The Black Bear Undergraduate History Journal

University of Maine History Department

University of Maine History Graduate Student Association

Ana Stanek  
University of Maine

Bram Dennis  
University of Maine

Poppy Lambert  
University of Maine

See next page for additional authors

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Authors
University of Maine History Department, University of Maine History Graduate Student Association, Ana Stanek, Bram Dennis, Poppy Lambert, Sadie Richardson, and William Milne
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The Black Bear Undergraduate History Journal

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Ana Stanek is a University of Maine Honors student, activist, and change-maker. She has been a dedicated member of both the Orono and University of Maine community since she moved to Orono from Georgia in 2020 with just two suitcases. Through all of her work, her ultimate goal is to help create a society in which all citizens have the same opportunities to be successful and live peaceful, productive lives.

Bram Dennis is enrolled at the University of Maine, majoring in History. He loves playing golf and taking care of his three miniature horses, Sam, Bella, and Trixie, and singular miniature donkey, Vega. His favorite branch of history to study is World War II from the European perspective, with focus on Germany and the Soviet Union. A dream job of his would be operating a World War II museum.

Poppy Lambert is a freshman student at the University of Maine, currently pursuing a bachelor’s degree in Economics while double majoring in History. Poppy is an international student from New Zealand, and on the University of Maine Field Hockey team.

Sadie Richardson is a sophomore at the University of Maine with majors in History and Political Science. In her spare time, she enjoys playing basketball, skiing, and hiking. After graduation, Sadie plans to work at a museum as an archivist or researcher.

William Milne is from Norwell, Massachusetts. After highschool graduation in 2017, he went on to attend the University of Maine for International Affairs with a concentration in History. Upon graduation in 2021, William hopes to work for the Federal Government.
Dear Readers,

Welcome to the inaugural edition of the Black Bear Undergraduate History Journal! In the winter of 2019, members of the History Graduate Student Association proposed the creation of an undergraduate journal to their peers. Carrying on in their footsteps, we set out to publish one. The editors of the BBUHJ are excited to share this project that has been close to their hearts for the past couple of months. Starting and publishing an academic journal in one semester certainly had its challenges but has also been a fun and rewarding experience.

The Black Bear Undergraduate History Journal is an academic journal dedicated to showcasing undergraduate work from History students at the University of Maine. Our publication is run by the Journal Board, made up of four History graduate students who have worked diligently this past semester to organize, edit, and publish this journal. We received a number of submissions to our journal, and our authors have worked hard to produce and edit the work found in this journal.

Included in this edition are five papers on a wide range of topics. From the CIA led Guatemalan Coup to the Cherokee and the Indian Removal Act, readers are sure to find something of interest. The works included in this journal were well researched and well written, showcasing exemplary scholarship from undergraduate history students.

The BBUHJ would like to thank the University of Maine History Department and the History Graduate Student Association for providing support for this project. We look forward to continuing with this project in the following years and cultivating undergraduate research.

Yours truly,

The Journal Board
The Intersectionality of Early National Reform Movements

Ana Stanek

The Early National Period was the birth of many of our country’s most significant reform movements. These include the Anti-Slavery, Labor, and Women’s Rights Movements. At a glance, these causes could not seem more different. However, their differences are accompanied by many similarities. In The Long Emancipation, Ira Berlin describes the factors involved in emancipation. The most prominent of these steps that are seen in each movement is the ubiquity of violence. While the types and degree of violence within each movement were different, they all sparked the social changes that have brought our society where it is today.

For the Women’s Rights Movement, violence manifested itself in verbal abuse. This is reflected in how the press, and the entire nation, attacked the movement after the first convention was held in Seneca Falls in 1848. Leading activist, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, describes the country's disdain for the movement by saying, “All the journals from Maine to Texas seemed to strive with each other to see which could make our movement appear the most ridiculous.” (Stanton, 221). The verbal abuse was so frightening that Stanton noted, “If I had the slightest premonition of all that was to follow that convention, I fear I should not have had the courage to risk it.” (Stanton, 221). Much like the Anti-Slavery and Labor Rights Movement, in the Women’s Rights Movement there was an incredible amount of resistance when the oppressed sought equal rights. A key

Elizabeth, Stanton, “Eighty Years and More: Reminiscences,” 1897. Published in America Firsthand, vol 1, 10th ed. Edited by Anthony Marcus, John M. Giggie, David Burner. (New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2016), 221
contrast between the Women’s Rights Movement and the Labor Rights Movement was in methods of organizing. Stanton placed greater emphasis on the significance of the leaders who organized conventions, whereas, in the fight for labor rights, workers’ strikes were much more prevalent.

In the Labor Rights Movement, laborers began their advocacy as their treatment progressively worsened over time with poor working conditions, decreasing wages, and continually increasing costs of living. Harriet Robinson, a prominent Labor Rights advocate from the era, discusses the cost of living increases and decreases in wages by saying, “the corporations had paid twenty-five cents a week towards the board of each operative, and now it was their purpose to have the girls pay this sum; and this, in addition to the cut in wages.”\(^1\) This is similar to the Anti-Slavery movement in that the conditions for the slaves also worsened over time. Slave rebellions lead to an increased fear of a slave uprising that caused slave owners to tighten their grips and intensify the slaves’ punishments. Of course, the reality was that when conditions became unbearable at the factory, employees had the right to leave, whereas slaves did not have the right to leave their brutal masters.

While each reform movement played a critical role in furthering equality in the United States, none were more important than the Anti-Slavery Movement. In *The Long Emancipation*, Berlin describes the ubiquity of violence as the inhumane dynamic between slave and master. When talking about the perspective of the slaves, Berlin says, “For them, slavery was not merely a symbol of savagery and inhumanity; it was savagery and inhumanity.”\(^2\) The anti-slavery movement was unique from the other movements in that it endured the greatest degree of both physical and verbal violence. Slaves were the only people who began their fight for equality from nothing. Slaves were not even considered to be

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\(^1\) Harriet Robinson, “Loom and Spindle; or, Life Among the Early Mill Girls,” 1898. Published in America Firsthand, vol 1, 10th ed. Edited by Anthony Marcus, John M. Giggie, David Burner. (New York: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2016), 194-203

people, but as property instead. While the conditions for women and laborers were far from ideal, they were still far more fortunate than the slaves.

Another common thread between reformers was their support for one another. Many of the women who would go on to found the Women’s Rights Movement began as Abolitionists. The Women’s Rights Movement actually began after the founders attended an anti-slavery conference in London. When Stanton undertook her work for women’s rights, she commented on the support from abolitionists. In her memoir she wrote, “the anti-slavery papers stood by us manfully and so did Frederick Douglass, both in his convention and in his paper, The North Star.” Other memoirs also reflect activists’ engagement in multiple reform movements. First name? Robinson, a young woman who grew up working in a New England Factory, lead a strike in protest of the poor labor conditions and wrote, “As I looked back at the long line that followed me, I was more proud than I have ever been since at any success I may have achieved, and more proud than I shall ever be again until my own beloved State gives to its women citizens the right of suffrage.” (Robinson, 199). Robinson looks back to what she had done as a child for labor reform and ties it to her support for women’s suffrage in the present. In The Long Emancipation, Berlin asserts that Abolitionists defined equality as being “the central tenant of American nationality.” (Berlin, 157). In this way the Anti-Slavery movement paved the way for all Americans to attain equality through the reform movements in the Early National Era.

The Anti-Slavery Movement started a snowball effect of future reform movements. Once slaves began fighting for freedom, other oppressed groups followed suit. These groups included laborers and women. While their movements differed, they all shared a common passion for equal rights that was matched only by their individual oppressor’s opposition to giving them those

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rights. That snowball of reform that began in the Early National Period is still prominent as we continue the fight for equal rights today.

Using my sources, I realize that I am focusing on three significant and influential, but also specific, limited, historical, contextualized developments in the Early Modern U.S. Women's Rights Movement, Labor Rights Movement, and Anti-Slavery Movement. I acknowledge that a fuller understanding of the Women's Rights Movements, the Labor Rights Movements, and the Anti-Slavery Movements extends back far beyond this Early (US) National Period, must include all kinds of diverse struggles against many forms of violence and continues to the present. We are grateful for those past movements that now allow us to join and contribute to the Women's Rights Movement, the Labor Rights Movement, and the Anti-Slavery and Anti-Racist Rights Movement today.
Bibliography


The Legacy of the Conquered

Bram Dennis

The legacy of Mexica Empire, also known as the Aztec Empire, thought to have fallen on August 13th, 1521, lives on through its people. Today, parts of the Empire’s culture, religion, lifestyle, and society remain after the fall of Tenochtitlan. This legacy remains due to the leadership, courage, and selfless actions carried out by the Mexica people who are a strong and civilized people and would have fared much better had they never faced the Spanish. The ruler of Tenochtitlan, Moctezuma, attempted peace with Hernan Cortés and his Spaniards from their arrival until the fall of the city. He tried to make the Spanish see reason, often requesting peace treaties, giving great gifts to the Spanish that were presented in the highest honor in his culture, and demonstrating an overall jolly attitude. This attitude is returned by Cortés and the conquistadors, though the latter was laced with false pretenses. Moctezuma may have been killed by his own men after the fall of Tenochtitlan, but his legacy carries on. To quote from Stuart Schwartz and Tatiana Seijas book Victors and Vanquished, “The fall of Tenochtitlan signaled both an end and a beginning”.¹ This is explored further with the study of Mexica artifacts that survived, such as maps of surrounding areas. Both maps include unique symbols that would have been used by the Mexica on traditional maps to mark significant locations. These two maps were created many years after the fall of Tenochtitlan, one example of lasting culture. One of the maps is even dedicated to King Charles. This is one example of the blending of Mexica and European cultures. The maps both have Nahua symbols, and hints of European conformity exist in the second map’s composition points. The maps are only a small example of influence to European

¹ Victors and Vanquished, 214.
culture. Other forms of conformity are essential to the preservation of Mexica legacy. The Mexica are able to retain their *altepetl* organization, with minor changes to adapt to Spanish requests. These sacrifices and adaptations to culture and society mark the persistence of the Mexica people, and the difficult decisions they are forced to make to ensure some form of survival.

The theme that is clearly prevalent within the Mexica people is survival. The Mexica have strong warriors who attempted to repel the Spanish soldiers and they fight valiantly and courageously throughout the conquest. Other Mexica warriors continued the survival effort in a different way. *Doña* Marina is one of these warriors. *Doña* Marina was born around c. 1500 A.D to a ruling family of Paynala. After her father’s death, she was sold into slavery by her mother. She was thought to be between eight and twelve years old at the time. Her mother made this action so her stepbrother would become heir to the family’s fortune. She was brought to Pontonchan, where she learned several languages which were essential in her role as translator. During her time in Pontonchan, the local Mayan tribe was defeated in a battle against the Spanish, and *Doña* Marina was given to the Spanish as a gift to usher in peace. This begins her journey with the Spaniards, which significantly influenced the course of history in many ways.

*Doña* Marina took on many roles with the Spaniards, ranging from translator, general advisor in the wars, and a metaphoric role of “mother” of the Mexican people. *Doña* Marina is still a very contested figure in history. She was first depicted in a more negative connotation, seen as one of the main figures who brought the downfall of the Mexica Empire. However, Swartz and Seijas have a differing opinion, going as far as implying that *Doña* Marina is partially a savior for the Mexica. It can be argued that without the influence of *Doña* Marina, many Mexica would have continued to fight the Spanish, which would have resulted in pointless death and destruction.

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2 *Victors and Vanquished*, 65.
Doña Marina’s connection to Moctezuma and Cortés is quite significant. She is shown to be present during meetings with Moctezuma and Cortés. She was depicted in these drawings seated next to Cortes, advising and translating for him during these encounters. She was essentially the ears and mouth of Cortés, who carried the fate of Mexica in his hands. Probanza de méritos, or the Proof of Merits, of Doña Marina reads “…and that the said Doña Marina, [who was] very faithful and loyal to don Hernando Cortés and the conquering Spaniards, had a talent for speaking with Indigenous people and ways of making them understand that there were no way to tame the Spaniards”. This recognition of Doña Marina’s efforts to dissuade bloodshed stands out due to its Spanish origin. Doña Marina’s recognition for her service to the Spanish Crown highlights her importance for both groups. Doña Marina also assisted Cortés with forming alliances with other warring tribes against the Mexica.

Doña Marina understood that the Mexica were powerless against the strength of the Spanish, but throughout her journey with Cortés she always tried to limit the destruction. From The True History of the Conquest of New Spain, Bernal Diaz encompasses a portion of Doña Marina’s legacy in a short paragraph. He writes, “When Doña Marina saw them in tears, she consoled them and told them to have no fear… She forgave them for doing it… and told them to return to their town and said that God had been very gracious to her in freeing her from the worship of idols and making her a Christian and let her bear a son to her lord and master Cortés…” These chosen fragments encompass aspects of Doña Marina including compassion for her people as seen through her mercy. Doña Marina wants to see the legacy of her people continue. She argued that God allowed her to break away from her old traditions and gods. Although the Mexica no longer worshipped their old idols, they were still able to be spiritual with Christianity’s God, thus allowing them to retain a spiritual outlet. The last line in Diaz’s quote cements Doña Marina into Mexica legacy. By bearing a child to arguably one of the most powerful men in New Spain, Doña Marina ensures not

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3 Victors and Vanquished, 85.  
4 Victors and Vanquished, 69.
only her own survival, but the survival of her bloodline. Her child with Cortés is considered one of the first “mestizos”, or a person of European and indigenous descent. This gives testament to her contribution to her people’s survival. She is one of the first links between the Mexica and Spaniards, and her impact lives on after her death.

The importance of individuals during this volatile time period cannot be understated. Several events resulted in the eventual end of the Mexica Empire, but through the adoption of new cultures and lifestyles, the legacy lives on. Moctezuma and Doña Marina both played very different roles, and both struggled to maintain the survival of their people. One could explore Schwartz and Seijas depiction of the fall of Tenochtitlan to be both “an end and a beginning”. The Mexica Empire and Tenochtitlan may cease to exist, but remnants of its legacy have slipped through cultural cracks over the years. The beginning of New Spain, along with traditions and cultures from the past come to be, ushering in a new time period for the Mexica people.
Bibliography

The Battle of Equality and Economic Opportunity

Poppy Lambert

Economic opportunity and moral issues can often be viewed at different ends of the spectrum. When looking at American history, a clear continuity is an economic motivation when creating colonies. From valuing exports rather than food, to deciding to legally allow the crippling institution of slavery. The values and motives of Americans throughout history is vital to understand the world we live in today and the promises and contradictions that America was built upon. Economic motivation can be viewed as one of the fundamental motivations for success from the colonial era to Reconstruction within North America.

When the English settlers of the “New World” set foot on land, they had a clear vision of economic prosperity. The abundant land, they thought was empty before them, served as a vision of economic prosperity. Instead of focusing on agricultural progress, the colonists prioritized the production and exportation of the tobacco crop. Mercantilism, an economic system founded by the British, was a way to focus on creating colonies for profit. This was a fundamental part of the original Jamestown colony. The profitability of successful colonies and potential for economic growth was the driving force for success. John Smith, an original settler of the Jamestown colony, promoted the new world to those seeking enterprise. In his reports to England, Smith describes the Virginian land as “so propitious to the nature and use of man as no place is more convenient for pleasure, profit and man’s sustenance.”¹ Smith’s motivation to promote this description of Virginia not only highlights Smith's incentives for personal profit

through company stock sales, but also illustrates that if the new world was not profitable, it would not be as desirable.

Similarly, Camila Townsend, in *Pocahontas and the Powhatan Dilemma*, advances the argument that the chief motivation behind colonization was profit. The English justified displacement of the Powhatan from their homelands by arguing they were using the land productively and profitably whereas the Powhatan were not. Townsend believes this justification of colonization is dismissive of the agricultural progress, traditions, and way of life established by the Powhatans.²

As the reputation of the successful new colony spread, a new labor institution emerged and indentured servitude began to be the main labor force. Free passages to the colonies were granted to servants in return for a binding contract for a number of years' work after which they would be given freedom. Although the free passage to a new world was enticing, the risks involved were hard to avoid. Indentured servitude was a way for colonists to expand their tobacco growing companies without having high wage costs, generating wealth for themselves and the colony. This institution was the first experience of labor exploitation within America, foreshadowing the corruption of slavery that would follow.³

As the United States began to grow, British involvement became widely disputed. The Seven Years’ War left Britain in heavy debt, and the solution was to tax American citizens. Cities such as Boston, Massachusetts were left facing an urban poverty crisis as the distance between rich and poor continued to grow. Those who were poor were left on the streets, often participating in street politics

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³ Riordan, Liam, “A New World for All,” History 103: Creating America to 1877 (class lecture, University of Maine, Orono, Maine, September 21, 2020); Olaudah Equiano, *The Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African, Written by Himself* (New York: Isaac Knapp, 1837) as printed in *America Firsthand* 63-68; Gottlieb Mittelberger, *Journey to Pennsylvania in the Year 1750 and Return to Germany in the Year 1754*, trans. Carl Theo (Philadelphia: John Joseph McVey, 1898) as printed in *America Firsthand* 68-72; Darcy Stevens, History 103: Creating America to 1877 (recitation, University of Maine, Orono, Maine, September 23, 2020)
to convey their desire for home rule. Street politics was a way to convey the opinions and struggles of the regular people, often differing from those of the wealthy elite. The Boston Massacre illustrated the complexity of the internal Revolution between colonists and exposed a division between socio-economic classes. When the artisan crowd mobilized in the Boston street, they were first and foremost rebelling against the British occupation. Opposition to British troops in Boston united all classes. However, the artisans also sought a social revolution. They envisioned a new nation that promoted a more egalitarian and democratic way of life. Conversely, most leading Patriots desired only political independence from England. Their ideal new nation would be ruled by elite Americans rather than elite Britons. The wealthy upper class fully intended to retain social and political power. The difference between the intentions of the working class artisans and the elite highlighted how complex the Revolution had become, exposing both an internal and external revolution. The complex social situation that the Revolution sparked proved that Americans were driven to political action by economic concerns. However, the different classes clearly interpreted the meaning of the Revolution differently. While the wealthy upper class were excited by the idea of new economic opportunity, the lower class were merely hopeful independence eased their economic burdens through changes like lower taxes.4

The Declaration of Independence was a way to bind former colonists together, under the label “Americans”. The ideas of “unalienable Rights” and that “all men are created equal” was a way to inspire unity among Americans of all

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4 Riordan, Liam “Revolutionary Origins: Politics and Violence,” History 103: Crafting America to 1877 (class lecture, University of Maine, Orono, Maine, September 28, 2020); James Hawkes [supposed author], A Retrospect of the Boston Tea-Party, with a Memoir of George R. T. Hewes, a Survivor of the Little Band of Patriots Who Drowned the Tea in Boston Harbour in 1773, by a Citizen of New York (New York, 1834) as printed in Marcus et. al 92-95; Boston Gazette and Country Journal, March 12, 1770, as printed in Marcus et. al 96-99

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classes in the war against the British. The Declaration of Independence not only offered the Revolutionary idealism the people sought, but also was essential to instill allegiance to the new nation. However, political independence was not all the Americans sought. The mercantilist system continued to be a motive for seeking independence. British imposed taxes and trade regulations limited Americans’ ability to profit through exports and expansion. As with colonization, the American Revolution arose, at least in part, because of a desire for economic freedom. Whether this was through not paying taxes, the right to expand to the west, or to create a new labor institution of their own, Americans were intent on economic independence.

The next step in creating a successful independent nation was expansion and development. The West promised both geographical and economic expansion. As development to the West persisted, the Louisiana Purchase in 1804 created another territory and more economic opportunity. Americans expected the extension of already ingrained labor systems, in particular slavery. Slavery was essential for the South, as it was their most established profiting scheme. As industrialization continued to grow, slavery became the most optimal way for Southerners to continue producing goods at high rates of profit. Essentially, slavery was the cheapest route for production of labor-intensive goods, without needing to pay wages.

In The Long Emancipation, Ira Berlin illustrates that the Fugitive Slave Act and the Constitution protected the institution of slavery, and in particular slave masters. The Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 legalized returning any slaves to their owners, regardless of where in the United states the fugitive was captured. It also led to the capture and enslavement of free blacks. Those against slavery, in particular Northerners, were outraged and disgusted by the act, as it forced them to be complicate in the institution. The act was endorsed at the highest levels of the federal government, which “facilitated the massive westward expansion of

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As Berlin suggests, the road to emancipation was long and required many battles on a legal and personal scale. This coincides with the actions of the Revolutionary Era, showcasing the importance of activism at both a social and political scale. But, perhaps more importantly, that economic factors continued to outweigh moral ones.

The expansion of slavery was also validated through the South’s interpretation of the Constitution. Georgia representative Robert Toombs illustrates that interpretation in a speech during the 1860 secession crisis. He argued the Constitution protected “the right of all people of the United States to emigrate into the territory with all of their property of every kind (expressly including slaves).” Expanding to the West was a profitable move for slaveholders, and being somewhat validated in the Constitution proved a strong incentive. Toombs’ direct reference to the Constitution highlights that not only did Southerners feel that it was their right to hold property, but also that Lincoln’s plan to restrict the expansion of slavery, would have a disastrous economic impact on the South. Cotton had become one of the most profitable exports in America and abolishing slavery would drastically increase producers’ costs and negatively impact trade. Although the exportation of goods had changed from earlier colonial years, the relentless pursuit of profit proved to be deep rooted. Americans were basing their decisions on economic considerations rather than the egalitarian ideals the founding documents of their country were based on.

Slavery continued to drive the South’s economy, and for many slaves, “the powerful grasp of the demon Slavery” proved difficult to challenge. This institution was so heavily ingrained into Southern society that life was unimaginable without it. Harriet Jacobs’ memoir, published in her later years, was


7 Robert Tombs, “Speech to the Georgia Legislature,” (Nov 13, 1860), as printed in Marcus et al. 278.

8 Harriet Jacobs, The Incidents in the Life of a Female Slave Girl, (Boston: Self-published, 1861), as printed seen in Marcus et al. n America Firsthand
a direct attempt to tackle the “demon” of slavery, by trying to gain widespread attention and support for emancipation. However, an emotional account of the evils of slavery could not compete with the economic and legal considerations which validated slavery’s place in the nation.

As slavery continued to drive a wedge between the North and South, the election of Lincoln into presidency in 1860 drove nine states to secede. Lincoln was a centrist, and had a moderate approach to the abolition of slavery. While recognizing slavery as immoral, Lincoln only opposed the expansion of slavery, and recognized its legality in states where it already existed. Although Lincoln was prepared to contain slavery rather than abolish it, the South feared that electing a Northern president would lead to the exploitation of power from the federal government which could overrule the South “until slavery is everywhere abolished.”9 The value of a slave was so high that slaveholders were not prepared to lose such a high level of assets and profit and would rather fight than face economic reconstruction. While Toombs’ address to the Georgia legislature calling for immediate secession from the Union showcased a radical position, he illustrates the opinion of a large majority of those who felt victimized most by Lincoln’s election.

After the rage militaire for the Civil War burned out, Northern forces instituted a compulsory enlistment through a draft in 1863. The draft exploited those either unable to provide the $300 fee to avoid enlistment, or those who were not able to find a willing candidate to take up arms in their place. As a result, the New York City Draft Riots, taking place from July 13-16, 1863 highlighted the objection to the compulsory enlistment. Published in Harper's New Monthly Magazine in 1867, Ellen Leonard, an innocent eyewitness to the horrifying riots, recalls the people of New York “all seemed possessed alike with savage hate and fury.”10 Her account offers an insight to the sheer scale of violence the draft

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9 Toombs, 281

created, and the impact it had on the city. The “deepened class and ethnic antagonisms” not only led to racial prejudice within the city, but foreshadowed the discrimination that the black community continued to face for centuries.11

The Civil War altered every economic institution created. The abolition of slavery meant that the South lost their entire labor system, and Reconstruction proved difficult. Southern African Americans who were newly enfranchised, sought the ability to create family farms, similar to the yeoman ideals of the Colonial and Revolutionary era. The emergence of sharecropping was a new way for former slaveholders to retain high profits, through renting land and creating an oppressive, but legal labor system. Further actions, such as the 14th Amendment, changed the way the black community was recognized in the labor force. While inequality and racism persisted, it existed on a different and new terrain than it had previously. The emergence of legal discriminatory actions, such as the Black Codes, highlighted that although America could recognize that labor inequality was morally wrong, the social and personal scale of inequality remained. The persistence of racism and profit motivations are still prevalent today.

It has been a challenge to create a society that is both economically strong and socially equal. It is a feat much more difficult than anticipated by the settlers and founders of this country.

There are many ways to understand and interpret North American history from colonization to Reconstruction. While economic and moral issues can be viewed at different ends of a spectrum, the woven nature of these two driving forces are definitely one of the strongest persistence in American history. Every action throughout this time period, from the early commitment to profits from colonists, to the struggle to balance an economically sustainable and morally correct society, exposes the struggle to balance these chief motives throughout history.

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Implications of Written Language:
The Cherokee Syllabary and its Relationship with Indian Removal
Sadie Richardson

The written word holds a great amount of power. Prior to European arrival in North America, indigenous groups practiced oral storytelling to pass down traditions, records events, and family lineage. Storytelling was an extremely important aspect of Cherokee culture. In the early 1800s, a new way of distributing information was created: a written language. A Cherokee man named George Guess, better known as Sequoyah, developed a written syllabary consisting of phonetic characters. It quickly spread throughout the Southeast and by 1825, it was formally adopted by the Cherokee. Many Cherokee people became literate and were able to record history and traditions, as well as communicate with others, with the syllabary. Sequoyah’s development of a written syllabary had a huge impact. It helped the Cherokee re-establish their culture, take pride in their language, and record traditions, events, and history. The written syllabary helped resist assimilation into American culture because the Cherokee could use their language to communicate over distances. The creation and dissemination of the newspaper named Cherokee Phoenix was the main tool used to connect the Cherokee across the Southeast. However, there were also unintended consequences of the syllabary. In the early 1800s, government officials and the general public believed that in order to be civilized, native groups had to learn English and practice Christianity; in other words, they had to assimilate. As the Cherokee started to resist Americanization, they faced dire consequences. Most notably, the Indian Removal Act was signed in 1830 and forced the Cherokee to leave their ancestral lands. The written language of the Cherokee, and its use in print, played a significant role in the early 1800s, especially regarding the cementing of a Cherokee nation, forming the resistance to
assimilation into European society, and the subsequent relocation of the Cherokee.

Prior to European arrival, oral storytelling was a huge part of Cherokee culture. Since the language was only spoken, not written, members of the Cherokee used it for everything. Oral traditions were passed from generation to generation, along with legends, folklore, and history.¹ Records of lineage, marriages, and political leaders were kept in memories and stories. Members of the Cherokee used the language to “communicate from one end of the nation to the other,”² even after the introduction of English and other European languages. Oral storytelling was still important after written language came about, but the syllabary became a new symbol for the Cherokee.

There was a rather sudden change from oral storytelling to the development and use of the Cherokee syllabary. Credit for the syllabary goes to a man named George Guess, who is now commonly known as Sequoyah. There are conflicting accounts over Sequoyah’s parentage; some historians claim that he was only half-Cherokee.³ Nonetheless, he was a member of the Cherokee who aimed to help his tribe become more literate. Ironically, he was only able to understand Cherokee, which was a spoken language, thus under the definition of literacy, which is the ability to read and write, Sequoyah was considered to be illiterate. Even so, he managed to create his own path to native literacy. There was no existing writing system, so he made one. He worked on a written language for several years and went through several different types before settling on the final version. In 1821, Sequoyah finished developing a syllabary that consisted of symbols that represented eighty-six phonetic syllables. These symbols did not resemble anything found in the English alphabet.⁴ In fact, Sequoyah’s style of

writing was quite different from the use of alphabets in most western European
languages. Nevertheless, his was the first and only written language of the
Cherokee.

It is unclear why exactly Sequoyah decided to create a written syllabary.
There are a few theories that historians tend to focus on. One was that “native
North Americans considered European writing to be inherently powerful and
mystical.” Like many aspects of European life, a written language was foreign to
the Cherokee. But this first theory received a small level of opposition to the
syllabary. Initially, many Cherokee thought that literacy was an inherent
component of European life and not meant for the native population. A second
widely accepted reason for the development of the syllabary was the attempt to
bring the Cherokee into the ‘civilized’ world. Sequoyah believed in the latter,
though to him, becoming civilized did not mean becoming Americanized.

This new way of communication made ripples in both Cherokee and
American society. In the early 1800s, a written language was a large factor in how
civilized a group was or was not perceived to be. Most Native American tribes
had not developed a written language or syllabary by this time. Oral storytelling
was the norm; this method was a significant part of life for many tribes, including
the Cherokee. They communicated, recorded events, and told stories through
spoken language. This was vastly different than American culture in the 19th
century, which placed importance on literacy and even linked it with civilization.
To some historians, the syllabary elevated the Cherokee and made them appear
civilized to white Americans. To dissenters, of which there were two types, this
writing system was not respectable. Within the Cherokee, the syllabary
represented a loss of culture and a form of assimilation. To European-Americans,
the type of writing system itself was an issue.

American scholars in the 19th century reacted negatively to the syllabary
and were generally not supportive of it because to them, it was not a civilized way

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5 Margaret Bender, Signs of Cherokee Culture: Sequoyah’s Syllabary in Eastern Cherokee Life (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 24.
6 Hochman, Savage Preservation, 13.
of communicating. Common European languages in the U.S., like French, Spanish, and English, were based on alphabets. Nineteenth-century linguists were not impressed by other forms of writing. Syllabaries were “viewed as ‘grossly inadequate, even savage forms of writing’ because they seemed to use an excessive number of symbols the sounds of human speech.” Every indigenous tribe that used syllabaries, therefore, were considered to be no more advanced than tribes that used only spoken languages.

Sequoyah’s syllabary played a significant role in the Americanization of the Cherokee. In the 19th century, assimilation played a huge role in the relationship between native groups and Americans. Members of tribes were encouraged to leave their native culture behind in favor of joining American society. The Cherokee were expected to learn English, practice Christianity, and abandon their traditional way of life. Assimilating was synonymous with civilization. But Sequoyah was not a supporter of assimilation, and he felt that his syllabary would actually enable the Cherokee to become more independent of the white population. To an extent, he was right; the Cherokee published an independent newspaper and established their own government later on. But, in some ways, Sequoyah was wrong about the syllabary and its role in assimilation. The creation of the syllabary marked an abrupt shift in cultural practices and traditions, as much as it tried to keep them from assimilation. Oral storytelling was converted to using a written language, which was a practice used by Americans with European heritage. Some Cherokee felt they ‘gave up’ their traditions, like storytelling, in favor of a new practice associated with the United States. This change in communication could be a clear sign of assimilation and ‘civilization.’

According to some historians, using written language enabled the Cherokee to enter the “civilized social order.” After they started using a syllabary, there were more parallels drawn between the Cherokee and the

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7 Ibid, 18.
8 Gubele, “Talking Leaves,” 49.
9 Bender, Signs of Cherokee Culture, 24.
‘civilized’ world. The syllabary “represented a threshold onto a new Indian modernity.”¹⁰ It opened doors for the Cherokee that were previously only available to the non-indigenous U.S. population. The Cherokee were the first major tribe to be able to communicate over long distances and spread ideas about culture and politics.

The syllabary also served a practical purpose; the Cherokee used written language to write letters, record historical events, and, most significantly, produce government documents. A significant number of European missionaries feared that the syllabary would “strengthen and prolong the Cherokee’s attachment to their own language and culture.”¹¹ To an extent, they were correct. Now that missionaries were no longer teaching the Cherokee how to understand English, they were also not teaching them about Christianity. The main reason that missionaries interacted with native groups in North America was to spread Christianity, so the development of the syllabary put a wrench in their plans. Now that the Cherokee were not learning English, some missionaries worried they were not assimilating into American culture. The writing system gave the Cherokee the ability to communicate and unite as a nation with a common goal: to advance their political agenda. With the help of print media, the Cherokee became a unified nation with a strong nationalist political stance.

The newspaper titled Cherokee Phoenix was a significant tool that helped spread ideas to members of the Cherokee. These ideas were typically related to cultural and ethnic unity, as well as the need to defend Cherokee land against the United States government. This newspaper was created in the late 1820s and was the first newspaper printed in an indigenous language.¹² Its first editor was a man named Elias Boudinot, who aimed to spread literacy and culturally specific ideas to the Cherokee. The Cherokee Phoenix was printed in both English and the new syllabary, which allowed Cherokee from all over the Southeast to learn their written language. There were two ways the Cherokee could learn, either by

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¹⁰ Hochman, Savage Preservation, 18.
¹¹ Bender, Signs of Cherokee Culture, 52.
¹² Ibid.
reading English or becoming self-taught in the syllabary. Since the syllabary was based entirely on phonetics in the Cherokee language, it was only a matter or memorizing which symbols represented each spoken syllable. Conversely, the Cherokee could also learn the syllabary by translating English passages to the syllabary and teaching themselves how to become fluent in their new native language.

The Cherokee Phoenix played a large role in spreading literacy, which was at an all-time high. The syllabary was a hit, and in less than half a decade after its introduction, it was formally adopted by the Cherokee Nation. The new syllabary was used in Cherokee schools, the home, and in the community. Boudinot estimated in 1830 that “more than half of adult Cherokee men were literate in their own language.” He came to this percentage by looking at how many households purchased the newspaper. There is some debate over his figures because the newspaper was also printed in English, so it is not certain which language in the newspaper was being read by every Cherokee. However, Boudinot included an incentive for readers of the Cherokee Phoenix. The regular price of the newspaper was $3.50 a year, or $3.00 if paid in advance. But “to subscribers who can read only the Cherokee language, the price will be $2.00 [sic] in advance, or $2.50 [sic] to be paid within the year.” He wanted to encourage members of the Cherokee to learn the new syllabary by lowering the price for those who learned. Regardless of which language the readers could understand, they could certainly understand the ideas being mentioned. The Cherokee used their newspaper to spread nationalist and political ideas to members of the Cherokee Nation.

The development of the written syllabary was the tipping point in relations between the Cherokee and the U.S. government. Existing historiography perpetuates the idea that the Cherokee benefitted from the development of the syllabary. To an extent, this is true. In terms of culture, the syllabary helped unite

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13 Hochman, Savage Preservation, 17.
them, since “literacy in Cherokee became, in itself, a nativistic movement, an act of resistance.” The Cherokee took pride in the syllabary because it was an opportunity to reject assimilation tactics. To be literate, they no longer had to learn a different culture’s language; they could focus on their own. Using the syllabary, the Cherokee were able to communicate over long distances, spread political ideas, and become unified as a nation. However, as they veered away from American society, the Cherokee were also seen as threats. They were becoming more ‘civilized,’ and American settlers began “to see Indians less as charges than as competitors.” Instead of being people who could be easily controlled, converted to Christianity, and forced to assimilate, the Cherokee were becoming independent. However, their independence was costly; political unification placed a target on their back. The Cherokee Nation created their own structure of government in the 1820s and demanded sovereignty, which posed a threat against the U.S. government.

The media was used to disseminate political ideas throughout the Cherokee Nation. The Constitution of the Cherokee Nation, first written in a year prior, was published on the first page of the first issue of the Cherokee Phoenix on February 21, 1828. This constitution laid out exactly how the Cherokee expected their newly formed government to be treated by the U.S government.

The first article of the Constitution declared that the Cherokee were to be considered equal to the white population. It established boundaries for their ancestral homelands and declared that the Cherokee Nation had sovereignty. Later in the article, the Cherokee established a legislative body of their government that consisted of a Committee, Council, and a General Council. These ideas about government were quite different than the governing structure used prior to European contact. As the Cherokee started to assimilate, they gleaned ideas for a

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17 “Constitution of the Cherokee Nation, Cherokee Phoenix.”
18 Ibid.
19 Ibid.
new government from American political structures. Their ideas came to fruition with the publication of the Constitution of the Cherokee Nation. However, this act of political independence was met with disdain from U.S. politicians.

There was certainly an anti-Indian rhetoric in American politics in the early 1800s. The Spanish, French, and English settlers and colonialists who came to North America hundreds of years beforehand left a dark stain on history. The already-tumultuous relationship between the U.S. and Native Americans continued the deteriorate after the introduction of the syllabary. With written language acting as a glue that connected the Cherokee, the U.S. needed to take action before the Cherokee got too strong. It was not a coincidence that the Indian Removal Act was passed directly after the Cherokee started to play a significant role in politics.

The U.S. government was threatened by the Cherokee’s insistence on political participation, especially at the federal level. The government wanted to force all native tribes to leave their ancestral lands and make new homes west of the Mississippi River. Many tribes, especially the Cherokee, fought back against this plan. The idea of relocation and removal was not new to the Cherokee. At the end of the 18th century, the U.S. established the first Native American reservations. Indigenous people were already being forced to move from one place to another. There was a small but significant number of Cherokee who moved to modern-day Arkansas in the 1810s because of federal incentives to settle the area.\(^{20}\) The older generations had already faced attempts by the U.S. to convince them to leave the Southeast. In the early 19th century, the Cherokee made various treaties with the U.S. that included land concessions. One significant instance was the Treaty of Fort Jackson in 1813, which forced the Cherokee to cede land to the U.S.\(^{21}\) Sequoyah himself grew up in a time period of

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\(^{21}\) Ibid.
instability and uncertainty. The newer generation was filled with motivation to remain where their ancestors had lived and built traditions. The Cherokee were able to stay on their land until the first third of the 1800s. In the 1824 presidential election, the issue of native relocation was in the spotlight. It became a hot button issue that Andrew Jackson tried to exploit. Although he lost in this election, his anti-Indian rhetoric remained. When Jackson became president in 1829, the U.S. revigorated their efforts and started to become more forceful in their goal of removal.

Cherokee resistance to removal came to head a few years after the syllabary was formally adopted. The Cherokee Nation was involved in a Supreme Court case that directly threatened the U.S. government and their plans for native relocation. *Cherokee v. Georgia* was presented to the Supreme Court in 1828 but was not addressed by the court until three years later. In this case, the Cherokee Nation argued that Georgia was infringing on their right to keep their land. Although the Supreme Court heard the case, it did not make a ruling. The leading judge on the bench, Chief Justice John Marshall, dismissed the case after saying that the Supreme Court did not hold the jurisdiction needed to make a ruling. Marshall did give an opinion on the matter, though, saying that tribal government are considered to be “domestic dependent nations.” Without a ruling, the Cherokee failed to legally establish their sovereignty in U.S. courts. Even though they were considered to be more ‘civilized’ because of their syllabary, the Cherokee were still treated like pests that had to removed. The Indian Removal Act was signed into law by President Andrew Jackson on May 28, 1830. All indigenous people in the Southeast U.S., including the Cherokee, were commanded to leave their homes and travel to ‘Indian Territory,’ or land west of the Mississippi. The Cherokee continued to resist removal and were forced to deal with state laws for several years until another significant court case was heard.

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In the time directly after this court case, the Cherokee utilized their syllabary to write political arguments and statements in the *Cherokee Phoenix*. Even after their court case failed to establish sovereignty, the newspaper still insisted that “as a nation, the Cherokee are as independent as the Swiss.”

Boudinot and the Cherokee Nation did not want to back down. As more members of the Cherokee Nation became literate, they became more involved in politics and resistance to removal. This caught the attention of the American public; while there was vast opposition to the Cherokee’s goals, there was some support, too. One man in particular was an ally to the Cherokee. Samuel Worcester was a missionary who worked to defend Cherokee sovereignty. He had quite a bit of exposure to the syllabary, seeing as he translated the Bible from English to Cherokee when working as a missionary. Worcester also played a role in expanding the syllabary’s influence. Worcester had helped Elias Boudinot print the *Cherokee Phoenix* and spread it throughout the Cherokee Nation. Finally, he played a major role in advocating for Cherokee sovereignty and rights in the legal system.

The court case *Worcester v. Georgia* was heard in 1832, just a few years after *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia*. Samuel Worcester, who played a prominent role in spreading the Cherokee syllabary, took legal action against Georgia, which had once again violated the Cherokee’s declared sovereignty. Interestingly, the Cherokee did not blame Georgia for its continued usage of state laws to exert power. Instead, they thought “the Georgians are not much to blame in this matter as the General Government.”

To the Cherokee, the federal government had the responsibility to handle and cooperate with tribal governments. Rather than arguing at the state level, this court case was filed to force the federal government to take action. Although conceptually similar to the previous court case, this time, the outcome was favorable to the Cherokee. The case was heard and ruled upon by the same man, Chief Justice John Marshall. He decided that “the Cherokee

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25 Ibid.
nation, then, is a distinct community, occupying its own territory, with boundaries accurately described, in which the laws of Georgia can have no force.” The Cherokee had finally achieved sovereignty in the eyes of the U.S. government. The ruling gave only the federal government the right to legally interact with the Cherokee, rather than allowing states to impose laws on them. In theory, the Cherokee had more legal rights to their homelands than ever. In practice, though, the Cherokee did not walk away with a victory. President Jackson quietly continued to enforce the Indian Removal Act and ignored the court ruling.

There was resistance to the enforcement of the Indian Removal Act in the Cherokee Nation, who had thought that their Supreme Court win meant they had, well, won. As the deadline to leave, or be forcefully removed, grew closer, the Cherokee utilized all available tools to prevent their removal, especially the *Cherokee Phoenix*. The syllabary had previously acted as a way to voice discontent, so it was used in the same way after the Indian Removal Act. In the months after it was signed, each issue of the newspaper discussed removal in some way. There were editorials, government decrees, and other articles that aimed to inspire the Cherokee Nation to continue their fight. Unfortunately, using the syllabary was no longer an effective way to incite nationalism. Boudinot left the newspaper in 1832; after his resignation, the newspaper began to focus on cultural and religious topics rather than political goals. The *Cherokee Phoenix* published its last issue on May 17, 1834. When the newspaper, and as an extension, the syllabary, no longer served as a tool for political unification, things became more difficult for the *Cherokee Phoenix*.

The Cherokee’s consistent and unified resistance to removal from their ancestral lands placed a larger target on their backs. They had considerably slowed down the relocation process by utilizing the *Cherokee Phoenix* and the U.S. Supreme Court, so the federal government was getting impatient. The

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Cherokee did not want to leave their homes, so the U.S. government took more forceful measures to ensure compliance. On December 29, 1835, the Treaty of New Echota was signed, which gave the Cherokee only two years to evacuate their homes and move to ‘Indian Territory.’\(^{29}\) Around two thousand people complied, but the rest waited until the deadline passed, partly in hopes that the treaty would be reversed, and partly because they did not want to leave their homes. It was not meant to be. In 1838, the U.S. military intervened and forced nearly sixteen thousand Cherokee to travel to Oklahoma. On the journey, known as the Trail of Tears, it is estimated that a quarter of the population died during removal.\(^{30}\)

Sequoyah’s syllabary had long-lasting, mostly unintentional consequences for the Cherokee. It started out as a way to unify the Cherokee culturally and politically. The syllabary enabled the Cherokee to create a newspaper and empowered them to use it to spread ideas about sovereignty. The *Cherokee Phoenix* played a prominent role in resistance since it helped spread ideas of nationalism throughout the Cherokee Nation. At a base level, the syllabary itself was responsible; without a written language, the Cherokee would not have been able to disseminate their declaration of sovereignty. Acts of political resistance, like Supreme Court cases and refusal to comply with the Indian Removal Act, were inspired by this growing popularity of sovereignty. The U.S. government was threatened by the power the Cherokee had gained from the written word. In the end, the syllabary was a double-edged sword, as it gave the Cherokee the power to fight back, and in some ways ultimately led to their susceptibility to the Trail of Tears.

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\(^{30}\) Ibid, 234.
Bibliography

Primary


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“Indians’ Advocate.” *Cherokee Phoenix* (New Echota, GA), May 17, 1834.


Secondary


During the Cold War, the United States was adamantly against communism anywhere in the world and routinely intervened in other countries to stop the communist threat. Not all of these interventions were done to stop communism, however. For instance, the United States fomented a coup that overthrew the democratically elected government of Guatemala in 1954. For decades following the coup, the official U.S. explanation for it was that the government was communist and had to be stopped because Guatemala was in America’s backyard. It was not until the Freedom of Information Act of 1967, which allowed historians to analyze previously classified government documents, that it became evident that the U.S. government did not overthrow the Guatemalan government because of communist threats. These documents show that the U.S. government incited the coup because American-based corporations in Guatemala were being threatened by the Guatemalan government. These corporations, especially the United Fruit Company, pressed the U.S. government to intervene in Guatemala by manipulating information about the new Guatemalan government, making it appear to be a communist one. United Fruit also had the support of many politicians and members of the U.S. government who had financial ties with them, had previously worked for them, or who wanted jobs with the company after they left government work. Few historians connect U.S. politicians’ financial and personal ties with United Fruit to the Guatemalan coup. However, these connections importantly show that United Fruit and certain American politicians overthrew a democratically elected government for personal and financial reasons and used communism as an excuse.
In 1951, Guatemalans democratically elected Jacobo Arbenz for president. In his inaugural address, he promised to change Guatemala from "a backward country with a predominantly feudal economy into a modern capitalist state." At the time most Guatemalans were poor farmers who worked on land owned by foreign companies. Once in office, Arbenz enacted new policies to improve the economic situation of his citizens. He began social reforms like seizing uncultivated land from foreign owned plantations in Guatemala. However, these social reforms threatened United Fruit’s lucrative profits in Guatemala. In the 1950s United Fruit owned 550,000 acres of land in Guatemala for growing bananas but left 85% of the land uncultivated. Arbenz seized 209,842 acres of this uncultivated land to redistribute it amongst his country's poor farmers. He compensated United Fruit based on “United Fruit’s declared tax value of the land” which was approximately $627,572. However, United Fruit had undervalued their land in order to pay fewer taxes and demanded $15,854,849 for their seized land. Faced with losing their land for less than its actual value, United Fruit asked the U.S. government to intervene.

The U.S. government decided to help United Fruit by enacting economic sanctions against Guatemala and sending military aid to neighboring countries and to rebel forces. When the Guatemalan government witnessed neighboring countries building up their militaries, the Guatemalans attempted to build up their military in case of foreign invasion. However, due to the economic sanctions the U.S. had imposed, the Guatemalans had to purchase weapons from Czechoslovakia. In 1954, Czechoslovakia was communist and a puppet state of the Soviet Union. The U.S. knew well in advance that a shipment from Eastern Europe was heading to Guatemala, however they did not try to stop the shipment.

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3 Ibid., 76.

4 Ibid.
from reaching the country. The U.S. government attempted to appear surprised after learning about this arms shipment. However, a now declassified Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) document, written one month after the shipment arrived in Guatemala, shows that the CIA knew exactly what was being shipped and how much of it. This CIA document describes the weapons as “German World War Two manufacture” and they knew the shipment totaled 2,000 tons and had an estimated value of ten million dollars.\(^5\) This arms transaction was used by the U.S. as evidence of communist infiltration in Guatemala even though the weapons that Guatemala received would not have been useful to their armed forces. The CIA knew this, stating that “Guatemala has succeeded in obtaining considerable supplies of arms and military equipment, but has not been able to obtain complementary supplies of ammunition. All of the arms and equipment obtained is old and much is deficient in various ways.”\(^6\) Most of the guns that Guatemala received were World War II era bolt action rifles and a handful of old machine guns. If Guatemala was receiving serious military aid from the communists, then they would have received assault rifles or submachine guns and not old bolt action rifles. The Guatemalans never received tanks or planes but just small arms, meanwhile the U.S. was arming the neighboring countries with military supplies. The CIA and the American government used these arms purchases to make Guatemala appear to be communist and a threat to South America when in reality the arms were outdated and Guatemala would not be able to accomplish anything with them. Prior to this event, the CIA had also planted Soviet made weapons off the coast of Guatemala to fabricate Soviet-Guatemalan connections. The director of the CIA, Allen Dulles, was a part of this fabricated arms drop as a now declassified telegram shows the agent in charge of planting the weapons telling Dulles when he would plant them.\(^7\) Conveniently for the CIA,

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\(^6\) Ibid.

the Czech-Guatemalan weapons deal was real evidence that they could exploit. The CIA made sure that both of these events made it to the news to get the world to see that there was “communism” in Guatemala. The CIA knew there were no ties to the Soviet Union in Guatemala, so they had to create their own and exaggerate claims in order to change the government in Guatemala to a pro United Fruit one.

After these events it became clear that the United States was getting too involved in Guatemalan affairs, so Arbenz went to the United Nations (UN) to get the aid of the international community in order to stop U.S. involvement in Guatemala. President Arbenz sent his representative Castillo Arriola to the UN security council meeting on June 19, 1954 to plead their case. The Guatemalan government stated that they were a democracy and they were not communist nor were they allies with the Soviets. Even though the Guatemalan government knew that the U.S. had involved itself in their country, they still wished to remain friendly with the U.S. and stated to the UN council: “Among these actions designed to cause enmity between Guatemala and the friendly nation of the United States, with which my country has repeatedly and in all sincerity emphasized its wish to preserve the most correct, respectful and friendly relations.”  

Though they did want to maintain friendly relations, the Guatemalan government made sure to emphasize to the UN security council that the invasion of their country was illegal. Guatemalan officials quoted the French magazine *La Monde* to the security council and explained how the Guatemalans agreed with the magazine on how the U.S. misinterprets communism and how they support dictators to prevent communism:

If free elections could be organized in their countries it would not be communism that would come to power, but left-wing anti-communist political movements which, moreover, would be firmly resolved to reopen negotiations over the advantages obtained by foreign monopolies. It is quite understood that

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this prospect holds no charms for Standard Oil or United Fruit, which prefer to deal with regimes which are strong on the home front and little inclined to come to terms with the democratic principles established by the United States.\(^9\)

The Guatemalans saw how the U.S. helped overthrow the democratically elected president of Iran in 1953 in order to maintain oil access and how they were attempting the same thing in Guatemala to help United Fruit. Unfortunately for President Arbenz, the UN was not helpful for him and he was eventually overthrown.

Arbenz was overthrown in a coup orchestrated by the CIA and in examining those involved in the coup, it is clear their financial and personal ties to United Fruit influenced their actions. The head of the CIA, Allen Dulles, approved and planned the coup in Guatemala. As head of the CIA, Dulles had to analyze and react to perceived threats to the U.S. abroad. However, like many other government officials and politicians involved in the Guatemalan coup, Dulles appeared to have instead acted in the interests of American-based companies, rather than those of the United States. Before working for the U.S. government, Dulles was a lawyer for the Sullivan and Cromwell law firm. He did a lot of work for Sullivan and Cromwell’s biggest client, United Fruit, helping to create the monopoly that United Fruit had in Guatemala. He also worked for Schroder bank and the International Railways of Central America, which both had connections to United Fruit. The International Railways of Central America was the only railroad company in Guatemala and Dulles helped United Fruit acquire it. Schroder bank was a financial advisor and a stockholder in the International Railways of Central America company.\(^10\) Schroder bank was also a “depository of secret CIA funds for covert operations.”\(^11\) Dulles also “reportedly held substantial blocks of United Fruit stock” and so he would have benefited financially if he

\(^9\) Ibid., 6-7.
\(^10\) Schlesinger and Kinzer, Bitter Fruit: The Story of the American Coup in Guatemala, 106.
\(^11\) Ibid.
helped his former clients.\textsuperscript{12} In 1953, a whole year before the Guatemalan land seizures, a CIA memo was sent to the White House describing how coffee producers in Guatemala were fearful of any U.S. intervention.\textsuperscript{13} Before United Fruit asked the U.S. government to intervene in Guatemala, the CIA was worried about “American interests who fear business losses in case of US intervention.”\textsuperscript{14} A CIA memo listed the negative effects intervention could have, however Dulles and the CIA went ahead and overthrew the Guatemalan government after United Fruit requested they intervene.

John Foster Dulles, like his brother Allen, was also a high-ranking member of the U.S. government with ties to the United Fruit Company. From 1953 to 1959, Dulles was the Secretary of State under President Dwight D. Eisenhower. Like his brother Allen, John had also worked for the law firm Sullivan and Cromwell and owned stock in the United Fruit company. While it is not known how much stock he owned, it is likely that he owned a good amount of stock, considering his years helping United Fruit become more successful.

Two other politicians that had personal and financial ties to United Fruit were brothers John Moors Cabot and Thomas Dudley Cabot. As one historian notes, “John Moors Cabot, the assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, was a large shareholder [in United Fruit]. So was his brother, Thomas Dudley Cabot, the director of International Security Affairs in the State Department, who had been United Fruit's president.”\textsuperscript{15} The Cabot brothers publicly supported the coup in Guatemala because it was an effort to stop a communist threat. However, the Cabot brothers may not have been as anticommunist as they claimed. Thomas Cabot lost his security clearance once


\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.

because his father may have been a communist or was pro-communist. Thomas Cabot was given a letter that his father had written and was questioned about the communist themes of the letter. Thomas Cabot commented on what happened in a 1975 interview:

He said basically in the letter that we should not call the Russians "Communists." We should call them "Stalinists," because after all Jesus Christ was a Communist, and so were the Pilgrims who had settled in Plymouth. When the man read me this thing I said, ‘Look, my father, having written that letter, was then past 90. Like most people past 90 he didn't consider the superficiality of what he was writing; he was only considering the truth of it. I don't deny the truth.’

Thomas Cabot's father wrote procommunist letters during the height of the Cold War when people could have been arrested for that and his son repeatedly defended him. Less than a year later, Thomas Cabot supported overthrowing the government of Guatemala to stop communism, despite previously being soft on communism. This indicates that the Cabot brothers most likely supported the coup in Guatemala because of their financial and personal connections to United Fruit, not because they were concerned with stopping communism there.

Another politician with interests in United Fruit was Henry Cabot Lodge Jr. Lodge was a senator from Massachusetts from January 3, 1947 to January 3, 1953 and then the United States Ambassador to the UN from January 26, 1953 to September 3, 1960. Much like the Cabot brothers, Lodge, most likely supported helping United Fruit in Guatemala for personal and financial reasons, not because he felt there was a legitimate communist threat. Lodge and his family owned stock in United Fruit. In addition, United Fruit’s headquarters were in Boston, Massachusetts and since Lodge was a Massachusetts senator he would have had an interest in supporting the company. Lodge was involved when the Guatemalan government went to the UN for help and he attempted to defer the issue to the

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Organization of American States where the U.S. maintained more influence. However, the Soviet Union vetoed Lodge’s proposal and claimed that “many American senators and responsible officials of the State Department have material personal interests in the United Fruit Company.” Lodge denied this assertion and told the Soviets to “stay out of this hemisphere and don’t try to start your plans and your conspiracies over here.” Lodge likely told the Soviets to not start anything in South America, so as to not interfere with the coup the U.S. government started because he had important connections to United Fruit.

Unlike other government officials, it is unclear if President Dwight D. Eisenhower knew much about what American politicians were attempting to do in Guatemala. Eisenhower had no known personal ties to the United Fruit company and historians disagree over whether he knew that the CIA and United Fruit fabricated the communist threat or if he believed their propaganda. Historian Richard H. Immerman writes that “the overwhelming consensus among analysts of United States foreign policy during the Eisenhower administration is that it was dominated by Secretary of State John Foster Dulles.” Eisenhower may have allowed Dulles to act on smaller foreign policy events without needing his approval, because as president in the early 1950s, he had to deal with much more pressing issues. He would later write a book about his time in office and in it he describes the Guatemalan situation without much proof of communism. He describes the seizure of United Fruit’s land by the Guatemalan government as a “discriminatory and unfair seizure” but claims “expropriation in itself does not, of course, prove Communism; expropriation of oil and agricultural properties years before in Mexico had not been fostered by Communists.” He mentions this land

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18 Ibid.


seizure as unfair, yet it was about 200,000 acres of unused farmland that United Fruit did not pay any taxes on.

There is hardly any mention of a communist threat in Guatemala within Eisenhower's book until he writes “About that time a new ambassador, John E. Peurifoy, was appointed to Guatemala. He was familiar with the tactics of the Communists in Greece, where he had served. Peurifoy soon reached definite conclusions on the nature of the Arbenz government.”21 After Peurifoy went to Guatemala, Eisenhower suddenly believed there was a communist threat there. John E. Peurifoy was a well-known anticommunist which explains why he was eager to overthrow the Arbenz government. Many anticommunists of the 1950s were known to accuse and go after individuals and countries thought to be communist with little to no proof. After the coup, when the Senate investigated it, Peurifoy testified about the nature of the revolution that had occurred in Guatemala, stating:

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, let me state that the menace of communism in Guatemala was courageously fought by the Guatemalan people themselves, always against the superior odds which a police state has over the decent, patriotic citizen. Communist power was broken by the Guatemalans alone, and their deeds of heroic sacrifice deserve and will always receive the admiration and applause of our own people. They fought the battle which is the common battle of all free nations against Communist oppression, and they won the victory themselves.22

Peurifoy never mentions how the CIA helped create the revolution and helped train the rebels. He also testified that anyone who accused the U.S. of doing anything illegal in South America was a communist who “sought to divert Latin American attention from [Soviet] depredations and crimes in Europe and Asia by

21 Ibid.
pushing forward Spanish-speaking front men who, in native accents, accused the United States of the aggression and crimes which the Soviet itself was actually performing.” Through his testimony, Peurifoy convinced Congress and Eisenhower that the Soviet Union was involved in Guatemala and that the coup was needed to stop the spread of communism in South America. While Eisenhower may have been convinced by men like Peurifoy that there was a communist threat in Guatemala, as discussed above it is evident that many of his advisors were not in fact concerned with any communist threat in Guatemala. Since Eisenhower did not have much experience as a politician before becoming president, as he was a career military man, he likely relied on his advisors for foreign policy decisions and many had various ties to the United Fruit company which influenced their decision making and shaped the Eisenhower administration’s foreign policy.

Prior to 1954 there were not any communist threats in Guatemala. Accusations only occurred after President Jacobo Arbenz hurt United Fruits lucrative profits by attempting to improve the lives of poor farmers in his country. Unfortunately, due to United Fruit's extensive connections to members of the U.S. government and their greed, Arbenz was overthrown and any attempt to improve the lives of Guatemalans left with him. After the coup, Guatemala was ruled by various dictators who killed thousands of Guatemalans and ethnically cleansed thousands of ethnic Mayans. The CIA and U.S. government continued supporting Guatemalan dictators after learning about the genocide and killings. Even though these leaders committed human rights violations, the U.S. continued to send them aid because they were pro U.S. and United Fruit profits were safe. Before the Carter administration and during the Reagan administration, the United States continued to prop up Guatemalan regimes that supported American business interests. Geoff Thale, who was the Central America Program Director at the Washington Office for Latin America (WOLA) stated that "Direct U.S. military aid was suspended during the Carter Administration, but then restored by the

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23 Ibid.
Reagan Administration, whose Cold War worldview clearly prioritized the fight against insurgents and their civilian supporters over respect for human rights.”\(^\text{24}\)

Later, in 1999, President Bill Clinton apologized to Guatemala for how “the United States gave money and training to Guatemalan forces that committed acts of genocide against Mayans and other extreme human rights abuses in the conflict, which began in 1960” but he did not apologize for the coup in 1954 that allowed these dictators to assume power.\(^\text{25}\) The U.S. government never acknowledged its role in the Guatemalan coup. However, because of this coup, the Guatemalans suffered for decades while United Fruit, their shareholders, and the dictators that ruled with absolute power benefited.


Bibliography

Primary Sources


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