior to the conflict, but now has an unpredictable future and is unstable in terms of regional balance of power. The Arab Spring has done no favors in this case, spilling over refugees and militants alike (Fawcett 325). With such instability and a government that is only democratic by name, it comes as no surprise that the rights of the Iraqi people would be under great threat. In her article “The Iraq War ten years on: Assessing the fallout,” Louise Fawcett makes an

interesting observation of the effect the war had on the region. “Contrary to expectations that the regime change in Iraq would have a positive impact on regional order through improving regional governance by example and securing the resolution of regional conflicts, the short-term result was increased instability arising from the growth of religious sectarianism and the activities of radical transnational movements, the large-scale displacement of Iraqis (at least 2 million were internally displaced at the height of the conflict) and, above all, disturbances to the balance of power which fundamentally shifted regional security dynamics” (Fawcett 332). This war would lead to an increase of insurgency in the area, and would lead to the mass exodus we have seen over the years. The insurgency begets the instability, which in turn leads to the trampling of the rights of the Iraqi people. This tells us only part of the story though. To develop a deeper understanding of the suffering of the Iraqi people, we must observe their plight for the aforementioned basic rights. The first right that is easiest to understand is freedom from bodily harm.

Safety is a right we often take for granted here in America and is often taken for granted in other industrial and post-industrial countries. It is a vitally essential right, though, that not all Iraqis have available to them in Iraq. The lack of safety in Iraq comes largely as a part of the insurgency in the area, from radical Islamic groups like Hamas and Hezbollah. Contrary to our initial beliefs, Al-Qaeda does not have and has never had ties or presence in Iraq. This was a misconception that led us into the Iraq War, along with the misconception that there were “weapons of mass destruction” being hidden. These other groups, like Hamas and Hezbollah, are the real terrorizers of Iraq (Fawcett 325, 332). These are the groups that go about killing people with car bombings, drive-by shootings, and suicide bombers. These groups are partially to blame for the lack of total safety in Iraq. The other parties to blame would be the Iraqi government and America. The Iraqi government does not and cannot do much to combat the insurgents, as it is ill-equipped. According to Fawcett, “Regional leadership in the Middle East had often been in short supply, hindered by long-standing rivalry and suspicion.” This kind of leadership is not the kind that will take care of its people. A strong, centralized seat of authority is needed to deal with the issue of insurgency. Without a well-organized government, the people are largely left to fend for themselves in the midst of these terrorists. The American government and military is just as much to blame for this sorry state of affairs though. Though the overthrow of Saddam Hussein was necessary for the betterment of the people, more could have and should have been done to prepare the nation for the inevitable withdrawal. A better-prepared local military would have prevented the insurgents from moving in and terrorizing the Iraqi people, therein preserving the freedom from bodily harm the Iraqis and all human beings deserve. This might have cost the U.S. extra, though not by much, considering the steep cost of the war and the protracted occupation, not to mention the costs associated with the immigrants and refugees that resulted from the whole ordeal. Without the insurgents in the area, there would be no need to immigrate or seek refuge in other countries. Safety may be relatively easy to trace (largely due to how much we hear about insurgents through American media), but other needs are harder, like education.

It is not as though there is no education at all in Iraq. The quality is lower than in other countries, though, and is less accessible than it is in other countries as well. Of

course, education is not always easy for refugees. According to Samia Qumri's article "Iraqi Refugee Children's Quest for Education in Jordan," "Education, a long-neglected sector in emergency response according to some aid groups, is gradually being perceived as vital in crisis management." The vitality of education in our age is well-known. Without an education, finding work is more difficult; you are more limited in your opportunities. This is just as valid for refugee children as it is for everyone else. In managing the refugee crisis that has resulted from the Iraq War and the subsequent sectarian violence, education is even more vital. Countries accepting the refugees, however, focus on more basic needs, such as food and shelter. Though this is not necessarily wrong, the need for education is often left up to debate. Whether or not it is needed is not the matter of debate; rather, it is a matter of accessibility. Some countries have organizations that fund the education of refugee children. In Qumri's article, she mentions an organization that fully funded the education of some Iraqi refugee children in Jordan. Another potential issue for children involves their "guest" status in countries they seek refuge in. This isolates them from the other children in public schools in other countries. Residency permits are needed to allow the children access to these schools. The process of obtaining these permits is rough, leaving most refugees without access to the governments' school systems. In Jordan, this is no longer the case, due to increased funding and support from the international community (Qumri 197). The rest of the world, especially America, needs to match this. America receives a massive amount of refugees, making reform of educational accessibility for refugees paramount. If international aid helped in Jordan, then perhaps funds could be appropriated by the United Nations or another international body. This much is certain: education is absolutely necessary for a long-term recovery from refugee status. Iraqis flee Iraq for opportunities elsewhere, only to hit roadblocks. It is not fair to those who have already suffered so much to deny them the opportunities they came here for. The suffering they have endured has predictably not just been restricted to physical suffering, but to psychological trauma as well.

The psychological suffering of the Iraqi refugees and immigrants is seen in the high levels of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression found amongst them (Slewa-Younan et al 348). In studies involving multiple groups of 25, refugees were given the Harvard Trauma Questionnaire (HTQ) and Mini-International Neuropsychiatric Inventory (MINI) for diagnoses of a variety of psychological disorders. The studies showed that 48% of refugees were diagnosed with PTSD, along with 36% major depressive disorder and 36% dysthymia (a psychological disorder similar to major depressive disorder, but with less severe symptoms that last a longer period of time) (Slewa-Younan et al 350). It is not hard to see why these people have these afflictions. Many have lost family members and have witnessed violence we in America can scarcely imagine. To come out of that experience can only leave you scarred. The need for peace of mind is high on the list of what refugees need, of what all human beings need. Iraqis seek refuge and immigration to America and other countries to escape the torments brought about by the conflict found in their home, hoping that putting distance between them and their homeland will give them some stability. The treatment of these refugees with PTSD and depressive disorders is less common in countries surrounding Iraq than it is in more industrial and post-industrial

countries, like America, Australia (the studies in Slewa Younan and company's article was in Australia), and others. Those who come to America thanks to organizations can get the help they need, allowing a re-establishment of their peace of mind. Whether or not the Iraq War caused all of these rights to become jeopardized is hard to debate, though some would hold that the state of Iraq was inevitable.

The argument that Iraq's current condition was going to exist regardless of the war is a very narrow-minded point of view, relating to those Fawcett would say believed that governments in the Middle East were "illiberal and non-democratic," needing intervention to allow for democracy to grow. This way of thinking makes no room for self-determination of the people to choose how they are governed. While it is true that Iraqis likely could not self-determine anyway due to the fact that they had a dictator, the overthrow of their dictator should have been supported peripherally and only if the people actually wanted to do away with their ruler. What we did in Iraq was stick our nose where it did not belong as a reaction to the recent terrorist attack of 9/11. Paranoia was in bloom, and hearsay of nuclear weapons and Al-Qaeda was all the proof needed for an invasion. Iraq's current state of affairs would be better now if they had wanted us to help them peripherally in the overthrow of their despot, combined with the previously mentioned military training to bolster their resistance to the insurgents that we see running amuck in Iraq. All of this no longer matters anyhow; what we must do now is tend to the refugees and immigrants that we receive into our nation, helping them to acclimate and integrate into our society. According to Harding and Libal, it is up to the international community to help these migrants from Iraq, both forced and voluntary, stating: "Using the case of Iraq, we urge local and international social work organizations to assume a more central role in advocating for, setting and implementing refugee policies and practices." It really is up to the local and international communities to help these people, because if they do not, no one will; these are people who have no place left to go, no longer content or able to stay in Iraq. Moreover, America should feel a particular responsibility to lend a hand since "The crisis of Iraqi displacement stems directly from a war of choice initiated by the United States." (Harding and Libal 99). It is partially our fault that Iraq is the way it is, and we know for certain that none of the other perpetrators (insurgents and the Iraqi government) will step in to help at all. Of course, there are borders present that will make the integration process more difficult, borders that can be dealt with to aid these unfortunate people.

In terms of borders that stymie the integration process, the most obvious one is the stark contrast of their culture to ours. Alex Kotlowitz's "The Other Side of the River" comes close to being a parallel of this contrast. In his book, he describes the state of two cities separated by a river: Benton Harbor, which is 92% black and is the model of destitution, and St. Joseph, which is 95% white and quite affluent and content. These glaring differences lead to conflict between their two cities, and though the proximity is not quite there in the case of Iraq and America, the conflict is also more isolated to Iraq, the effect is still similar. It's a tale of two nations we see: Iraq and America. One is rife with instability, a democracy only by name; the other is the model of a stable society to much of the world and the model of democracy the world over. More important, one is mostly Muslim and the other is mostly Christian. During my time in ECC, I learned

from a Senegalese man that America could be tolerant of Muslims. Though we hear about persecution of Christians in non-Christian countries, in truth most non-Christian countries are quite accepting (or at least tolerant) of Christians. If our society would be more tolerant of these Muslim immigrants/refugees, then the integration process would go over a lot more smoothly. They would not feel as if they are stigmatized by their new home, feeling welcomed instead.

The Iraq War was a war of choice on the part of America, a war that has left Iraq in a sorry state of affairs for some time to come. This poor status leaves the basic rights of Iraqis harder to access than they are in other countries. Rights such as freedom from bodily harm, peace of mind, and education are harder to come by due to insurgent threats and an ill-equipped government. Many have fled their homes there to seek out opportunities, to seek out a new home where these rights are more accessible. For many Iraqis, that new home is America.

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# Can the Kennedy Assassination Narrative Be Considered a Chaos Narrative?

Amanda Muse

After a long week filled with politics and campaigning throughout Texas, President John F. Kennedy finds himself in Dallas. President Kennedy and the first lady were supposed to begin their visit to Dallas with an eleven-mile motorcade through Downtown that would end at the Trade Mart, where the President would give a speech. Dallas had welcomed the President with great weather, a temperature of 76 degrees. The weather was so nice that the top and bulletproof windows of the President's limousine were removed, giving the crowd a great, open view of the Presidential couple and the Governor of Texas and his wife, as they rolled down the streets of Dallas. Once the limousine passed the Texas School Book Depository, three shots were fired hitting the President and Governor Connally. Governor Connally's injuries were not fatal. It was a different story for the President. After desperate measures of a tracheotomy, a blood transfusion, and a chest massage, the medical staff at Parkland Hospital realized that it was too late. On November 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1963, at 1:33 P.M., President John F. Kennedy was pronounced dead (United Press International, 1964).

The assassination of President John F. Kennedy contains many features of an illness narrative known as *The Chaos Narrative* (Frank, 1995, page 97). By analyzing a variety of perspectives of those who were directly involved in the assassination, such as the President's brother, the Governor's wife, medical staff, and even the first lady, the characteristics of the chaos narrative can be seen.

Illness and medical narratives have become a way of therapeutic healing and understanding of suffering in today's health care (Kilty, 2000). Illness narratives show the depths of interruption to what most people would classify as a *normal* life with hopes, dreams, and goals. The chaos narrative, in particular, has plots that seem as if life would never get better, that the suffering is never ending. Chaos narratives work as a reminder of how easily suffering can occur to anyone. This type of narrative is the hardest for listeners to hear because they are threatening and provoke anxiety. According to Arthur Frank, author of *The Wounded Storyteller*, "The chaos that can be told in story is already taking place at a distance and is being reflected on retrospectively," and that "in the chaos narrative, troubles go all the way down to bottomless depths. What can be told only begins to suggest all that is wrong" (Frank, 1995, pages 98-99). Chaos narratives show a lack of control and predictability; the chaos lives on the idea that no one is actually in control. Emotional battering is also another characteristic of chaos narrative (Frank, 1995).

To begin, when news broke out about the death of President Kennedy, not only were American citizens in mourning, but the entire Kennedy family grieved as well. Robert Kennedy was the brother of President Kennedy. He was not present in Dallas at the time of the shooting. Instead, he was enjoying the warm November day having a conference about organized crime around his pool. Then he received a call on his poolside phone from J. Edgar Hoover, the Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) informing him that his brother had been shot (Thomas, 2013). Bobby later remembered the flat, emotionless tone of J. Hoover. Author Evan Thomas reported that “Bobby was of course stunned, put his hand over his eyes....he gets on the phone and he starts trying to find out who killed his brother” (Thomas, 2013, n.p.). Robert was also said to be in denial and when it actually came down to it, he didn’t want to know who had killed his brother, “his wound was too raw.” He also carried a burden of fear that something he had done or said somehow got his brother killed (Thomas, 2013).

This narrative of Robert Kennedy’s perspective on the killing of his brother demonstrates many characteristics of a chaos narrative. It shows an interruption and unpredictability in his life. One moment, he was lounging and working alongside his pool, and the next moment he was hit with suffering—quickly and unexpectedly. He went from his version of normality to instantaneous interruption. He then quickly picked up the phone in an effort to try to find out who had committed this horrible act and then changed his mind. This shows a loss of control, that no one is in control. According to Frank’s *The Wounded Storyteller*, “The chaos story presupposes *lack of control*...” (Frank, 1995, page 100). Society held the Kennedys very fondly, and the Kennedy family held a lot of power at that time. This assassination showed America and the Kennedy family that not even some of the most powerful people could have control of this situation or of this suffering.

Nellie Connally was the wife of the Governor of Texas, John Connally. The couple was sitting in the seat in front of the President and first lady. This is her recollection of the assassination published in *Nellie Connally: That day in Dallas* by R. Rees:

I turned and looked toward the President—just in time to see his hands fly up to his neck. He sank down in his seat. There was no utterance of any kind. There was no grimace. I had no sure knowledge as to what the noise was. I felt it was a gunshot, and I had the horrifying feeling that the President could be dead.

In this portion of Mrs. Connally’s story, chaos reveals itself as a lack of predictability. Life-threatening events kept happening to the President consecutively without warning. It caught everyone in the limousine by surprise. Nellie was unsure as to what was happening and to the fact if the President was living or dead. Frank said in regards to chaos narratives, “efforts to reassert predictability have failed repeatedly and each failure has had its cost” (Frank, 1995, page 102). This can be proven true in the perspective when their lack of predictability starts and ends with multiple gunshots.

Nellie’s husband, Governor John Connally, received nonfatal injuries around the same moment the President was shot. This is her account of the remainder of the motorcade:

With John in my arms, and still trying to stay down, I did not see the

third shot hit...but, I felt something falling over me. My sensation was spent buckshot. My eyes saw bloody matter in tiny bits all over the car.

From behind her came Jackie's tortured wail, 'Jack! Jack! They've killed my husband! I have his brains in my hands!'

I never looked back after John was shot. I saw the crowds on the right side of the road streaking past. I couldn't help but think what an awful sight to see two women holding their lifeless husbands in their arms, streaking down a roadway in utter horror and disbelief. (Rees).

The rest of Mrs. Connally's perspective portrays the never-ending suffering that chaos narratives have. The plot of chaos narratives "imagines life never getting better" (Frank, 1995, page 97). In this situation, Nellie is uncertain to what is actually happening and a continual series of disastrous events are occurring. She and her injured husband witness the President get shot and are covered in his bloody pieces while trying to stay low in case of other shots being fired. In this aspect, it doesn't seem like life is getting better, especially when the President is killed and Nellie is holding her husband who could've lost his own life.

Continuing on from the motorcade, the next stop was Parkland Hospital. Dr. Ronald Jones was one of the doctors on staff at Parkland Hospital at the time of the assassination. Fifty years later, in an interview with USA Today, he revealed his memories of that day. Dr. Jones recalled his first look at the President: "His eyes were open but had little or no life in them...I never saw them move. It was a stare, straight ahead" (USA Today, 2013, n.p.). He and a team of doctors performed a tracheotomy, fluid, and even attempted to massage his heart back to life. They realized that their efforts would inevitably come up short after seeing the shattering of the back of the President's head.

The medical staff at Parkland Hospital experienced their own chaos narrative in the fact that they felt so much pressure to attempt to revive the President. The situation had to provoke anxiety amongst the pressure, and anxiety is another characteristic of a chaos story (Frank, 1995). They knew that the President's wounds were too severe to bring life back to him, but they tried everything they could in hopes to do so. This chaos also showed that no matter their efforts, they had no control over the injuries the President had.

As soon as Jones left the room where Kennedy's body lay, he was approached by FBI agents who needed to inform J. Edgar Hoover and Secret Service Agents who needed to inform the President's father on the condition his son. He did not want to be the one who announced to the world that the President was dead, so he told them, "He's not doing very well." Dr. Jones went on to describe that moment, "that's when it really hit home. Joseph Kennedy was about to find out his son was dead as the President of the United States" (USA Today).

Dr. Jones experienced chaos in the very moment when he came out of denial to truly recognize that the President of the United States was dead. He had no control over the life of the President or predictability over the future of the country. On his shoulders,

Dr. Jones held the secret that was certain to bring suffering to not just Joseph Kennedy or the FBI, but to the entire nation.

The country's beloved first lady had accompanied the President to Dallas and was a great hit among the crowds of Texas. She was sharing the backseat of the limousine throughout the motorcade. After the assassination of her husband, she told her story of that day in an interview with reporter T. White. Jackie's interview can be found in *The Kennedy Assassination Chronicles* and her responses is as follows:

then Jack turned and I turned—all I remember was a blue gray building up ahead; then Jack turned back, so neatly; his last expression was so neat; he had his hand out, I could see a piece of his skull coming off; it was flesh colored not white—he was holding out his hand—and I can see his perfectly clean piece detaching itself from his head; then he slumped in my lap. ....we all lay down in the car and I kept saying 'Jack, Jack, Jack' and someone was yelling 'he's dead, he's dead' (White, 1995, page 2).

“His head was so beautiful. I'd tried to hold the top of his head down, maybe I could keep it in. ...I knew he was dead” (White, 1995, page 3).

During Jaqueline's account of the chaos taking place during the motorcade, you can see in her vivid details the true depth of suffering with its constant reminder. She witnessed the horrendous trauma to her husband and yet she describes in awe the beauty of his head. In Frank's *The Wounded Storyteller*, he says, “...but those who are truly living the chaos cannot tell in words” (Frank, 1995, page 98). The chaos is so consuming and provoking of suffering, the first lady cannot put into words how chaotic the situation really was, so instead, she focuses on the last minor details of what is left of her beloved husband. In the midst of the chaos, she also attempts to keep her husband's head together, trying to control the situation in a way to prevent the suffering that the narrative ultimately brings.

After reaching the Hospital, Mrs. Kennedy refused to leave the President's side even after many protests by the secret service (White, 1995). This is her perspective of the scene in the Hospital.

I watched them going in, with saline solutions, with other things...I thought maybe he isn't dead, maybe he's alive....I saw them going in and maybe he would live...and I thought: 'I'll take care of him every day of his life. I'll make him happy,' but I knew he was dead...I just wanted to be with him when he died.

There was a sheet over Jack, his foot was sticking out, whiter than the sheet...I took his foot and kissed it. Then I pulled back the sheet. His mouth was so beautiful, his eyes were open. I found his hand under the sheet, and I held his hand all the time the priest was saying extreme unction.

In Mrs. Kennedy's perspective from the hospital, she has false hope that causes

anxiety by watching the medical staff attempt to save her husband. Ultimately, she soon realizes, like in most chaos narratives, that no one could control the situation. The chaos had provoked suffering on her husband, and it moved to her as she held his lifeless hand in their final moments.

Although chaos is prevalent throughout every narrative of those directly associated with the assassination, it was not just they it had reached. This chaos allowed suffering and anxiety to reach an entire nation. When the news spread about the death of the President, America went into mourning. According to the book *Four Days* written by the United Press International, a college student interviewed minutes after hearing the word about Kennedy replied that it felt “as if the end of the world had come along, and you’re not prepared for it”(United Press, 1964, page 26).

This chaos narrative provoked such anxiety and suffering that it permanently left an imprint on nearly everyone who heard the devastating news. In an article from *Time Magazine*, ER nurse Jodie Hansen sent out a questionnaire to celebrities asking them their experiences of that day in Dallas. For example, when Nancy Reagan was asked about this moment, she remembered that she was in a car driving to an appointment when she heard it on the radio. She then pulled over and wept for a long time (Sanburn, 2013). Entertainer Bob Hope remembered that he was golfing at Oakmont Country Club when the Caddy Master ran over to give them the news. He, “like the rest of the world, was very shocked”(Sanburn, 2013, NP). During a conversation with Joy Muse, a small town citizen who was only four years old at the time, she remembered the vivid details of how her parents and siblings cried and how they felt when the news reached them.

The assassination was so traumatic for the country that many from that generation will always remember it as a time when time stood still and can recall every detail of the moment they received the disturbing news. After taking a deeper look into the historical event and all of its accounts, it becomes clear that the assassination can be considered a chaos narrative. Anxiety and suffering was constantly present throughout Robert Kennedy’s, Nellie Connally’s, Dr. Jones’s, and Jackie Kennedy’s perspectives, and it can even be felt when reading through them. Along with that aspect of chaos, their stories also lack control and predictability. Lastly, the fact that the chaos in the assassination was so powerful that an entire nation suffered is amazing.

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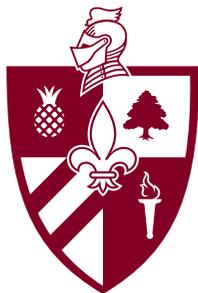
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*Amanda Muse, Class of 2017, is a Psychology major. Muse, in this essay written for her Galileo Learning Community IDC course, explores the idea of the assassination of John F. Kennedy—a well-known historical event—as a chaos narrative.*









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