

History in the Making

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Bartlett Little

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History in the Making is an annual publication of the California State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB) Alpha Delta Nu Chapter of the Phi Alpha Theta National History Honor Society, and is sponsored by the History Department at CSUSB. Issues are published at the end of the spring quarter of each academic year.

Phi Alpha Theta's mission is to promote the study of history through the encouragement of research, good teaching, publication and the exchange of learning and ideas among historians. The organization seeks to bring students, teachers and writers of history together for intellectual and social exchanges, which promote and assist historical research and publication by our members in a variety of ways.

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History in the Making

Introduction

Welcome to the third volume of Cal State San Bernardino's history journal, *History in the Making*. The history journal is a student-edited journal with submissions from undergraduate and graduate students at California State University, San Bernardino. The editorial board strives to publish work that presents the reader with unique and important topics in history that appeal to a wide audience. This year's journal also includes three exhibit reviews from museums around southern California, including large traveling exhibits and local permanent exhibits.

Our first article, by Mark Ocegueda, is an award-winning article that uncovers an important piece of local history. *Lopez v. Seccombe* tells the story of an important San Bernardino court case involving desegregation that was influential in creating precedent for the famous national desegregation case *Brown v. The Board of Education*. Mr. Ocegueda's original research and photographs help bring to life early twentieth century San Bernardino, while at the same time recognizing the unsung heroes of this important legal battle.

Our next article, by Cherice Estes, examines the role that the western media had in spreading disinformation about the Rwandan genocide in the 1990's. The article emphasizes the power that the western media has, and how important it is to use that power responsibly, particularly in times of crisis. Ms. Estes also forces us to rethink common misconceptions about events in Africa and how we view African politics.

Our third article, by Alicia Gutierrez, is a fascinating look into the history of the Seventh Day Adventist church and their role as conscientious objectors and non-combatant military personnel throughout the history of the United States from the Civil War to the present. Ms. Gutierrez provides us with important details about the history of the church's role in the military and its ties to medical experimentation.

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Our final article, by Adam Miller, is a detailed account of the flooding issues experienced by communities in southern California throughout the twentieth century, in particular the flood of 1938. Mr. Miller emphasizes the importance of flood control for the industrial and residential development of southern California; without which many southern California landmarks could not exist. Mr. Miller's article also includes many photographs as evidence of the enormity of the destruction caused by flooding in southern California's history.

Concluding this volume of *History in the Making* are three exhibit reviews highlighting three themes: local museums, social resistance and women in the west.

Please enjoy the 2010 volume of *History in the Making*.

Oceana Collins
Chief Editor

Acknowledgments

Creating this journal required the hard work and cooperation of many people. In particular, I would like to thank our wonderful faculty supporters: Dr. Cherstin Lyon and Dr. Tiffany Jones. Dr. Lyon's decisiveness and professional insight combined with Dr. Jones' technical know-how and extensive editing experience created a professional atmosphere and thoughtful, effective leadership. I would also like to thank Starlene Justice, my co-chief editor, for her thoughtful feedback and help on making tough decisions, Mark Ocegueda and Christopher Moreland, the journal's two interns, who helped with all of the final editing details, and last, but certainly not least, all of the editing staff who took the time to meet with authors, attend meetings, and step up to the front lines of the editing process. Special thanks to Brittney Miller who created the original drawing for our cover and added a unique quality to the journal. In addition I would like to thank the Sam and Patricia Gabriel (Andreson) for their generous donation to the journal. Finally, thanks to the California State University, San Bernardino's history department and Phi Alpha Theta, whose sponsorship and support was an essential asset.

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Lopez v. Seccombe:
**The City of San Bernardino's Mexican American
Defense Committee and Its Role in Regional and
National Desegregation**

BY MARK OCEGUEDA

ABSTRACT: *This article examines Lopez v. Seccombe, one of the earliest successful desegregation court cases in United States history. The legal challenge was decided in 1944 in the City of San Bernardino, California and desegregated city parks and recreational facilities, specifically the Perris Hill "plunge" or pool. The decision of this case set precedent for other local desegregation challenges, including the much more celebrated Mendez v. Westminster decision in 1947, and eventually had influence on the landmark Supreme Court decision of Brown v. Board of Education in 1954. This study will focus on the Mexican American barrio in San Bernardino's Westside, the city's Mexican American Defense Committee, and the city's discriminatory policies against Mexican Americans that eventually led to the legal challenge. Such an examination contributes to historians' understanding of segregation and the eventual legal victories in desegregation by situating the social aspects that surrounded Lopez v. Seccombe. More attention should be paid not only to the cases that led to the landmark case of Brown v. Board, but also to the context in which these cases developed. Major Supreme Court decisions rarely come to pass suddenly; they usually arise through a long journey of precedents and legal challenges that force an evolution in legal philosophy. Mexican American communities played a unique role in desegregating their communities and contributed toward the national process of desegregation through legislative and judicial means.*

Lopez vs. Seccombe

On August 1, 1943, the Mexican American Defense Committee of San Bernardino held a meeting to discuss strategies to combat discriminatory practices Mexicans and Mexican Americans faced on a daily basis in the city of San Bernardino, California. During this period, Mexican children in San Bernardino could only attend segregated schools, and the Mexican population of San Bernardino could only use public pools on Sunday, the day before the pools were drained and cleaned. The Mexican American Defense Committee met at San Jose Hall on Fifth Street and Pico Avenue. Eugenio Noguerras, Mexican American Defense Committee organizer and editor for a local Spanish language newspaper, *El Sol de San Bernardino*, presided over the meeting.¹ The members at the meeting decided to confront the city about the explicit role it played in the inequitable and discriminatory treatment that Mexicans living in the Westside *barrio*, specifically along Mount Vernon Avenue, suffered due to the City's segregation policies. On August 19th, the Mexican American Defense Committee sent a letter to Mayor W.C. Seccombe and the City Council demanding that Mexicans be allowed to use the municipal pool at Perris Hill Park. The letter had local support, including that of Tommy Richardson, the City Recreation Supervisor for baseball games held on Mount Vernon Avenue. When the City rejected the Defense Committee's demands, Ignacio Lopez, editor of *El Espectador*, another local Spanish language newspaper, and members of the Mexican American Defense Committee filed a class action lawsuit against the Mayor and the City Council.²

The results of the ensuing court case, known as *Lopez v. Seccombe*, served as legal precedent for future court cases, especially the landmark *Mendez v. Westminster*, a school desegregation case that took place in Orange County in 1947. The San Bernardino case successfully desegregated local parks, pools, and recreational facilities in the City on grounds that segregation was unconstitutional under the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments

¹ Mario T. Garcia, *Mexican Americans: Leadership, Ideology, and Identity, 1930-1960* (London: Yale University Press, 1989), 88.

² Retired professor Manuel R. Delgado writes about growing up in his hometown of San Bernardino in *The Last Chicano*. Manuel Delgado, *The Last Chicano: A Mexican American Experience* (Bloomington, Indiana: Author House Press, 2009), 13.

– one of the first times that the argument was used to desegregate a public facility other than a school. Specifically, the *Lopez* case used the argument that the Mexican community paid taxes for public parks and recreational sites and should benefit equally from those publicly-funded facilities. Before analyzing the significance of these court cases in-depth, it is important first to examine the conditions that led to *Lopez v. Seccombe*.

Looks Like Mexico's Moved In! The Westside barrio of San Bernardino

During the 1880s, San Bernardino became a significant trading center with the establishment of railroads. By the early twentieth century, the Santa Fe railroad began to double-track its line as citrus groves and irrigation became more prominent in San Bernardino. As these industries grew, there was a greater need for unskilled labor that included ditch diggers, track workers, and fruit pickers. Since Anglos³ filled the skilled labor positions, Mexicans were recruited to work menial labor jobs because they were seen by employers as “tractable, easily moved, and willing to work for low wages.”⁴ San Bernardino’s Santa Fe Railroad Depot, the nearby city of Colton’s Southern Pacific Railroad operation, and the growing citrus industry, which had boomed throughout the towns of inland Southern California during the 1880s, all demanded an unskilled labor force. At the time, Mexicans, Italians, blacks, and Chinese mostly served as the unskilled labor force in San Bernardino. Chinese exclusion played a role in transforming the Westside into an almost exclusive Mexican

³ I will use the term Anglos throughout this work to refer to white Americans, specifically those of Anglo-Saxon descent. In the historiography of Mexican American history, the term Anglo has been used constantly to discern white Anglo-Saxon Americans from Irish or Eastern European immigrants, because “white” identity at the time was still being developed. Additionally, the terms of “Mexican” and “Mexican American” are used to differentiate Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans, whose constitutional rights theoretically should have been protected. At times the term “Mexican” will just be used to refer to both Mexicans and Mexican Americans.

⁴ Ruth Tuck, *Not With the Fist* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1946), 38.

barrio. As Chinese residents moved out of the Westside of San Bernardino, an influx of new Mexican immigrants filled vacant jobs that were left as the number of Chinese immigrant laborers declined. As a result of the shifting demographics of laboring populations, the segregated Westside of the city along Mount Vernon Avenue became home to a concentrated population of Mexicans.

The combination of various factors, such as geographical proximity of Mexico to the Southwest and San Bernardino, low-paying labor positions that were available to Mexicans, and volatile political conditions in Mexico all provided push and pull factors for Mexicans to continue migrating into the inland Southern California region. The Southwest's adjacency to Mexico made it convenient for employers to recruit Mexicans for temporary positions. Employers took advantage of existing cyclical migration patterns and reinforced them while at the same time ignoring the role that they played in perpetuating a lack of permanence among Mexican laboring populations. They both enjoyed the benefits of having access to a temporary labor pool and chided Mexicans for their lack of permanence. This sentiment proved to be prevalent among Anglos in San Bernardino where in the initial stages of the Mexican migration northward they, according to anthropologist Ruth Tuck, "cherished the illusion that its new Mexican population was not going to be very permanent. Some day when the work was all done, they would 'go home.'"⁵ Moreover, the first half of the twentieth century witnessed the emergence of American employment agencies that would enter Mexico and recruit workers for U.S. labor purposes. Anglo labor recruiters would also be located in border towns, such as El Paso, where they provided Mexican workers with low-paying labor jobs on railroads, in factories, and on farms throughout the Southwest, including San Bernardino.⁶

Factors that pushed Mexican migration north included the unstable economic and political conditions in Mexico. Mexico

⁵ Tuck, *Not With the Fist*, 39.

⁶ George J. Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press 1993), 20.

during the nineteenth century had been ravaged by constant wars and political and ideological instability that failed to unite the nation and establish a stable economy. During President Porfirio Díaz's reign (1876-1911), agrarian reforms left thousands of Mexican peasants landless. The transition to exporting food crops also severely decreased the supply of Mexico's staple foods and inflated their prices, causing many peasants in Mexico to live on the brink of starvation. Landless and without food, thousands of Mexican peasants were compelled to join the migration northward in order to survive.⁷ One of the major historical events that pushed Mexicans north was the 1910 Mexican Revolution. Many Mexicans fled the country to escape the chaos and violence of the revolution. Manuel Delgado, a native of San Bernardino, recalled his grandmother's journey to San Bernardino:

During... the revolution of 1910, Mexico was a dangerous place, especially for beautiful young women, so *Mama Lupe* was sent to live... with friends in the United States. She came first to Albuquerque, New Mexico... and, in 1921, moved to San Bernardino's Mt. Vernon district.⁸

Violence and political instability in Mexico remained on-going factors that caused Mexicans to emigrate north into the towns and cities of the Southwest including San Bernardino.

Although there had already been an established Mexican community in San Bernardino before large numbers of new migrants arrived, the continued influx of significant numbers of new Mexican immigrants contributed to the development of a well-established, self-contained Mexican *barrio*. Between 1890 and 1900, San Bernardino's census recorded 69 foreign-born Mexican residents; however, by 1910 the city had experienced exponential growth and recorded 888 foreign-born Mexicans in San Bernardino. By 1930, census figures continued to mark an increase of foreign-born Mexican residents and recorded nearly 2,500 Mexicans living in the City.⁹ An Anglo resident living in

⁷ Sanchez, 20.

⁸ Delgado, 2-3.

⁹ Tuck, 38.

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San Bernardino during this period of growth stated the following about the growing Mexican population:

I was working near the depot on a grading job and I used to see them getting off the cars. I'd seen Mexicans all my life but these sure looked different. Half of 'em had blankets on and sandals on their feet. Some of 'em wore funny big hats and some wore funny little ones. There were women with their arms full of babies and bundles. They'd mill around and jabber all excited, for a while, and then they'd stand still and look scared... there were a lot of them! I said to my partner, '*Looks like Mexico's moved in!*'¹⁰

The influx of Mexican immigrants into the Southwest and their eventual establishment in the *barrios* would set the stage for segregation. As the description above makes clear, Anglo-Americans' attitudes toward the existing population of Mexican Americans were shaped by the large influxes of new Mexican migrants and their perceptions that these immigrants represented not only a non-white population but also a distinctly foreign class of people.

Throughout the decades from the end of the nineteenth century into the beginning of the twentieth, pseudo-scientific views and racial philosophies reinforced Anglo-American fears of 'the other' and validated the gradual construction of racial barriers in San Bernardino. Although racist ideas were not quite as menacing to the Mexican in the early 1900s, historian David Gutierrez explained that "by the mid-1920s many Americans were beginning to conclude that Mexicans were inferior even to the lowliest European immigrant."¹¹ In 1928, Congressman John Box called for exclusion of Mexican immigrants because they were "a mixture of Mediterranean-blooded Spanish peasant[s] with low-grade Indians

¹⁰ Tuck, 38.

¹¹ David G. Gutierrez, *Walls and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the Politics of Ethnicity* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), 53.

who did not fight to extinction but submitted and multiplied as serfs.”¹² Vanderbilt University economist Roy L. Garis also expressed similar views held by Americans during the time and noted that Mexicans were characterized as possessing “minds that run to nothing higher than the animal functions--- eat, sleep, and sexual debauchery” and that if immigration restriction did not materialize, Americans would risk “a lowering of our standards of morals and of our political and social ideals; the creation of a race problem that will dwarf the negro problem of the South; and the practical destruction, at least for centuries, of all that is worthwhile in our white civilization.”¹³ These emerging racial ideologies the Anglos developed about Mexicans would become the foundation for justifying segregation on the local level in communities throughout the Southwest.

As Mexicans established themselves in the San Bernardino *barrio*, they soon became targets for the pseudo-scientific views of white Americans at a period of time when racist philosophies were at their peak in American history. For example, anthropologist Ruth Tuck noted:

[San Bernardino]¹⁴ was immediately convinced... that no immigrant group had ever been so ‘low’ or so ‘dumb... The [Mexicans] were uniformly low intelligence... (Poorly used testing devices, applied to bi-lingual school children were later to give this estimate a great air of ‘scientific’ validity, but it doubtless would have been made anyway.) They lived like animals, produced too many children,

¹² John Box. “Congressman John Box Objects to Mexican Immigrants, 1928,” quoted in Jon Gjerde, ed.: *Major Problems in American Immigration and Ethnic History* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1998), 287.

¹³ Gutierrez, 54-55.

¹⁴ Note that in Ruth Tuck’s history of San Bernardino, *Not With The Fist*, she referred to the city as “*Descanso*” in order to fulfill a theoretical argument in which she asserted that a *descanso* “was a spot at which [Spanish] parties stopped to refresh themselves” in the days of Spanish exploration. For the Mexican American during the 1940s, the period in which Tuck’s work was written, “*Descanso*”, or San Bernardino, could therefore represent a “stop-over on the journey toward complete assimilation into and acculturation with American society.” Tuck, xviii.

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wasted their earnings on drink, and never took thought of the morrow.¹⁵

These racist views against Mexicans in San Bernardino further help to explain why segregated policies came into practice. Anglos would certainly want to distance themselves from Mexicans because of these social and racial anxieties.

The Westside of San Bernardino developed into a *barrio* by the late 1920s along Mount Vernon Avenue between Fifth and Ninth streets. During the 1920s, this rural area consisted of a mixed community of Mexicans, Italians, Chinese, and a few Anglos. As the decade rolled along and the Mexican population began to grow, they would further populate the Mount Vernon district. Anglo residents, in an effort to exclude Mexicans from settling permanently, began to call for restrictions against selling homes to Mexicans. Anglos living north of Ninth Street appealed to the City Council to restrict Mexican home ownership because “property owners on *both* sides of 9th street had agreed to restrict their property to whites only.” The City Council responded by introducing policies to increase the value of homes in order to prevent Mexicans from affording them by improving sewers, curbs, and sidewalks.¹⁶ This provides an example of City efforts to racially segregate residents through methods less often recognized. The City made efforts not only to confine Mexicans to a particular area, but began a ghettoization process of the area by improving neighboring sections of the town to elevate property values of white residents and economically excluding others. This is a strong example of how segregation did not just hinder the inclusion of others but materially uplifted the white population.

¹⁵ Tuck, 38.

¹⁶ Delgado, 7.



Figure 1. Mount Vernon Avenue facing North during the 1950s. San Bernardino, CA, (Courtesy of Manuel Delgado).

Once the influx of Mexican residents could not be prevented in the Mount Vernon district, city officials soon neglected the area. For example, in 1947, more than 650 residents signed a petition to add stop signs and appropriate traffic lights along Mount Vernon Avenue because of traffic incidents that had resulted in multiple deaths of residents in the Mount Vernon district.¹⁷ This neglect to protect the security of residents could also be seen in 1944, when G.E. Carlson ran for city council in San Bernardino's Fifth Ward, which contained the Mount Vernon district. Carlson commented on the underdevelopment of the Mount Vernon district and lack of security provided by City officials:

The... district needs more police and fire protection. The merchants and responsible people of that area want it. Mt. Vernon is a main artery of transcontinental traffic [referring to Route 66 that ran along the district] and lacks adequate police protection. We have a problem of juvenile irresponsibility in this ward. Restrictive measures alone will not cure it. This problem deserves

¹⁷ Ignacio Lopez, *El Espectador*, 13, no. 18 (May 23, 1947), California Polytechnic University, Pomona Microfilm.

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solving at its source--- that is adequate recreational and other facilities to take care of excess energies of young people. Where is the plunge¹⁸ that was promised this ward?¹⁹

The comments that G.E. Carlson provided about the Mount Vernon district suggested that city officials neglected the area through a variety of means: lack of development, refusal to provide adequate recreational facilities, and a lack of police and firefighters. The fact that Ignacio Lopez and the Mexican American Defense Committee chose segregation in recreational facilities as the focus of their lawsuit against the city is significant when placed in context of their overall battle for equitable treatment. In other words, the case of *Lopez v. Seccombe* was not only about desegregation but also about the fact that the City had completely neglected the Mount Vernon neighborhood in nearly every respect.

Another effort to exclude Mexicans in the Mount Vernon district from city development came in 1956 with the construction of Interstate 215. Two important off-ramps, according to Manuel Delgado, “at 5th Street and Baseline, [led] to Downtown, away from the *barrio*” and “effectively diverted all the traffic from Route 66 and the businesses along Mt. Vernon Avenue.”²⁰ The building of the freeway cut off economic opportunities for Mexicans in the Mount Vernon district by diverting potential consumers into the downtown area. In addition, Mexicans would also experience restricted economic mobility as the jobs available to them paid low wages. Low-paying positions at the Santa Fe Railroad, agricultural labor jobs, and other menial labor offered minimum wages to Mexicans with no benefits. As the *barrio* became increasingly Mexican, the city used various methods to further segregate Mexicans into the Mount Vernon district and eventually prevented any development in the area by funneling economic development into other sections of the City. A pattern of

¹⁸ Swimming pool.

¹⁹ *San Bernardino Sun*, 1944. California State University, San Bernardino Microfilm.

²⁰ Delgado, 1.

economic neglect would contribute towards the Mexican American Defense Committee's demands for justice on behalf of San Bernardino's Mexican residents.

City officials also segregated the African American residents of San Bernardino. Most African Americans were located in the southern section of San Bernardino off of Waterman Avenue known as the Valley Truck Farms area. When accusations of deliberate residential exclusion of blacks arose, real estate developers responded by stating that the sale of lots had no restrictions on the homes and that any race could buy; however, according to Ruth Tuck, they "were fully aware that without the restriction, whites would not risk buying a lot for fear of having a black neighbor."²¹ Tuck also noted that the housing segregation for African Americans was severe; blacks were confined to certain areas in southern San Bernardino and many would never consider buying or renting a home in the northern part of town where whites primarily lived. In addition, employment was also severely restricted as blacks were channeled into menial service trades, such as porters, elevator operators, dish washers, and other cheap labor positions.²² By the late 1920s, the City of San Bernardino had established a racially divided city. Mexicans lived in the Westside *barrio* along Mount Vernon Avenue, African Americans were living in the Southern section known as the Truck Valley Farms area, and Anglos lived primarily in the northern part of the city. The plight of the African Americans in San Bernardino is useful for comprehending the injustices the City committed against ethnic minorities and helps to explain why opposition to those injustices emerged.

It should also be noted that many Mexicans preferred to live in the *barrio*. According to historian Albert Camarillo, the *barrio* allowed the Mexican American communities of the Southwest to function "within a closed Mexican social universe. Faced with their new-found status as a segregated minority and confronted by a hostile outside world, the Mexican community entered a phase of social change and adaptation... [that] ensured

²¹ Delgado, 7.

²² Tuck, 46.

the continuity of Mexican society” in California.²³ This positive aspect of the segregated *barrio*, as David Gutierrez has persuasively argued, allowed Mexican Americans to:

Transform Anglo Americans’ efforts to stigmatize them as racial inferiors into a positive strategy of self-affirmation as Mexicans in American society. At the same time, Mexican Americans’ success in generating such new bases for solidarity went a long way toward guaranteeing the survival and growth of a distinct, if syncretic, variant of Mexican culture in what had become part of the United States. This was the last thing the proponents of Manifest Destiny had in mind when they had predicted the eventual fading away of the region’s ethnic population... Americans planted the seeds of continuing ethnic discord in the region.²⁴

If the *barrio* allowed for the survival and growth of the Mexicans and for a strategy of self-affirmation as Gutierrez contends, then it would almost certainly lead to a path of resistance against discriminatory Anglo policies. As racial hostilities increased, Mexican Americans found power in solidarity and through the maintenance of their own communities. The persistence and even the growth of *barrios* throughout the Southwest was not merely a function of white racism against Mexicans but a strategic defense on the part of Mexican Americans. This helped give rise to the Mexican American Defense Committee in San Bernardino and to leaders like Eugenio Noguera and Ignacio Lopez who pushed the legal envelope in an effort to overturn discriminatory practices.

²³ Albert M. Camarillo, *Chicanos in a Changing Society: From Mexican Pueblos to American Barrios in Santa Barbara and Southern California, 1848-1930* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), 53-54, quoted in Gutierrez, *Walls and Mirrors*, 22.

²⁴ Gutierrez, *Walls and Mirrors*, 37-38.

School Segregation in San Bernardino and Early Resistance by the Mexican American Community

In addition to being economically excluded and residentially segregated, Mexicans living in San Bernardino and other towns in the inland region of Southern California suffered from typical forms of segregation as well, such as segregation in schools. In 1874, newly arriving Anglos in Riverside, a town in inland Southern California, created the Trujillo School District to serve the Mexican community of La Placita. The Riverside City School Board maintained that all children must attend the school in the attendance precinct in which they lived. The school board's ruling was a response to the increasing Mexican immigrant families that worked the line crews of the Santa Fe and Southern Pacific Railroad and the subsequent increased enrollment of immigrant children within Riverside schools.²⁵ The Riverside City School board would reaffirm this decision again in 1906. The Casa Blanca School of Riverside provides evidence of early educational discriminatory policies against Mexicans and an example of segregation through means of residential exclusion. The Trujillo school district in Riverside was not alone in inland Southern California and the Southwest with its discriminatory educational policies. By the mid -1930s, roughly 85 percent of school districts in the Southwest were segregated.²⁶

Another example of school segregation in the inland region of Southern California can be seen in Ontario. In 1921, Chaffee Union High School Superintendant, Merton Hill, recommended that a new school site be built for Mexican children in the

²⁵ National Park Service, "Five Views: An Ethnic Historic Site Survey for California (Mexican Americans): A History of Mexican Americans in California: Casa Blanca School," http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/5views/5views5h10.htm (accessed June 11, 2009).

²⁶ Gilbert G. Gonzalez, "The System of Public Education and Its Function Within the Chicano Communities, 1910-1930" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 1974), quoted in Gilbert G. Gonzalez, *Chicano Education in the Era of Segregation* (Philadelphia: The Balch Institute Press, 1990), 20-21.

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southeastern part of Ontario.²⁷ In addition, the *San Bernardino Sun* reported in 1922 that

Children living west of Euclid Avenue and north of Fifth Avenue should attend school at San Antonio building. Children living east of Euclid Avenue and north of Southern Pacific Railroad should attend school at Central building. All other children, except Mexicans, in the Ontario School district, should attend school at South Euclid building. Mexican pupils in the first three grades will report to Sultana school.²⁸

These examples show clearly that during the early twentieth century, segregation was intrinsically linked to residential segregation in the inland region of Southern California. Historian Gilbert G. Gonzalez has further commented on the issue and stated that:

As the pattern of Mexican residential segregation into *colonias* developed, school segregation followed... segregation reflected and recreated the social divisions within the larger society formed by residential segregation, labor and wage rate differentials, political inequality, socioeconomic disparities, and racial oppression... Education for the Mexican community therefore meant change as well as the preservation of their subordination.²⁹

Mexicans in inland Southern California and San Bernardino had thus been structurally separated into a group of people who had been cut off geographically, excluded from city services, and

²⁷ Mary M. Peters, *The Segregation of Mexican American Children in the Elementary Schools of California: Its Legal and Administrative Aspects* (Master's thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 1948), 37, quoted in Gonzalez, *Chicano Education*, 21.

²⁸ *San Bernardino Daily Sun*, Friday, September 15, 1922, 10. "Assignment for Schools Given: Full Roster Obtained for Opening of Grammar Grades Monday." California State University, San Bernardino Microfilm.

²⁹ Gonzalez, 21.

separated in public schools. This amounted to total segregation for Mexicans and depicts the depth of discrimination that Mexicans experienced in San Bernardino and the Southwest.

In San Bernardino, events surrounding Ramona Elementary in the Mount Vernon *barrio* provide early examples of resistance by the Mexican community towards discriminatory educational policies. In 1926, a new site was built for Ramona Elementary school. The fifth grade students that attended the old Ramona Elementary school building were excited about the prospect of attending Sturgis Junior High School in downtown San Bernardino after completing the sixth grade. They had been particularly excited about attending school with Anglo students for the first time. After graduating from Ramona Elementary, school officials notified their parents that the district planned to hold back the students of Ramona Elementary for one more year because of supposed overcrowding at Sturgis Junior High School, forcing them to repeat the sixth grade. The parents, students, and some teachers protested before the school board to let the sixth grade students enter Sturgis Junior High School; however, the sixth grade students would have to repeat the same grade at Ramona Elementary the following year.³⁰ Although the Mexican community of San Bernardino did not succeed in getting their children reassigned from Ramona Elementary to Sturgis Junior High School, they would prove to be the first Mexican Americans to resist unequal policies in the city.

Additionally, when the new Ramona Elementary site was built in 1926, school officials built it to serve as a vocational training site for Mexican students that would “lead to habits of thrift and industry, and to the ability to make necessary contacts with the industrial world.”³¹ Vocational education would be offered to Mexican children through fourth and sixth grades. This educational experiment remained in practice through the 1931-1932 school year. School officials believed that vocational training benefitted Mexican school children because Mexican pupils were, according to school officials, “becoming retarded in academic

³⁰ Delgado, 14.

³¹ Annie Reynolds, *The Education of Spanish-Speaking Children In Five Southwestern States* quoted in Carlos E. Cortes, ed.: *Education and the Mexican American* (New York: The Arno Press, 1974), 53.

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subjects” and “vocational opportunities [might] open [them to] become interested in remaining in school in order to make furniture or cook and sew.”³² Gilbert Gonzales has also noted that educators who advocated segregation supported vocational training that could Americanize the children in a controlled cultural and linguistic atmosphere and train them for occupations that Anglos considered best suited for them.³³ Ramona Elementary offers an example of the effort to provide vocational training in a segregated environment.



Figure 2. Ramona Elementary Class photo, 1947. San Bernardino, CA, (Courtesy of Manuel Delgado).

One justification for segregating Mexican students in San Bernardino dealt specifically with language. As Mexicans became demographic minorities to Anglos in the decades following the end of the U.S.-Mexico War in 1848, English became the primary language used in the political, economic, and educational realms. In 1923, the *San Bernardino Sun* reported that County Superintendent Ida M. Collins would give “the study of English...

³² Reynolds, 53.

³³ Gonzalez, 22.

special emphasis during the 1923-24 scholastic year.”³⁴ Collins justified segregation of Mexican children on the grounds that the Spanish-English language barrier impeded their learning capabilities and separation was necessary in order to help the children learn English. In 1929, students, parents, and the Mexican consulate protested unsuccessfully to Collins concerning the school board’s efforts to segregate Mexican and black children at De Olivera Elementary School.³⁵ Just as in 1926, when students and parents protested against holding the sixth grade Mexican students back a year, the Mexican community once again responded in a unified effort to prevent further discriminatory policies from being implemented.

The reasons for the segregation of Mexican students had deeper underlying causes than just an English-Spanish language barrier. One of the prominent writers on Mexican American education, George I. Sanchez, concluded that Anglos believed “that a foreign home language is a handicap, that somehow children with Spanish as a mother tongue were doomed to failure-- in fact, they were, *ipso facto*, less than normally intelligent.”³⁶ Indeed, one of the reasons Anglos segregated Mexican children had to do with racial stereotypes that cast Mexicans as inferior and less intelligent. In 1920, a San Bernardino school teacher stated that segregation of Mexican children resulted from public opinions within the Anglo community that was “based largely on the theory that the Mexican is a menace to the health and morals of the rest of the community.”³⁷ In addition, Chaffee Union Superintendent Merton Hill justified segregation on grounds “that Mexican children advance more rapidly when grouped by themselves,” and thus profited “most by the instruction offered in such classes.”³⁸

³⁴ *San Bernardino Sun*, March 25, 1923. California State University, San Bernardino Microfilm.

³⁵ Francisco A. Rosales, *Chicano! The History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement* (Houston: Arte Público Press, 1996), 70.

³⁶ George I. Sanchez, *History Culture and Education* quoted in Julian Samora, ed.: *La Raza: Forgotten Americans*, (South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966), 15.

³⁷ Gracey C. Stanley, “Special Schools for Mexicans.” *The Survey* 44 (September 15, 1920), 714 quoted in Gonzalez, *Chicano Education*, 24.

³⁸ Merton E. Hill, *Development of An Americanization Program* (Ontario, Calif.: Union High School District, 1928) quoted in Gonzalez, *Chicano Education*, 24.

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These examples illustrate that many Anglo educators considered separate education beneficial to the Mexican community; however, according to Gilbert Gonzalez, “these shallow arguments masked the same prejudices that motivated the overt racists.”³⁹ Arguments, such as language barriers and the underlying racist reasons all intertwined to create the segregation policies in San Bernardino that would meet resistance from the Mexican American community.

The resistance to Ramona’s sixth grade students’ injustice and the incident between Superintendent Ida Collins and the Mexican parents in San Bernardino served as early examples of community resistance against discriminatory policies. Another example of resistance would occur again in 1940, when the registrar at Mount Vernon Elementary refused to enroll children at the school on the basis of language and race. Manuel Delgado recalled a confrontation between his *tía* Agapita and the registrar at Mount Vernon Elementary when her niece’s children had been denied enrollment into the school:

Tía Agapita: I want to enroll my niece in this school.

Registrar: I can’t accept them here because Mexican children have to go to Ramona Elementary.

Tía Agapita: But I see some Mexican kids out there.

Registrar: They speak English already. Besides, they live in this district.

Tía Agapita: Well, my niece speaks English too and we also live in this district.

Registrar: I’m sorry.

After this discussion, Agapita asked to see the Principal and the registrar eventually acquiesced and stated that Agapita’s niece could be enrolled only if she was to be helped with her studies in order to keep up with the other children.⁴⁰ These types of occurrences that surrounded Ramona Elementary School from the 1920s into the 1940s would eventually contribute to the formation

³⁹ Gonzalez, 24.

⁴⁰ Delgado, 8-9.

of Mexican American self-help organizations that would seek to achieve civil rights for the Mexican community in San Bernardino.

Ignacio Lopez and San Bernardino's Legal Challenge for Civil Rights, Lopez v. Seccombe (1944)

The movement to desegregate parks and recreational facilities in San Bernardino began in 1943 when John H. Milor, Principal of Alessandro Junior High School, stated that racial prejudice against Mexicans by whites was a real problem in the city. He blamed segregated parks and pools for the recent outbreak of San Bernardino's own Zoot Suit gangs, similar to those that emerged in Los Angeles. Milor also advocated the building of another pool for Mexicans in the Mount Vernon *barrio* because of their non-admittance into the Perris Hill Park Pool.⁴¹ Mexicans at this time were only allowed to swim in city pools on Sundays, the day before the pool was drained and cleaned. Shortly after Milor's statements, Eugenio Noguera held the Mexican American Defense Committee meeting on August 1, 1943, that would send a letter to the City Council demanding Mexicans' admittance into the pool at Perris Hill Park. The letter was supported by various members of the Mexican community including Father Joseph Nuñez and Ignacio Lopez, editor of *El Espectador*.

Father Joseph Nuñez had crossed into the United States in 1926 from Zacatecas, Mexico, a place from which many Mexicans in the San Bernardino *barrio* had also emigrated. Nuñez took over Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church on Pico and Spruce Street in 1937 and quickly became an outspoken leader for Mexican American struggles against injustices in San Bernardino.⁴² A specific incident with Father Nuñez contributed toward the Mexican American Defense Committee's demand to desegregate parks and recreational facilities in the city. Ignacio Lopez wrote: "Last Tuesday afternoon Reverend J.R. Nuñez and three of the Mexican children of his parish were refused admittance to the San Bernardino Municipal Plunge because they were Mexicans... They were refused the use of a swimming pool which displays a bronze

⁴¹ Delgado, 13.

⁴² Delgado, 11.

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plaque that says ‘no one is to be refused admittance because of race or color,’ and which was built with WPA [Works Progress Administration] money.”⁴³ When the city council rejected the Mexican American Defense Committee’s demands, Ignacio Lopez and other leaders of San Bernardino’s Mexican community filed a class action lawsuit against the city of San Bernardino.



Figure 3. Ignacio Lopez and *El Espectador*⁴⁴

Ignacio Lopez was born in Guadalajara, Mexico in 1908 and raised in the United States. Lopez, from 1933 until 1961, ran *El Espectador*, his weekly Spanish language newspaper that served the Mexican residents of inland Southern California towns. *El Espectador* assisted Mexicans in fighting for greater civil rights on many fronts, such as: political integration, housing equality, school desegregation, and police brutality against Mexican Americans. Lopez would also help form the Unity Leagues in Southern California and vigorously encouraged civic participation by Mexican Americans because, as Mario García has noted:

⁴³ Ignacio Lopez, *Wooing in the Dark* (undated column) quoted in Garcia, *Mexican Americans*, 88.

⁴⁴ *Pomona College Magazine*. 45, no. 3.

López spoke more for the attainment of the fruits of the American Revolution than the Mexican Revolution. Hence the concept or sense of permanency [among Mexican Americans]--- the United States being the home country--- and the recognition that one was an American citizen with all the rights pertaining to such citizenship strongly influenced the political ideology and activism of Mexican Americans.⁴⁵



Figure 4. Ignacio Lopez, September 16, 1945⁴⁶

Ignacio Lopez also helped to mobilize the Mexican American community by calling them to action. When a case of police brutality occurred in San Bernardino in the late 1940s, Lopez publicized the case against police officer John Epps for his role in the wrongful death of San Bernardino resident Ramon Rios. When talking about the death of Ramon Rios, Ignacio Lopez declared that “Johnnie Epps is not to blame,” but that the “guilty ones are all of us, who permit the police to become executioners of those they are supposed to serve.... We are the criminals.”⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Garcia, 85.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 92.

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Constant calls to action by Lopez helped mobilize Mexican Americans in San Bernardino and other Mexican communities in Southern California.

On September 1, 1943, Ignacio Lopez announced that he had contacted the nationally known civil rights lawyer and former United States Presidential candidate Wendell Willkie to represent the Mexican American Defense Committee.⁴⁸ Willkie, however, refused to take the case. Instead, Los Angeles based attorney David C. Marcus agreed to represent San Bernardino's Mexican community. On September 17, 1943, Marcus filed a class action lawsuit against San Bernardino Mayor W.C. Seccombe and the city council. The petitioners in the *Lopez v. Seccombe* case included Ignacio Lopez, Eugenio Noguerras, Father Nuñez, Virginia Prado, and Rafael Muñoz. Marcus made the argument that as tax payers and United States citizens, the Mexican Americans of San Bernardino were entitled to use parks and recreational facilities within the city and that non-admittance was unconstitutional under the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments.⁴⁹ Mayor Seccombe denied the allegations and stated that under the city charter, the Mayor and City Council had the legislative "authority to acquire, own and maintain public libraries, common museums, gymnasiums, parks and baths."⁵⁰ Presiding Judge Leon Yanckwich ruled on behalf of San Bernardino's Mexican American Defense Committee and declared that segregation of swimming pools and other recreational facilities was unconstitutional under the Fifth and Fourteenth amendments. On February 5, 1944 Judge Yanckwich concluded:

⁴⁸ Delgado, 14.

⁴⁹ *Lopez v. Seccombe*. Records of the District Court of the United States for the Southern District of California, RG 21. Southern California Central Division (Los Angeles). Civil Case Files 1938-1969. National Archives and Records Administration Pacific Region (Laguna Niguel), box 578, folder 3158.

⁵⁰ *Lopez v. Seccombe*, Defense, paragraphs I-III, 3. Records of the District Court of the United States for the Southern District of California, RG 21. Southern California Central Division (Los Angeles). Civil Case Files 1938-1969. National Archives and Records Administration Pacific Region (Laguna Niguel), box 578, folder 3158.

That respondents' conduct is illegal and is in violation of petitioners' rights and privileges as guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States... as particularly provided under the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments. That petitioners are entitled to such equal accommodations, advantages, and privileges and to equal rights and treatment with other persons as citizens of the United States, in the use and enjoyment of the facilities of said park.⁵¹

At last, the organizing and resistance against discrimination paid off when Judge Yanckwich ruled in favor of the San Bernardino Mexican American Defense Committee. This was only the second case where a judge ruled against the segregation of Mexican Americans and the first case in which a judge did so with regards to public facilities other than schools. The *Lopez v. Seccombe* case thus marked a significant victory for San Bernardino and for all Mexican Americans fighting for similar rights throughout the Southwest.

After the case, an article in *El Espectador* stated that the legal victory resulted from the San Bernardino Mexican American Defense Committee's efforts to eliminate discriminatory policies. The article also noted that the City Council decided shortly thereafter to have San Bernardino merchants remove signs from their windows that stated "White Trade Only."⁵² The *Lopez* decision marked the first time in history that the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment was used to uphold the rights of Mexican Americans.⁵³ This court case was a landmark decision for Mexican residents in San Bernardino and would later be used in the judgment of *Mendez v. Westminster*, one of the most significant court cases leading up to the Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), which ended de jure racial segregation in public schools.

⁵¹ Judgment, paragraph I. *Lopez v. Seccombe*, 71 F. Supp. 769.

⁵² Garcia, 88.

⁵³ Richard R. Valencia, *Chicano Students and the Courts: The Mexican American Legal Struggle for Educational Equality* (New York: New York University Press, 2008), 25.

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Lopez v. Seccombe's Influence on Mendez v. Westminster (1947) and National Desegregation

On March 2, 1945, attorney David C. Marcus filed a lawsuit on behalf of Gonzalo and Felicitas Mendez against the Westminster School District in Orange County, California. Gonzalo, born in Mexico, had become a U.S. citizen and had resided in California since the age of six. His wife, Felicitas, was born in Puerto Rico and therefore entitled to U.S. citizenship as well. The Mendez family experienced a similar incident to that of Agapita when she tried to enroll her niece's children into Mount Vernon Elementary in 1940. When the Mendez family attempted to enroll their three children into a local school, school authorities denied them admission because of their dark skin and Mexican last name. Gonzalo's sister, however, was able to gain admission for her children because they were fairer skinned and had the less evident Mexican surname of "Vidaurri." School officials informed the Mendez family that the children would have to attend the school established for Mexicans in another part of town.⁵⁴

Soon after the incident, an outraged Gonzalo Mendez consulted attorney David C. Marcus, who had just won the *Lopez v. Seccombe* case in 1944. Marcus accepted the Orange County legal challenge because of its similarities to *Lopez*. He believed he could win using the same type of Fourteenth Amendment argument used in San Bernardino. The following is a discussion from the *Mendez v. Westminster* pre-trial between David C. Marcus and Federal Court Judge Paul J. McCormick, which brought the San Bernardino case into question:

The Court: I have been thinking a good deal about the procedure in this case. The case seems to be, as far as I can discover, sui generis. I don't believe

⁵⁴ The Honorable Frederick P. Aguirre is a Superior Court Judge in the Lamoreaux Justice Center in Orange County, California and writes an excellent analysis on the *Mendez v. Westminster* trial and its affect at the national desegregation process. Frederick P. Aguirre, "Mendez v. Westminster School District: How It Affected Brown v. Board of Education," *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education* 4, no.4 (October 2005): 321, <http://jhh.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/4/4/321> (accessed June 11, 2009).

there is any case in the books that parallels this case... I was hopeful that there might be some appeal to the State court primarily instead of bringing the case to the Federal Court ab initio. Counsel doesn't seem disposed to do that. The complaint did state a case, I think, under the modernized method of pleading in civil actions in the Federal Court. For that reason I thought that the motion to dismiss was not well taken. I will think that is true, but I was hopeful when I permitted the amicus curiae to come into the case that they would help us some. Instead of being friends of the Court, they seem to be onlookers. We have been trying to formulate some method whereby the time of everybody could be conserved in a case of this kind.

Mr. Marcus: Your Honor, there was a like suit in this court before Judge Yankwich⁵⁵. The case involved - -

The Court: Well, that was the case that you called the Court's attention to. That was a consent judgment, as I recall it, wasn't it?

Mr. Marcus: That was after a hearing on the motion, your Honor.

The Court: Well, I have ruled on the motion. I have denied the motion.

Mr. Marcus: But the motion went to the respective capacities to sue. The same position as counsel has taken here was taken in that. That suit was brought by some four people on behalf of all the Mexican people of Mexican descent in San Bernardino County.

⁵⁵ The Honorable Judge Yankwich ruled in the case the San Bernardino Case *Lopez v. Seccombe* (1944).

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The Court: That case wasn't analogous to this case.⁵⁶

Despite the motion being denied during pre-trial to use the *Lopez* decision as a precedent for the *Mendez* case, Judge McCormick would eventually use it to justify the decision.

The final decision in *Mendez* came in 1946 and was the first federal court case in the country to state that separate schools for children of color was unconstitutional because they violated constitutional rights provided by the Fourteenth Amendment.⁵⁷ *Mendez* would eventually lead to the desegregation of public schools in California. On June 14, 1947, Governor of California, Earl Warren signed the bill to desegregate public schools. In the concurring majority decision of the *Mendez* case, the *Lopez* decision was mentioned to have a considerable influence on the outcome of the Orange County case. Circuit Judge Denman wrote:

I concur in what is said in the court's opinion but cannot agree with the omission of the consideration of *Lopez v. Seccombe*, so widely discussed in the profession... What our decision here does is to follow the precedent of Judge Yankwich's decision in the *Lopez* case... the priest and the two editors, suing for themselves as American citizens and eight thousand (8,000) other San Bernardino persons of Latin descent, sought an injunction against the mayor, councilmen, chief of police and park superintendent for such discriminatory exclusion. The case was tried by Judge Yankwich who ruled, as in the instant case, that such discriminatory barring of the class of Latin descended people

⁵⁶ *Mendez v. Westminster* Pretrial. Records of the District Court of the United States for the Southern District of California, 21. Central Division (Los Angeles). Civil Case Files 4292-4305. National Archives and Records Administration Pacific Region (Laguna Niguel), box 3811, folder CV 4292-M [1/4].

⁵⁷ Aguirre, *Mendez v. Westminster School District*, 322.

violated the due process and equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.⁵⁸

San Bernardino's Mexican American Defense Committee's efforts three years prior to the final decision in *Mendez* thus had a major influence on one of the most significant test cases in United States history in regards to desegregating public schools.

Gilbert Gonzalez commented on *Mendez*'s significance and stated that the case would be the first stage of overturning the "separate but equal" doctrine as outlined in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896). The effects of the decision, according to Gonzalez, "were widespread... Mexican parents and civil rights organizations such as LULAC and the GI Forum in Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas, entered the campaign against school segregation shortly thereafter." Gonzalez also mentioned that attorneys for the plaintiffs in *Brown v. Board of Education* would use similar strategies to those used by Marcus in *Mendez*.⁵⁹ Frederick Aguirre noted *Mendez*'s national significance leading into *Brown v. Board of Education* by stating that Chief Justice Earl Warren clearly read and understood Judge McCormick's decision in *Mendez*. According to Aguirre, *Mendez* helped shape Warren's "sense of fairness and equity that manifested itself in the *Brown* case."⁶⁰

Mendez v. Westminster has only recently become recognized for its legal significance as a test case leading into national desegregation. Although the *Lopez v. Seccombe* case does not carry the legal ramifications that *Mendez* had, historians should not neglect the legacy of the *Lopez* court case. Attorney David C. Marcus first utilized the Fourteenth Amendment argument that won the *Mendez* case in the San Bernardino decision. Therefore, the *Lopez* case helped set a precedent, even if not formally recognized in *Mendez v. Westminster*, that helped pave the way towards the *Mendez* decision and the eventual landmark 1954 Supreme Court decision *Brown v. Board of Education*. The

⁵⁸ Concurring decision by Circuit Judge Denman. *Mendez v. Westminster*, 161 F.2d 774.

⁵⁹ Gilbert G. Gonzalez, *Chicano Education in the Era of Segregation* (Philadelphia: The Balch Institute Press, 1990), 28-29.

⁶⁰ Aguirre, *Mendez v. Westminster School District: How it Affected Brown v. Board of Education*, 331.

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Mexican American Defense Committee's legal challenge in 1944 deserves a higher degree of recognition and a closer analysis by historians as it is one of the integral test cases that led towards national desegregation and greater attainment of civil rights for Mexican Americans. Furthermore, San Bernardino's Mexican American Defense Committee should also be recognized as one of the groups that advanced the civil rights struggle for Mexican Americans. Their courageous resistance led towards a fairer and greater U.S. legal system and consequently a more equal and just United States.

In addition, since the City Council mandated that 'White Trade Only' signs be removed from businesses soon after the decision, the aftermath of the *Lopez* case assisted in further eliminating discrimination beyond just parks and recreational facilities. The Mexican American Defense Committee fought against wide scale structural exclusion that included economic exclusion, residential covenants, and school segregation. As recently as 2009, the City is still working to eliminate the institutional discrimination that Mexicans in San Bernardino experienced by correcting the effects of the 215 freeway by redesigning off ramps that will finally lead into the Westside. The 1944 case thus was not just about segregation of parks and recreational facilities but part of a larger effort to expose discrimination on a broad and interconnected scale.

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Mark Ocegueda graduated in June 2010 with a B.A. degree in history. Mark's article on the *Lopez v. Seccombe* case has won various awards, including the Charles McCall Award for Best Undergraduate Paper at the 34th Annual California State University, Social Science Research and Instructional Center Student Research Conference and First Place at the 20th Annual CSUSB Student Research Conference. Mark has served two years as president of CSUSB's chapter of Phi Alpha Theta. In addition, Mark has also received the following distinctions: Ronald E. McNair Scholar, 2009 J.C. Robinson Memorial Scholarship, 2009 History Department Service Award, 2010 College of Social and Behavioral Sciences Outstanding Undergraduate Award, and California State University Chancellor's Doctoral Incentive Fellow. Mark also maintains memberships in: Phi Alpha Theta, Phi Kappa Phi, Golden Key International Honor Society, and MECha. Mark was accepted into UC Davis and UC Irvine's PhD programs in history with five-year fellowships at both institutions. Mark will attend UC Irvine in Fall 2010 to begin his PhD in history. Mark wishes to extend his sincere appreciation to Dr. Cherstin Lyon for serving as his advisor while conducting research for this project.

The Western Media and the Portrayal of the Rwandan Genocide

BY CHERICE JOYANN ESTES

ABSTRACT: On December 9, 1948, the United Nations established its Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. Genocides, however, have continued to occur, affecting millions of people around the globe. The 1994 genocide in Rwanda resulted in an estimated 800,000 deaths. Global leaders were well aware of the atrocities, but failed to intervene. At the same time, the Western media's reports on Rwanda tended to understate the magnitude of the crisis. This paper explores the Western media's failure to accurately interpret and describe the Rwandan Genocide. Recognizing the outside media's role in mischaracterizations of the Rwanda situation is particularly useful when attempting to understand why western governments were ineffective in their response to the atrocity. The media is self-evidently a central tool in informing the public about issues, shaping public opinion, and promoting change within societies. Despite the objectivity that the media is expected to maintain, there is no denying that the media, whether intentionally or not, has occasionally reported on events and issues in ways that have misled or been misinterpreted by the public. The western media's treatment of the Rwandan Genocide is a clear example of inaccurate and incomplete news coverage.

In one hundred days, an estimated 800,000 Rwandan citizens lost their lives, while the United States and European powers failed to intervene. Inaccurate reports in the Western media compounded the failure of outside governments to recognize the crisis as genocide. Western publications circulated stories that characterized the tragedy in Rwanda in ways that minimized the

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enormity of the event. For example the media would characterize the situation as "a tribal war" or merely the "continuation of a civil war."

The primary purpose of this paper is to analyze the ways the Western media described the 1994 Rwandan Genocide and contrast those descriptions with the actual historical facts and circumstances of Rwandan politics and social relations. Too often, African political events that have particular and distinguishable contexts and precedents are simply labeled as irrational tribalism, without any attention given to the causes of a particular occurrence.¹ While journalists may attempt as best they can to be objective when relaying information, they, like anyone else, are the products of their training, their upbringing, their religious affiliation, and their political and social views. And, in the case of the Western media and Africa, the question of perspective is often exacerbated by the relative ignorance of Western media about the countries in Africa that they are asked to write about. Anne Chaon, a journalist who spent time in Rwanda during the genocide, explains that:

Most journalists are not experts in genocide. Many of them - myself included - arrived in Rwanda with very little knowledge of the country. So, it was tempting, especially at the beginning, to speak of the civil war, and to link these massacres to previous massacres since 1959. We failed to understand that the killing was something totally new, that this was not a continuity of what happened before.²

¹ Melissa Wall, "An Analysis of News Magazine Coverage of the Rwanda Crisis in the United States," in *The Media and the Rwanda Genocide*, edited by Allan Thompson and Kofi Annan, (London: Pluto Press, 2007), 262.

² Anne Chaon, "Who Failed in Rwanda, Journalists or the Media?" in *The Media and the Rwanda Genocide*, edited by Robert I. Rotberg and Thomas G. Weiss, (London: Pluto Press, 2007), 160-166.

Far too often, correspondents assigned to cover an event or issue involving Africa have not received the training necessary to “cover issues, activities, and crises in developing countries.”³

The media's mischaracterization and erroneous reporting about the Rwandan genocide is apparent in examples from American, Canadian, and European periodicals, and from other sources that covered the incident while it was occurring. Many of the misguided reports were due to a lack of historical knowledge about Rwanda. Thus, the first section of this paper examines the historical foundation for the social divide between the Hutu and Tutsi in Rwanda, the two groups involved in the genocide. The paper then examines the events leading up to the genocide. The third section focuses on the genocide itself and what I term the Rwandan "hate media." In the last section of the paper, I highlight the misrepresentations of the crisis by Western media and their political ramifications.

Historical Background

Rwanda's population consists of three main groups: the Hutu (85%), the Tutsi (14%), and the Twa (1%).⁴ These three groups share the same religion, speak the same language, and, prior to colonization, lived peacefully with one another in the same community. In many cases they intermarried. Each group considered itself as belonging to a single, integrated society, despite various social differences. The shared community among the three groups was not unlike the shared communities of the West, where, for example, Catholics and Jews live and work together in the same city or suburb.

Pre-colonial Rwandese society was organized around the *mwami*, or king as the central figure of authority. The *mwami* was considered to be powerful, sacred, and divine. Rituals were carried out in his honor and a special vocabulary known as "king's

³ John C. Hammock and Joel R. Charny, “Emergency Response as Mortality Play: The Media, the Relief Agencies, and the Need for Capacity Building,” in *From Massacres to Genocide* (Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1996), 125.

⁴ Catharine Newbury, “Background to Genocide: Rwanda,” *A Journal of Opinion* 23 (1995): 12.

speech" was used to describe his daily activities. Gerard Prunier, author of *The Rwanda Crisis: History of a Genocide* notes that:

The king was the father and the patriarch of his people, given to them by Imana (God). He is the providence of Rwanda, the Messiah and the savior. When he exercises his authority, he is impeccable, infallible. His decisions cannot be questioned. The parents of a victim he has unjustly struck bring him presents so that he does not resent them for having been forced to cause them affliction. They still trust him, because his judgments are always just. Whatever happens, he remains Nyagasami, the only Lord, superb and magnificent.⁵

There were three types of chiefs who were under the king: the *mutwale wa buttaka* (chief of landholdings), who was responsible for agricultural production, land attribution, and taxation; the *mutwale wa ingabo* (chief of men), in charge of recruiting men for the king's armies; and the *mutwale wa inka* (chief of pastures), who ruled over the grazing lands.⁶ The *mutwale wa buttaka* was normally Hutu as agriculture was their expertise, while most of the other chiefs were Tutsi. The chiefs were responsible for minding the cattle, working the land, and maintaining their quarters. They also set the form of payment for each household under their jurisdiction, which allowed people to make their own arrangements to fulfill their government demands. This system became known as *ubuhake* and remained in existence until the European powers changed the taxation system.⁷

Rwanda remained free from European colonization until May 4, 1894, when the first European, German Count Gustav Adolf von Goetzen, was received at court by King Rwabugiri. The King welcomed the Count, but was unaware that the European powers had already divided up the African continent at the Berlin Conference of 1885. The decision to give Rwanda to Germany was

⁵ Gerard Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis History of a Genocide* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 10.

⁶ Prunier, 11-12.

⁷ Prunier, 12.

an act of ignorance: Germans knew nothing about Rwanda. The Rwandan monarchy continued to exist while Germany deployed twenty-four military officers and six administrators to Rwanda. According to Linda Melvern, a British journalist and published author, “The German policy was to support the chiefs in such a manner that they would be convinced that their own salvation and that of their supporters depended on their faithfulness to the German.”⁸ The Germans also supported expansion and helped the Tutsi monarchy subjugate the northern areas.

After World War I, control over Rwanda and Burundi was transferred from Germany to Belgium under a League of Nations mandate. This covenant “was to herald a new phase of human evolution, to offer a framework for practical and effective co-operation between nations for their common good.”⁹ The covenant stipulated that the “tutelage of the peoples in the colonies should be entrusted to advanced nations who, by reason of their resources, their experience, or their geographical position, could best, undertake this responsibility.”¹⁰ Rwanda and Burundi were categorized as countries lacking in self-determination. Belgium agreed to assume administration, as well as to promote development, free speech, and freedom of religion.

The Germans had implemented a policy of indirect rule, which changed to one of direct rule under the Belgians. Slowly, the Belgians progressed in changing the societal structures that had existed throughout Rwanda’s history. In 1922, the king was forced to accept the assistance of Belgian representatives and one year later Belgium made it illegal for the king to have regional chiefs. Belgian colonialists dismantled the only structure that Rwandans had known. In 1931, King Mwami Musinga, who opposed colonization, was removed from power by Belgian administrators and replaced by Mutara Rudahigwa, who later became known as “king of the whites.”¹¹ His values and practices were more “western,” and his conversion to Christianity in 1943 became part

⁸ Melvern, Linda , *A People Betrayed The Role of the West in Rwanda’s Genocide* (London: Zed Books Ltd, 2000), 7.

⁹ Melvern, 9.

¹⁰ Melvern, 9.

¹¹ Melvern, 10.

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of the Belgian policy that made Christianity mandatory for anyone wishing to be part of the Tutsi elite.¹²

The Belgian government divided Rwanda into four chiefdoms and gave Belgian administrators the authority to control every aspect of Rwandan society. They introduced currency and implemented an education system available only to the sons of chiefs. They also created an African civil service that included only members of the Tutsi oligarchy. Despite the Tutsi being a decidedly small fraction of the total population – dwarfed in numbers by the Hutu—Belgium was intent on elevating the Tutsi over the Hutu based on physical characteristics. In this way, the Belgians were cementing their unfavorable attitudes toward the Hutu. Under the direction of the Belgian administration, Tutsi chiefs demanded forced labor from the Hutu in building roads. The Belgians insisted on cruel and inhumane beatings as a method of punishment and control. As a result, hundreds of thousands of Hutu peasants fled to Uganda to become migrant workers and escape the mistreatment.¹³

European Stereotypes and the Hamitic Myth

Europeans in Rwanda had long noted physical differences within the Rwandan population and, beginning with the Belgians, they began to exploit those differences to create a social divide and implement policies based on racial discrimination. John Hanning Speke, a well-known Nile explorer in the 1800s, linked Rwandan “monarchic institutions” to the arrival of conquering invaders from Ethiopia (whom he speculated to be ancestors of the Tutsi). Speke posited that Tutsis were of a Hamitic, non-African race, and thus “superior.”¹⁴ Other explorers, such as Sir Samuel Baker and Gaetano Casati, accepted this formulation.

Missionaries, such as Father van den Burgt and John Roscoe, also believed the explorers’ theories; some, however, had different opinions. Father Pages, for example, believed that the Tutsis were descendants of ancient Egyptians. Father van den

¹² Melvern, 10.

¹³ Melvern, 10.

¹⁴ Prunier, 7.

Burgt claims, “We can see Caucasian skulls and beautiful Greek profiles side by side with Semitic and even Jewish features, elegant golden-red beauties in the heart of Ruanda and Urundi.”¹⁵

Tutsi features were described as though they were European and not of the same group as the Hutu. Prunier notes that some Europeans thought:

The Bahima [a Tutsi clan] differ absolutely by the beauty of their features and their light colour from the Bantu agriculturalists of an inferior type. Tall and well-proportioned, they have long thin noses, a wide brow and fine lips. They say they came from the north. Their intelligent and delicate appearance, their love of money, their capacity to adapt to any situation seem to indicate a semitic-origin.¹⁶

These Hamitic or Semitic characteristics were purportedly the underlying reasons why the Tutsi emerged as the privileged group. These stereotypes not only demonstrate that the Europeans were ignorant of Rwandese history and populations, but that they in fact facilitated the spread of racial animosity and hatred among the different groups. Based on the assumption that the Tutsi were ancient European descendants, the Belgian government decided that they were “fit to rule.” The Hutu, by contrast, were deemed inferior. They were described as having typical African features: “short and thick-set with a big head, jovial expression, a wide nose and enormous lips.”¹⁷

In 1933, the Belgian administration put together a group of Belgian bureaucrats to conduct a census of the entire population. The purpose was to classify every Rwandan as belonging to one of the three groups: Hutu, Tutsi, or Twa. They counted each Rwandan, measuring height, nose length, and eye shape.¹⁸ Using physical characteristics as a way to group people into categories was, in fact, a flawed methodology because many Rwandans were mixed due to intermarriage. The Belgians' solution to that issue

¹⁵ Prunier, 7.

¹⁶ Prunier, 7.

¹⁷ Prunier, 6.

¹⁸ Melvern, 11.

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was to classify persons who were mixed as Hutu. Hutus who were wealthy and owned the required number of livestock were considered Tutsi.¹⁹

The Belgians then issued to every Rwandan an identification card that indicated the group to which the person had been assigned. The identification card policy is a primary example of how the Belgian government created and fostered a racially divided population based on physical appearance, a policy that contributed significantly to the country's progression down a path that led to genocide.

Belgian Discriminatory Policies and Their Outcomes

The favoritism displayed by the Belgian government to the Tutsi population was pervasive and resulted in the creation of an African civil service limited to Tutsi elites. In 1952, the Belgians introduced electoral procedures for advisory councils at four different administrative levels, limiting voting privileges such that the minority Tutsi won all the seats.²⁰

Because of these types of discrimination and repression, a sense of Hutu nationalism and racist ideologies began to surface in the northern region of Rwanda. In 1957, a group of Hutu nationalists published a manifesto that called for majority rule. Belgian Catholic priests supported the Hutus in their mission to gain equality and abolish discrimination within the public service, and in 1957, the United Nations pressured Belgium to liberate the Hutu.

On July 24, 1959, Rwanda's Tutsi King Mutara III Rudahigwa died while in the hospital. The Tutsi elite were under the impression that he was killed by the Belgians and that the Hutu were also involved.²¹ This rumor sparked outrage among the Tutsi population, and on November 1, 1959, a Tutsi group called Union National Rwandaise (UNAR) attacked a Hutu leader, Dominique Mbonyumutwa, which placed Rwanda in violent turmoil. The

¹⁹ Melvern, 11.

²⁰ Melvern, 13.

²¹ Melvern, 14.

Hutu started burning Tutsi homes and launching attacks on them. Many Tutsi fled Rwanda as a result of the violence.

This upheaval was only the beginning of the repercussions from European interference and the Belgians' restructuring of Rwandan society. The Belgian government placed Rwanda under military rule on November 11, 1959. Under international pressure, they tried to rectify the situation by replacing some Tutsi chiefs with Hutu and announcing to Belgian administrators that the Hutu would now be "favored within the administration."²² Tens of thousands of Tutsi were forced into exile in neighboring countries.²³

Gregoire Kayibanda, founder of the extremist Hutu group Parmehutu, wanted to end Tutsi dominance forever. He organized rallies to overthrow the Tutsi monarchy, a goal he achieved in September 1961. By February 1962, an estimated 135,000 Tutsi refugees were living in exile in the Congo, Burundi, Uganda, and Tanganyika, and one thousand people were entering Uganda each week.²⁴

Opposition Growth Across Borders

Tutsi men displaced in refugee camps were recruited into secret militia groups, called *Inyenzi*, or cockroach, by the Hutu. On November 14, 1963, the Belgian National Guard stopped an *Inyenzi* attempt to enter Rwanda to kill Hutu.²⁵ On December 21, 1963, two hundred armed Tutsi men left Burundi and succeeded in crossing over into Rwanda, heading toward the capital Kigali. They were defeated and Kayibanda reacted to the Tutsi infiltration with an organized campaign to kill Tutsi.

These killings in 1963 left journalists puzzled as to why an event like this would happen. Lord Bertrand Russell, a Welsh historian and philosopher, spoke of the event on Vatican Radio, claiming that, "It was the most horrible and systematic extermination of a people since the Nazi's extermination of the

²² Melvern, 14.

²³ Melvern, 14.

²⁴ Melvern, 14.

²⁵ Melvern, 17.

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Jews.²⁶ These massacres organized by Kayibanda were propelled by Kigali Radio, which aired warnings that the Tutsi were coming back to “enslave” the Hutu, proclaimed that, “The Tutsi must be killed before they killed the Hutu.”²⁷ Hoes, machetes, clubs, and any other tools attackers could access were used to kill at least five thousand men, women, and children. Some one hundred Tutsi women and children committed suicide by drowning themselves in the river to escape Hutu mobs at the Congo border.

Some consider this specific event genocide, though Europeans working for aid agencies in Rwanda during this time described the killings as “savagery of the negro.”²⁸ Unfortunately, this was not the last time that massive killings would take place; a far worse massacre – the most horrible mass destruction of human beings since the Jewish Holocaust of World War II – would occur thirty years later.

Various groups of Tutsi refugees prepared to return to their homeland in order to oppose Hutu nationalism. One group was the Rwanda Refugees Welfare Association, later known as the Rwandan Alliance for National Unity.²⁹ This group operated in exile in Kenya from 1981 to 1986. In 1987, the group changed its name to the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF). The RPF consisted of a 26-member executive committee that included 11 Tutsi and 15 Hutu who opposed then-President Habyarimana and wanted to end his regime. A guerilla army known as the Rwandan Patriotic Army eventually grew from this organization. They were well-trained, disciplined and had considerable combat experience.³⁰

Civil War 1990-1993

On October 1, 1990, the Rwandese Patriotic Army forces attacked guards posted at the Rwandese border. This surprise attack was the start of a civil war. Former Major Paul Kagame, who is the current president of Rwanda, called this “the beginning of a

²⁶ Melvern, 17.

²⁷ Melvern, 17.

²⁸ Melvern, 18.

²⁹ Melvern, 26.

³⁰ Melvern, 27.

protracted popular war.”³¹ The goal was to put an end to the Habyarimana regime, return the Tutsi to their home country, and take control of the government. Kagame worked with Habyarimana’s former accomplice, Colonel Alexis Kanyarengwe, who was a Hutu living in exile. After three years of fighting, the civil war ended with the signing of the Arusha Accords in August 1993.

The civil war gained international attention. President Habyarimana, a Hutu extremist, had come under scrutiny for the instability and violence that his rule generated throughout the region. It took thirteen months of talks to get the Rwandan government and the RPF to agree to sign the accords, the only hope for an end to the civil war.³² The negotiations were overseen by the Organization of African Unity (OAU), under the leadership of Tanzanian President Ali Hassan Mwinyi. Five African states were involved in the negotiations (Burundi, Zaire, Senegal, Uganda and Tanzania), along with four western countries: (France, Belgium, Germany, and the United States), which had observer status. Great Britain, Canada, the Netherlands, and the European Union monitored the talks from their local embassies.³³

Under the peace agreement, Rwandan presidential power was “reduced to no more than representing the Republic: the President could promulgate laws but had no authority to modify or veto them.” Not only did he have no power to nominate civil servants, but he also could not suggest names for nominations. Any messages addressed to the nation had to be approved by the Broad-Based Transitional Government (BBTG).³⁴

President Habyarimana agreed to sign this accord only to maintain a good image in the eyes of foreign donors.³⁵ He scrambled to get support from other African leaders to buy time and hold up democratization. He traveled to Uganda to meet with President Museveni on August 31, 1993. The meeting turned out to be unfavorable for President Habyarimana and left him

³¹ Prunier, 96.

³² Melvern, 52.

³³ Melvern, 52.

³⁴ Prunier, 193.

³⁵ Prunier, 195.

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searching for outside supporters to delay the implementation of the Accords.³⁶

Despite Habyarimana's signing of the Arusha Accords in August 1993, he failed to implement the agreement; too much was at stake. The Hutu supremacists who had supported him realized that he was incapable of defending their interests. The Hutu extremist group Coalition Pour la Defense de la Republique (CDR) decided to withdraw their support for Habyarimana and search for more radical representation and appease foreign governments who supported Habyarimana financially. Despite criticism from Europe and other African states, and despite the eagerness of the RPF to integrate the forces and implement the accords, Habyarimana refused.

On April 6, 1994, Habyarimana flew to Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania and met with Tanzanian President Ali Hassan Mwinyi, Vice-President George Saitoti of Kenya, President Cyprien Ntaryamira of Burundi, and Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni. The focus of the discussion was supposed to be on Burundi; Habyarimana's refusal, however, to abide by the Arusha Accords was the topic of discussion. Back home, on the other hand, Hutu extremists felt betrayed by Habyarimana's signing of the Accords. Thus, whether or not he implemented the agreement, he was still in a difficult situation that he could not ignore.

President Ntaryamira accompanied President Habyarimana in his aircraft on the way back to Kigali. At around 8:30 in the evening on April 6, the aircraft was struck by two missiles. Ironically, it crashed into the garden of Habyarimana's home and caught fire, killing everyone on board. This incident sparked the beginning of the wave of killings that became widely acknowledged as the Rwandan Genocide.

The Genocide of 1994: Rwandan Radio Hate Media

The Hutu-controlled Radio-Television Libres des Milles Collines (RTLMC) was financed by Hutu extremists, which also included Habyarimana. The purpose for this radio station had always been

³⁶ Melvern, 52-54.

to incite the Rwandan Hutu majority to genocide.³⁷ The radio station started calling for the extermination of Tutsi as early as January 1994 in response to the Arusha Accords. After Habyarimana's death, the radio station announcers had a new rallying cry; they called for murder "to avenge the death of their president." On May 5, they declared that the country must be "cleansed" of Tutsis.³⁸

In order to achieve their goal, they helped recruit and organize the Interhamwe militias, whose purpose was to annihilate all Tutsi in Rwanda. Radio announcers read the names and addresses of Tutsi and moderate Hutu who were to be killed. Their last-known locations were also broadcast, and listeners were told, "You have missed some of the enemies [in this or that place]. Some are still alive. You must go back and finish them off."³⁹ The results proved to be one of the worst human disasters ever. Fergal Keane, a journalist and writer, asks his readers:

Remember the figures, never ever forget them, in one hundred days up to one million people were hacked, shot, strangled, clubbed, and burned to death. Remember, carve this into your consciousness: one million. This estimate equates to three hundred and thirty-three and a third murders an hour, or five and a half killings every minute.⁴⁰

The enormity of the bloodshed should have been recognized as genocide immediately, but, due to Rwanda's remote geographic location and its lack of influence in the international arena, thousands of men, women, and children were slaughtered while world powers turned a blind eye. An article in *The Economist* explained that, "The killing in Rwanda is too terrible to ignore. It amounts to genocide, a word that the United States will not

³⁷ Melvern, 71.

³⁸ Peter Ronayne, *Never Again?* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), 157.

³⁹ Ronayne, 158.

⁴⁰ Ronayne, 159.

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officially utter since to do so would make it harder to resist taking action.”⁴¹

The Clinton Administration opposed using the term genocide to describe what was taking place in Rwanda at the time. Recognizing this as genocide would require the United States to intervene according to their adoption of the 1948 Genocide Convention. Nevertheless, United States government officials publicly acknowledged that “acts of genocide” may have been committed.⁴² David Rawson, former US Ambassador to Rwanda during this time, said during an interview that “As a responsible government, you don’t just go around hollering genocide. You say that acts of genocide may have occurred and they need to be investigated.”⁴³ While western powers danced around the issue, Hutu extremists carried out their successful agenda at an astonishing rate.

Western Media Coverage of the Genocide

The 1994 Rwandan Genocide officially started when President Habyarimana was killed. The Hutu extremists who supported him blamed the Tutsi for his murder and wasted no time in trying to rid Rwanda of Tutsi. Western media reported the violence as “a product of tribal factions.”⁴⁴ The *New York Times*, for example, on April 9, 1994, headlined “Terror Convulses Rwandan Capital as Tribes Battle.” The article understated events, citing “tribal bloodletting” as the cause for the high death toll and also for the evacuation of foreigners from Kigali, Rwanda’s capital. The reporter, who clearly lacked an understanding of Rwanda’s long history of Hutu-Tutsi conflict, attributed the violence simply to the murder of President Habyarimana. In fact, tension between Hutu and Tutsi had been building and worsening since the post-World War I entry of Belgium into Rwandan society and Belgium's

⁴¹ “Who Will Save Rwanda,” *The Economist*, June 25, 1994, 13.

⁴² Douglas Jehl, “Officials Told to Avoid Calling Rwanda Killings ‘Genocide.’” *New York Times*, June 10, 1994.

⁴³ Jehl.

⁴⁴ Niranjana Karnik, “Rwanda & the Media: Imagery, War & Refuge,” *Review of African Political Economy* 25 (December 1998): 614.

implementation of policies that included: inscribing “ethnic” identification on identity cards; relegating the vast majority of Hutu to onerous forms of forced labor; and favoring Tutsi in access to administrative posts, education, and jobs in the modern sector.⁴⁵

In another article titled, “Africa Has Yet to Come to Terms with Its Tribal Divisions,” the author stated, “Rwanda is African tribalism in its extreme form.”⁴⁶ A news article in the *San Francisco Chronicle* also incorrectly referenced the genocide as a “tribal vendetta.”⁴⁷ On the same day, the *New York Times* also incorrectly referred to the genocide as a tribal war.⁴⁸ In point of fact, the Hutu and Tutsi should not be referred to as different tribes. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, a tribe is defined as “a group of persons forming a community and claiming descent from a common ancestor.” The Hutu and Tutsi lived in the same community, spoke the same language, and shared the same religion.

An article featured in the *Boston Globe* stated, “The Troubles in Rwanda and Burundi go back 500 years, to the time when the tall Tutsi came in from neighboring Ethiopia to establish dominance over the Hutu people.”⁴⁹ Even though some of the physical features of Tutsi and Hutu differed, the two groups had been living together and co-mingling in Rwanda when the Europeans arrived. Moreover, recall that under Belgian policy, the Hutu could be classified as Tutsi merely as a result of their wealth. The classification system that was created never accurately represented the population, thus to describe the genocide as a “tribal war or tribal conflict” is an incorrect description of what occurred. The article below appeared in the *New York Times* one month after the genocide began and exemplifies the language used to describe this event.

⁴⁵ Catharine Newbury, “Background to Genocide: Rwanda,” *A Journal of Opinion*, 23 (1995): 12-17.

⁴⁶ Jonathan Power, “Africa Has Yet To Come To Terms With Its Tribal Divisions” *The Gazette*, final edition, B5, July 30, 1994.

⁴⁷ “Rwanda Struggle to Regain Balance/New Government Named, but Many More Massacred in Tribal Vendettas,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, final edition, April 9, 1994.

⁴⁸ “Terror Convulses Rwandan Capital as Tribes Battle,” *New York Times*, late edition, April 9, 1994.

⁴⁹ “Ethnic War in Africa” *Boston Globe*, April 13, 1994,16.



Reuters
A young Tutsi, one of more than 1,000 who have taken refuge in a seminary from Hutu carrying out "ethnic cleansing," huddling under a blanket. The seminary, in the Rwandan capital, is surrounded by Hutu soldiers.

Tribal Fighting Flares Again Around the Rwandan Capital

NAIROBI, Kenya, May 15 (Reuter) — Rebel forces in Rwanda are poised to begin new attacks against Government troops, diplomats said today. "They seem to be advancing from several areas," one African diplomat said after a day of artillery duels and small-arms fire around Kigali, capital of the small central African state. Government artillery barrages failed to dislodge the rebels, fighting as the Rwanda Patriotic Front, from positions around the airport east of the capital, and in the surrounding hills.

Isolation as a Tactic
Apart from tightening their noose around the major army barracks at Kanombe, east of the airport, the rebels have not advanced into Kigali since April. The mainly Tutsi rebel forces, lighter armed but highly mobile, have instead concentrated on cutting major roads and capturing rural areas in the north and south-east.

The fighting began on April 6, when President Juvénal Habyarimana, a Hutu, died in a suspicious plane crash near Kigali. The Hutu then began a slaughter of countless thousands of Tutsi and their allies in Hutu-based opposition parties. Some aid workers estimate that the death toll may have reached 200,000 people.

The United Nations Security Council is expected to vote on Tuesday on a proposal to send up to 5,500 African

troops to try to curb the bloodshed. But while the United States wants the soldiers deployed along Rwanda's borders to create safe havens for refugees, the United Nations wants them to secure Kigali airport first. Residents said reports of the latest rebel advances put them as close as 12 miles to the southwestern town Gitarama, seat of the Government since soon after President Habyarimana's death. "Politically, that would create disarray in the Government camp," a military analyst said. United Nations officials said there was also heavy fighting in Tumba and Nkumba, just east of the major Government garrison in Ruhengeri.

Drunken Militiamen
But in Government-held areas, aid workers speculated, the bloodshed could be easing, perhaps only because so many Tutsi have already been killed or have fled the country.

A reporter in southwestern Rwanda said some drunken Hutu militiamen with grenades, guns and machetes had become a law unto themselves. Even Government soldiers and the police seemed to defer to them at the frequent roadblocks, which have been set up to look for Tutsi, who are savagely killed.

Aid workers say the militiamen are preventing Tutsi civilians from being rescued from the camps, churches and hotels where they have sought protection. "This is one of the reasons why we're hopeful the Security Coun-



The New York Times
Rebel forces control positions in the hills around Kigali.

cil will increase our numbers on the ground so we can patrol such areas," Abdul Kabia, executive director of the 450-member United Nations Assistance Mission in Rwanda, said in a telephone interview.

United Nations officials said the lawless Hutu militias posed the greatest threat to foreign peacekeepers. "We are getting co-operation from the warring parties but I don't know if anybody is in control of the civilian militias," Mr. Kabia said.

He said a United Nations force could quickly secure Kigali airport because both the Government and the rebels had agreed to the idea in principle. United Nations officials said the African force would be backed up by armored personnel carriers and 16 helicopters.

Figure 1. Michael McMahon, "Tribal Fighting Flares Again Around the Rwandan Capital," *New York Times*, late edition, 16 May 1994.

Prolonged Civil War or Genocide?

Raphael Lemkin, a Polish jurist who lost forty-nine family members in the Holocaust, first used the word "genocide."⁵⁰ The term has been used to describe, "the systematic targeting of

⁵⁰ Samantha Power, "Raising the Cost of Genocide" in *Fifty Years of Dissent*, edited by Nicolaus Mills and Michael Walzer, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 295.

national, ethnic, or religious groups.”⁵¹ The United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, to include, however, has defined the term, more broadly:

Any of a number of acts committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group: killing members of the group; causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group, and forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.⁵²

It is the totality of the intended extermination that marks genocide.

The intention and attempt of the Hutu to annihilate the entire Tutsi population is clearly an example of genocide, yet the media often portrayed this crisis as a civil war, implying that two opposing political viewpoints had taken up arms simply to gain control of the government. Three months after the genocide began, *USA Today* headlined “Rwandan Rebels Call for Civil War Cease-Fire.”⁵³ *The Gazette* used the same mischaracterization in an article entitled, “Toll From Rwanda’s Civil War Nears 3 Million, UN Says.”⁵⁴ The *Washington Post* published an editorial that identified the violence as “savage civil war.”⁵⁵ The labeling of Africans as savages was started with the Europeans during the pre-colonial era. Although colonialism is a thing of the past, western media continued to use these terms to describe the genocide. Mark

⁵¹ Power, 295.

⁵² United Nations, *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide* (New York: United Nations, 1948).

<http://www.un.org/millennium/law/iv-1.htm> (accessed May 31, 2010).

⁵³ Charmagne Helton, “Rwandan Rebels Call For Civil War Cease-Fire” *USA Today*, July 6, 1994, final ed., 1A.

⁵⁴ “Toll From Rwanda’s Civil War Nears 3 Million, UN Says” *The Gazette*, May 14, 1994.

⁵⁵ “The Best News Out of Rwanda,” editorial, *Washington Post*, July 15, 1994 final ed., A20.

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Doyle, a British journalist, recalls a conversation that he had with a BBC presenter:

There are two wars going on here. There's a shooting war and a genocide war. The two are connected, but also distinct. In the shooting war, there are two conventional armies at each other, and in the genocide war, one of those armies – the governments side with help from civilians – is involved in mass killings.⁵⁶

Rwanda had been involved in a civil war from 1990-1993. The actions and goals of the Hutu extremists in 1994, however – to exterminate all Tutsis – made the million deaths in 1994 genocide and not merely the continuation of a civil war. Mahmood Mamdani, professor of anthropology and international affairs at Columbia University, wrote:

But whereas these Hutu were murdered as individuals— butchered for their beliefs or their actions—the Tutsi were murdered because they were Tutsi. This is why the killings of more than half a million Rwandan Tutsi between March and July of 1994 must be called genocide.⁵⁷

"War" and "genocide" are not simply two variations of the same behavior and the media's characterization of the 1994 events in Rwanda as "civil war" necessarily misled and misinformed Western audiences. In the Western mind, war is an activity involving two or more opposing sets of organized combatants or warriors who might contest land, property, or political supremacy. War involves accepted rules of engagement, the taking and humane treatment of prisoners who are returned at the conclusion of hostilities, and perhaps most importantly, the idea that civilians

⁵⁶ Mark Doyle, "Reporting the Genocide" in *The Media and the Rwanda Genocide* (London: Pluto Press, 2007), 145.

⁵⁷ Mahmood Mamdani "A Brief History of Genocide" *Transition* 10, no.3 (2001): 26.

are off limits to the warriors. The loser in a war surrenders and is not exterminated.

Genocide, on the other hand, is directed at the civilians as it aims to exterminate rather than to imprison, to annihilate rather than to capture. It is not land or political powers that those engaged in genocide seek; rather, it is the total elimination of the existence of the persons who are the objects of the genocide. Western audiences were deceived by a "war" characterization that distorted, and in the process minimized, what was actually occurring in Rwanda.

The Genocide and its Representation of Africa

Africa is often depicted to Westerners as a place of destruction, death, and deprivation. Westerners should not be led to believe such characteristics represent the entire continent. Nonetheless, some journalists reported the genocide as if it took place in all of Africa rather than in one specific country. The *Salt Lake Tribune* published an article titled, "Map of Africa Shifts As More Wars Break Out African Map Runs Red; Wars Erupt Among Incompatibles."⁵⁸ The same newspaper also issued another article one day later headlined, "Foreigners Flee As Blood Flows in Rwanda Stench of Death Everywhere As Rebels Advance; U.S. Sends Troops to Burundi Americans Flee For Their Lives From Africa's Land of Death."⁵⁹ These headlines give the impression that the entire African continent was affected by the genocide and not just the country where it was taking place. The cartoon image below was featured in the *Christian Science Monitor* when the Rwandan Genocide first started. Garth Myers, Thomas Klak and Timothy Koehl argue that this image highlights the exaggerated misconceptions that all of Africa is experiencing the same crises.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ "Map of Africa Shifts As More Wars Break Out African Map Runs Red; Wars Erupt Among Incompatibles," *Salt Lake Tribune*, April 9, 1994.

⁵⁹ "Foreigners Flee As Blood Flows In Rwanda Stench Of Death Everywhere As Rebels Advance; U.S. Sends Troops To Burundi Americans Flee For Their Lives From Africa's Land of Death," *Salt Lake Tribune*, April 10, 1994.

⁶⁰ Garth Myers, Thomas Klak and Timothy Koehl, "The Inscription of Difference: News Coverage of the Conflicts in Rwanda and Bosnia," *Political Geography*, 15, no. 1 (1996): 37.

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A mother and her child are seen emerging from the continent without any specific geographic context as to where the genocide was actually occurring. These types of depictions send a clear message about the way Western media views Africa, especially in a time of crisis.



Figure 2: Image reprinted from Christian Science Monitor⁶¹

Conclusion

The Rwandan Genocide represents both an international and media failure. As acts of genocide were perpetrated, Western powers ignored what was happening and the Western media continued to report the situation inaccurately and without any context. The role of Belgian colonialism had created divisions within Rwandan society that segregated persons who were not members of separate tribes, but people who had lived and worked together for centuries before the Europeans arrived.

The media, however, overlooked and over-simplified the origins of the genocide, and in so doing, misled Western audiences. California State University Fullerton professor Ronald Pahl states, "What is neglected or ignored in the reporting on

⁶¹ Myers, Klak and Koehl, 37.

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Africa are the issues that have caused these problems for the African nations.”⁶² As long as Western media continue to portray the continent in this manner, the rest of the world will never be able to understand accurately the underlying reality of Africa and its issues.

⁶² Ronald H. Pahl, “The Image of Africa in Our Classrooms” *Social Studies*, 86, no. 6 (1995:Nov./Dec.)

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Project Operation Whitecoat: Military Experimentation, Seventh-Day Adventism and Conscientious Cooperation

BY ALICIA GUTIERREZ

ABSTRACT: From 1954-1973, the U.S. Army established an unlikely alliance with the Seventh-Day Adventist (SDA) Church and their unequivocal support for a series of biomedical experiments called Project Operation Whitecoat (POW). In a letter dated October 19, 1954, Dr. T. R. Flaiz, Secretary of the Medical Department of the General Conference of SDAs wrote to then-Surgeon General Major George E. Armstrong, “the medical research project which you have under way... offers an excellent opportunity for these young men to render a service which will be of value not only to military medicine but to public health generally.”¹ While the notion of church, military and government cooperation, especially in regards to human experimentation may seem incongruous, unorthodox and paradoxical, the nature of the relationship that the church was able to maintain with the military hierarchy allowed for a series of biological experiments that can be considered a model of ethical human experimentation.

According to testimony by the United States General Accounting Office to the Legislation and National Security Subcommittee, Committee on Government Operations in the House of Representatives, a shroud of secrecy surrounds government sponsored experiments conducted on humans between 1940 and 1974.² Since the Nuremberg trials, which condemned the acts of Nazi doctors, US agencies adopted the Nuremberg Code. The Nuremberg Code requires that researchers obtain informed consent

¹ T. R. Flaiz, M.D., “Letter to Major General George E. Armstrong,” October 19, 1954.

² *Human Experimentation: An Overview on Cold War Era Programs* (Washington, D.C.: United States General Accounting Office, September 28, 1994), 3.

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before conducting any research involving human subjects. Researchers are also required to allow their human subjects the freedom to discontinue participation in any study in which they are involved as human subjects. Despite these codes designed to protect the rights of human subjects in research, in terms of government and/or military medical experimentation after World War II, no overarching or overseeing agency existed to ensure that these experiments were being executed in accordance with federal laws or policies, such as the Nuremberg Codes.³ Between 1954 and 1973, a series of ethical experimentation was conducted in the United States that stood in sharp contrast to regulations that might have better protected the humans involved in the research.

Project Operation Whitecoat (POW), as it was called, was a code name for an alliance between the US Army and the Seventh-Day Adventist (SDA) Church to provide an alternative means by which Seventh-Day Adventists could serve their country militarily. This alternative means of service meant that Seventh-Day Adventists would become the subjects of military medical research. In a letter dated October 19, 1954, Dr. T. R. Flaiz, Secretary of the Medical Department of the General Conference of SDAs wrote to then-Surgeon General Major George E. Armstrong, “the medical research project which you have under way... offers an excellent opportunity for these young men to render a service which will be of value not only to military medicine but to public health generally.”⁴ Attached to this letter was a preliminary statement by the General Conference regarding the use of volunteers for medical research. It stated, “it is the attitude of Seventh-Day Adventists that any service rendered voluntarily by whomsoever in the useful necessary research into the cause and treatment of disabling disease is a legitimate and laudable contribution to the success of our nation and to the health and comfort of our fellow man.”⁵ POW gave Seventh-Day Adventists a way to serve the country in a meaningful way that did not involve fighting in a war directly.

³ United States General Accounting Office, *Human Experimentation*, 1.

⁴ Flaiz, 10.

⁵ *Statement of Attitude Regarding Volunteering For Medical Research* (The General Conference of Seventh-Day Adventists, October 19, 1954).

Surprisingly little, if any, research has been done on POW. Because of the direct involvement of the SDA church and the strict supervision of the Army surgeon general, POW was able to distinguish itself away from the shroud of secrecy surrounding other military experiments and serve as a model for conscious, ethical human experimentation in an era when deception ran rampant.

The Seventh-Day Adventist Church in America: A Brief Military History

Throughout its history, the SDA church has been actively engaged and concerned with the involvement of its members in the military. In order to better grasp the role that the SDA church was able to play in POW, it is important to look at its history through the lens of military relations. The SDA church emerged from the Christian Connection and later, the Millerite Movement. The Christian Connection was “a religious body that in the mid-nineteenth century was fifth in membership within the United States.”⁶ One of the founding beliefs in this movement was literal interpretation, and sole authority, of the Bible. This included observance of the seventh-day (Saturday) as the Sabbath and the belief in the “literal soon advent of Christ.”⁷

Baptist preacher William Miller was renowned for the knowledge that he displayed when interpreting the Bible. He believed that Christ’s second coming was fast approaching which prompted believers and scores of churches to adopt the name ‘Adventist’ for themselves by the 1830s and 1840s.⁸ Some Adventists followed Miller’s belief that based on his calculations the Second Advent would occur in 1844. There were others, however, who believed that Christ’s advent could not be determined, and was yet to arrive, causing a theological schism. In 1844, a small wood structure in Washington, New Hampshire became the first ‘Adventist’ church, and on May 21, 1863, “the

⁶ “History of the Seventh Day Adventist Church,” http://www.adventist.org/world_church/facts_and_figures/history/index.html.en (accessed June 25, 2010).

⁷ “History of the Seventh Day Adventist Church.”

⁸ “History of the Seventh Day Adventist Church.”

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denomination was officially organized... [and] included some 125 churches and 3,500 members.”⁹

The early SDA church placed an important emphasis on freedom. As the church itself points out, because of this, SDAs “worked toward abolition of slavery as well as roles for women in the church... Freedom was also emphasized through an orientation toward temperance and health reform... Thus within nineteenth-century Adventism one finds strong anti-slavery actions, women licensed as ministers, and health reform principles that included abolition of alcohol and tobacco.”¹⁰ This movement towards freedom, especially anti-slavery sentiment, caused SDAs to side with the North during the Civil War. According to a statement released by renowned Adventist prophetess Ellen G. White in 1863, “God gives him [the slaveholder] no title to human souls, and he has no right to hold them as his property... God has made man a free moral agent, whether white or black. The institution of slavery does away with this and permits man to exercise over his fellow man a power, which God has never granted him.”¹¹ Yet, literal interpretation of the Bible, including the Sixth Commandment that forbids killing, put them at odds with the military. Because of the Civil War, the SDA church was forced to deal with this ideological dilemma just as the church was being formed.¹² In 1863, the Union implemented conscription and the SDA church took an official stance against military service. This clearly resonates from White’s prophecy:

God’s people... cannot engage in this perplexing war, for it is opposed to every principle of their faith. In the army they cannot obey the truth and at the same time obey the requirements of their officers... Those who love God’s commandments will conform to every good law of the land. But if the requirements of the rulers are such as conflict

⁹ “History of the Seventh Day Adventist Church.”

¹⁰ “History of the Seventh Day Adventist Church.”

¹¹ Ellen G. White, “The Rebellion,” in *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, 4th ed. (Mountain View: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948), 358.

¹² Ronald Lawson, “Onward Christian Soldiers? Seventh-Day Adventists and the Issue of Military Service,” *Review of Religious Research* 37, no. 3 (March 1996): 196-197.

with the laws of God, the only question to be settled
is:
Shall we obey God, or man?¹³

The SDA position on war made them a minority, which resulted in some disdain and contempt, yet they were not faced with legal penalization. When a member of the SDA church was drafted, the congregation utilized a provision allowing them to pay their way out of military service. Thus, drafted men were able to avoid military service by paying a \$300 commutation fee. When a poor member of the congregation was drafted, the church worked together to raise money, thereby cementing a legacy of the SDA church involving itself in individual members' military affairs. In 1864, the military created a stipulation allowing people or religious organizations to file for noncombatant status; however, the Adventist church did not immediately seek to gain recognition under it because they felt secure, confident and protected by the general accessibility of the commutations fee. When the commutation fee became subject to restricted use in July of 1864, the SDA church sought to gain recognition as noncombatants and ultimately received it from the state and federal levels of government.

Along with the end of the Civil War went any further discussion of SDA military service. Although SDAs admonished the Spanish-American War of 1898 and encouraged pacifism, the lack of conscription did not necessitate any further action. But when World War I erupted and conscription once again became an issue that members had to face directly, the SDA church developed a new viewpoint on what it meant to be a noncombatant.

When the draft was implemented for World War I, the SDA church took a major step in their stance on military service. Avoiding the myth that church doctrine was *fait accompli*, the SDA church changed their definition of noncombatant service. According to sociologist Ronald Lawson, "instead of being pacifists who refused to be involved in war, Adventists would now respond to the draft but refrain from bearing arms. As unarmed soldiers, they would not kill but do good."¹⁴ This conversion did

¹³ White, 361-362.

¹⁴ Lawson, "Onward Christian Soldiers?," 198.

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not come without debate. A week after the U.S. declared war, Adventist leaders met and petitioned that Adventists “be required to serve our country only in such capacity as will not violate our conscientious obedience to the law of God.”¹⁵ Dr. Lawson believes that this change was an attempt by the church to move away from ‘sect’ towards ‘denomination.’ According to Lawson, who utilizes Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge’s church-sect theory:

A highly sectarian group has high tension with society, a mainline denomination low tension, with a continuum between the two representing varying degrees of tension. As a group moves from sect towards denomination, this is indicated by relaxation in tension... When a religious group concludes that military service contravenes its principles and rejects the call to arms, that decision marks it as different. Depending on the political context, it may elicit antagonistic responses—scorn and harassment from the public and punishment by the state. This indicates that the group’s tension with society is high—that it is towards the sect end of the church-sect scale. Since many sects, over time, reduce their tension with society and move towards the church end of the scale, a sect holding a deviant position on conscription is likely to modify its stand in order to reduce tension.¹⁶

In other words, religious denomination and sect sit at opposite ends of a sliding scale. ‘Sect’ or ‘denomination’ is determined by a group’s tension with society. If a group’s religious doctrines or practices place them in a position where they are at odds with mainline society, they are considered a sect. Consequently, the more a religious group’s doctrines and practices fit within mainline society, the more they are considered a denomination. If a group

¹⁵ Douglas Morgan, “Adventist Review: Between Pacifism and Patriotism,” <http://www.adventistreview.org/2003-1535/story5.html> (accessed June 25, 2010).

¹⁶ Lawson, “Onward Christian Soldiers?,” 193-194.

does not want to retain the stigma associated with being considered a ‘sect,’ then the best way to do this would be to reduce the “tension” with society by adjusting their beliefs and practices to fit mainline society.

The shift from non-militarized pacifists, who paid commutation fees to avoid the draft, to militarized noncombatants, who allowed themselves to be drafted, yet, classified differently not to bear arms, did not seem to challenge SDA and biblical doctrine. SDAs did not see a problem with aiding the sick. They believed that whatever a wounded soldier decided to do after being rehabilitated was not their responsibility. They were proud, patriotic and willing to offer any assistance to their country so long as it was harmonious with their religious conviction. Further, this would create a legacy that combined patriotism with pacifism in a way that was religiously based.¹⁷

Based on biblical principles, SDAs long believed that it was important to give to God what is God’s and give to Caesar what is Caesar’s.¹⁸ In other words, while SDAs believed that their primary duty was to serve God, this adherence to God’s law and the bible should not get in the way of their duties and responsibilities here on earth (granted they do not conflict with biblical principles). SDAs believed that it was imperative to follow civil authority because it maintained order. Further, by being good citizens and not stirring up agitation or confrontation, SDAs would not be harassed for avoiding their duty to the country in a time of war, and might even be regarded highly for doing their service.¹⁹ Good citizenship would allow the SDA to remain in good favor with the government and allow the individual to continue to enjoy the comfort and protection the government provides him (or her).

In order to prepare SDA men for noncombatant service, the North American Division of the SDA church established training schools at its colleges and academies in conjunction with the Red Cross. This allowed young men who were predisposed to the draft

¹⁷ Morgan, “Adventist Review: Between Pacifism and Patriotism.”

¹⁸ Based upon Matthew 22:21, in which several disciples asked Jesus if it was right to pay taxes to Caesar to which he replied that Caesar should be given what is his.

¹⁹ Francis McLellan Wilcox, *Seventh-Day Adventists in Time of War* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1936), 28.

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to acquire basic medical training so that they would be attractive candidates for noncombatant medical units within the military. This also worked well with the church because providing medical aid would not conflict with allowable activity for the Sabbath.²⁰

With the implementation of the draft, the SDA church took steps to resolve potential conflicts between the service that their noncombatant members would be asked to perform and other core religious beliefs. The SDA church created the National Service Organization (NSO), an organization that deals with conflicts that arise in the armed forces between noncombatancy and Sabbath observance.²¹ The creation of the NSO made it outwardly clear that the SDA church would be readily available and vigilant in the handling of its members within the armed forces.

In the wake of rising tensions in Europe prior to the start of the second World War, the General Conference of SDAs released a pamphlet in 1934 that, “urged youth to prepare for noncombatant service by graduating in medicine, nursing, dietetics, or some other medically related field, or to at least get experience as cooks, nurses’ aides, etc.”²² The SDA church also implemented another program, similar to their Red Cross training in WWI, but it was revised and refined into a collaborative effort with the military and army leaders who were used to supervise the program.²³ Once the war began, the program expanded among the SDA educational and religious system. However, some SDAs disfavored the involvement and relations between the government and SDA church and accused it of being a “part of the national war machine.”²⁴ Referred to as ‘reformers,’ the SDA Reform Movement began to diverge from mainline SDAs after WWI. The movement began in Europe and expanded to the United States. SDA Reformers believed that when the General Conference adjusted their position of noncombatancy in the beginning of the First World War, “the leadership... overthrew the commandments of God... Hence, they have the right to exist as a separate

²⁰ Lawson, “Onward Christian Soldiers?,” 198.

²¹ Lawson, “Onward Christian Soldiers?,” 198

²² Ronald Lawson, “Church and State at Home and Abroad: The Evolution of Seventh-Day Adventist Relations with Governments,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 64, no. 2 (Summer 1996): 290.

²³ Lawson, “Church and State,” 290

²⁴ Lawson, “Church and State,” 291.

movement... Reform Adventists believe that no true believer could ever join the military, even in medical work.”²⁵ For the most part, however, SDA reformers were the minority, and mainline SDAs supported noncombatant roles in military service.

With the passage of the Selective Service Act in September 1940, the SDA once again had to clarify its stand on SDA military service versus other classifications such as conscientious objectors or noncombatant military service:

Those refusing to bear arms were classified as ‘conscientious objectors’... During World War II, American Adventists enthusiastically embraced the national consensus about the rightness of defending freedom against aggression of ultra-nationalist dictatorships. Noncombatant military service... offered a way to prove their patriotism. Moreover, their distinguished service demonstrated that noncombatancy was not cowardice. Desmond T. Doss, with his bravery in winning the Congressional Medal of Honor in 1945—the first ever awarded to a noncombatant—provided compelling evidence for that point.²⁶

However, there was still lingering uncertainty as to whether or not SDAs should bear arms. In *Atlantic Union Gleaner*, an SDA newsletter for the Atlantic region, dated December 24, 1941, two weeks after the attack at Pearl Harbor, an article entitled “Should Our Men Drill with Rifles?” relayed this fear. This article stated that “considerable... agitation has been stirred up among our people regarding the question as to whether our young men in army camps should consent to drill with rifles when pressure from army officers is brought upon them...”²⁷ In order to alleviate some of the tension felt by men in the military, or planning to enter the

²⁵ Gerhard Pfandl, “Information on the Seventh-day Adventist Reform Movement,” *Biblical Research Institute*, July 2003.

<http://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org> (accessed June 25, 2010).

²⁶ Morgan, *Adventist Review*: “Between Pacifism and Patriotism.”

²⁷ Carlyle B. Haynes, “Should Our Men Drill With Rifles?,” *Atlantic Union Gleaner*, December 24, 1941.

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military, *Atlantic Union Gleaner* provided, in text, the Definition of Noncombatant Training and Service as signed in Executive Order on December 6, 1940. It also stated that the SDA headquarters was “taking steps... to relieve this pressure at these... camps by bringing to the attention of their post commanders the official documents which have a bearing upon this particular matter.”²⁸ The article also listed the various different task groups and assignments that were suitable for 1-A-O²⁹ level COs.

Because of their dedication to serving both God and country, many SDAs in military service refused the label of ‘conscientious objectors,’ and preferred, instead, the label of conscientious cooperators. With this more cooperative position, SDAs were more welcomed and received by the military hierarchy than other religious groups.³⁰ According to Lawson, “some 12,000 American Adventists served during World War II as noncombatants in medical branches of the services, where they could observe the Sabbath conscientiously, with official government recognition.”³¹

When the Korean and Vietnam Wars commenced, the SDA church revived their Medical Cadet Training Program as they previously had operating during WWII. In *Atlantic Union Gleaner*, an article on July 17, 1951 explains training at Camp Desmond T. Doss. At the close of their training, one man stated “I do not fear to enter the army service...I want to be faithful in my service to my God and my country.”³² In addition to the revamped training, the Korean War also saw the first appointments of SDAs into positions of military chaplaincy. This was clearly another step with SDA/military relations. This is where the POW story begins.

²⁸ Haynes, 3.

²⁹ A status of 1-A-O signifies that the individual will participate in military activity and will cooperate with military sanctions, but will only assume a noncombatant role.

³⁰ Lawson, "Church and State" 291.

³¹ Lawson, "Church and State" 291.

³² A.M. Ragsdale, “Camp Desmond T. Doss,” *Atlantic Union Gleaner*, July 17, 1951.

Human Medical Experimentation: An Overview

Human experimentation has been in existence since the early development of science, and it is beyond the scope of the paper to deal with its extensive history. Nonetheless, it is useful to have a brief understanding of the history of medical experimentation in order to understand why POW was so different. The Ancient Greeks and Romans engaged in occasional vivisection for exploratory knowledge in medicine. Many experiments in early civilizations were done on condemned criminals because their suffering and death was seen as restitution for their crimes and as a token for the greater good of society. In the Middle Ages, animals, cadavers, and the occasional living human were used to learn about the human body.³³

During the Renaissance, an example of experimentation on humans can be found in Fallopius, a physician who acquired permission to perform experiments on criminals from the duke of Tuscany. Throughout the Scientific Revolution, Paracelsus, Andreas Vesalius and William Harvey began applying data gleaned from the dissections of animals onto the study of humans. This resulted in applications of the scientific method, and more dangerous experiments being performed on humans.³⁴

During the 19th and 20th centuries, human experimentation increased along with newfound medical theories. Most of the time:

Research was done with treatments or cures in mind; in others, treatments were denied or studies ignored either because the disease in question was limited to black populations or poor immigrant groups, or so that researchers could follow the progression of an untreated disease from beginning to fatal end. The purpose in both instances was simply to add to the body of knowledge, regardless

³³ Andrew Goliszek, *In the Name of Science: A History of Secret Programs, Medical Research, and Human Experimentation* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2003), xii.

³⁴ Adil E. Shamoo and David B. Resnik, *Responsible Conduct of Research* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 182.

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of the consequences, or to answer questions addressed by basic research.³⁵

Because of this goal-oriented research, many basic human rights were violated. For example, Adil Shamoo and David Resnik relate how:

In 1895, Henry Heiman, a New York pediatrician, infected two mentally retarded boys, 4 and 16 years old, with gonorrhea. In 1897, the Italian researcher Giuseppe Sanerilii injected yellow fever bacteria into five subjects without their consent in order to test its virulence... [and] the discoverer of the bacillus strain that causes leprosy, Amauer Hansen, carried out an appalling experiment on an unwitting 33-year-old woman when he twice pricked her eye with a needle contaminated by nodules of a leprosy patient.³⁶

Germ theory made experiments of the latter kind more common. In 1892, Albert Neisser, a professor of dermatology at the University of Breslau, wanted to study the possibility of vaccinating healthy children from the syphilis virus. To do so, he took samples from syphilitics and inoculated three teenage prostitutes and four healthy children without acquiring consent from them, their parents or guardians.³⁷

The notion of consent in early medical experimentation was novel and/or occasional at best. Because of social constructions, racial theories and social Darwinism, certain people were not seen as being as valuable as others, thereby resulting in scientists performing some experiments without informed consent. This meant that the people most often at risk were those belonging to “vulnerable populations: children, mentally ill people, poor people,

³⁵ Goliszek, xiii.

³⁶ Shamoo and Resnik, 183, 185.

³⁷ William H. Schneider, “History of IRB,” *Indiana University-Purdue University, Indianapolis*, <http://www.iupui.edu/~histwhs/G504.dir/irbhist.html> (accessed June 15, 2010).

prisoners, minorities, and hopelessly ill people.”³⁸ Vulnerable populations are people whose capacity to provide consent is inhibited or questionable. Also considered vulnerable populations are: embryos, fetuses, and people who are coerced or pressured into participating. Early to early-modern scientists and physicians were in a situation where human ethical concerns were either nonexistent, or juxtaposed to their desire and commitment to critical advances in medicine, science and anatomy.

In Cuba between 1900 and 1901, Major Walter Reed and his acting assistant surgeons wrestled with yellow fever. When Jesse Lazear received orders from the Army Medical Corps, he acquainted himself with Walter Reed and the two joined forces to create a research team to study yellow fever where it originated.³⁹ Their goal was to study the cause of yellow fever. Previous research had led them to assume it was either mosquitoes or fomites. The research team in Havana’s “aim was confirmation of the mosquito theory and invalidation of the long-held belief in fomites.”⁴⁰ While they were able to prove their theories, another important aspect that emerged from this experiment was the notion of informed consent. Written in both English and Spanish, and done “with the advice of the Commission and others, he [Reed] drafted what is now one of the oldest series of extant informed consent documents.”⁴¹ The informed consent forms required the men to be over the age of 25, and allowed them the opportunity to exercise their free will. They signed that they were volunteering to participate in the experiment “and as a reward for participation would receive \$100 ‘in American gold,’ with an additional hundred-dollar supplement for contracting yellow fever. These payments could be assigned to a survivor, and the volunteer agreed to forfeit any remuneration in cases of desertion.”⁴²

While Reed and his team made efforts in the early 20th century towards an ethical model for human experimentation,

³⁸ Shamoo and Resnik, 184.

³⁹ “The United States Army Yellow Fever Commission (1900-1901),” *University of Virginia Health Sciences Library Historical Collections*, <http://yellowfever.lib.virginia.edu/reed/commission.html> (accessed June 15, 2010).

⁴⁰ “The United States Army Yellow Fever Commission.”

⁴¹ “The United States Army Yellow Fever Commission.”

⁴² “The United States Army Yellow Fever Commission.”

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some of the clearest and most recent examples of unethical human research can be seen in Nazi and Japanese experimentation during WWII. In the concentration camps, the prisoners were at the mercy of their captors. Nazi medical doctors within the concentration camps had an unfathomable degree of freedom in performing experiments. Humans were treated like guinea pigs and subjected to the experiments of their physicians' choice which usually fell into at least one of three categories: experiments for military research purposes, experiments to prove racial superiority, or experiments based on the interest of a particular scientist or researcher. Among these (but not limited to these) were typhus experiments, malaria experiments, high altitude experiments, hypothermia experiments, seawater experiments (to determine possibilities for making seawater potable), polygal (blood coagulation) experiments, mustard gas experiments, and sterilization experiments.

In China during WWII, the Japanese implemented their very own system of medical and biomedical experimentation on subjugated people and prisoners-of-war. Unit 731 was "the world's largest and most comprehensive biological warfare programme [*sic*]." ⁴³ It was responsible for dropping "plague-infected fleas... over Chinese cities, causing epidemics, [and pouring] cholera and typhoid cultures... into wells. Prisoners were dissected alive without anesthetics. Others were subjected to pressure changes that made their bodies literally explode." ⁴⁴ While there is evidence of a American and Japanese cover-up, it is estimated that "more than 10,000 Chinese, Korean and Russian POWs were slaughtered in these experimental facilities." ⁴⁵ Even as some Nazi doctors were condemned at the Nuremberg trials, all the Japanese doctors who had been posted to Unit 731 "returned as pillars of the postwar medical establishment, as deans of medical schools and heads of pharmaceutical companies... [When asked about Unit 731 later,

⁴³ "Unit 731: Japan's biological force," *BBC*, February 1, 2002, Correspondent, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/correspondent/1796044.stm> (accessed June 15, 2010).

⁴⁴ "The crimes of Unit 731," *New York Times*, March 18, 1995, Late New York edition, sec. 1.

⁴⁵ "Unit 731" *BBC* February 1, 2002.

they] complained of wasting the best years of their lives on medical research that could not be continued after the war.”⁴⁶

The lasting legacy of WWII and human medical experimentation was the Nuremberg code. During the Nuremberg Trials, one trial was devoted entirely to medicine. Sometimes called the Doctors’ Trial, *U.S.A. v. Karl Brandt et al* transpired between 1946 and 1947. During the trial, “twenty-three doctors and administrators [were] accused of organizing and participating in war crimes and crimes against humanity in the form of medical experiments and medical procedures inflicted on prisoners and civilians.”⁴⁷ The doctors were “indicted on four counts: 1. conspiracy to commit war crimes and crimes against humanity; 2. war crimes (i.e., crimes against persons protected by the laws of war, such as prisoners of war); 3. crimes against humanity (including persons not protected by the laws of war); and 4. membership in a criminal organization (the SS).”⁴⁸ The exact crimes they were charged with included “twelve series of medical experiments concerning the effects of and treatments for high altitude conditions, freezing, malaria, poison gas, sulfanilamide, bone, muscle, and nerve regeneration, bone transplantation, saltwater consumption, epidemic jaundice, sterilization, typhus, poisons, and incendiary bombs.”⁴⁹ The experiments were performed on concentration camp inmates and did not involve any kind of informed consent. While in some cases, patients found ways to be medical test subjects for the ‘perks’ it invoked (i.e. less crowded living conditions, more food, not having to work), they were subject to the will of the camp doctor and could be sent off for experimentation as easily as they could be sent off for dissection or the gas chambers.

Karl Brandt was the primary defendant because of his position as the “senior medical official of the German government

⁴⁶ Steven Butler, “A half-century of denial,” *U.S. News & World Report*, July 31, 1995.

⁴⁷ “Medical Case Overview: Introduction to NMT Case 1, *U.S. v. Karl Brandt et al.*,” *Harvard Law School Library: Nuremberg Trials Project, A Digital Document Collection*, http://nuremberg.law.harvard.edu/php/docs_swi.php?DI=1&text=medical (accessed June 15, 2010).

⁴⁸ “Medical Case Overview.”

⁴⁹ “Medical Case Overview.”

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during World War II; other defendants included senior doctors and administrators in the armed forces and SS.”⁵⁰ The results of the trials were staggering. Brandt and six others were sentenced to death and executed, nine others were given lengthy prison terms, while the rest were acquitted. Besides the executions and prison terms, the Nuremberg code was established for appropriate codes of conduct for ethical research using human beings.

Following WWII, human medical experimentation was forced to revise itself according to the horrors that had been seen via Nazi and Japanese medical experimentation. However, research purposes shifted from germ theory to creating new biochemical weaponry. Much of this shift in the United States can be attributed to the newfound information acquired from giving impunity to certain perpetrators of WWII, particularly Unit 731, in exchange for research and data.

Despite the Nuremberg code, ethical abuses persisted for quite some time. One of the reasons for this may be that “many researchers here [in the U.S.] thought the Nuremberg Code applied only to ‘barbarians’ and not to ‘civilized physician investigators’... so human-subject research was not as strongly influenced by the principles of the Nuremberg Code as it ought to have been.”⁵¹ A striking example of this is the Tuskegee syphilis experiment. Though it began in the 1930s, it continued well into the 1970s. This study, which occurred in public health facilities in Tuskegee, Alabama, was designed to study effects of later-stage syphilis on African-American men.⁵² Funded by the U.S. Department of health, six hundred men participated in this study. Those who participated were not informed that they had syphilis or that they were partaking in a medical experiment. Infected participants were merely told “that they had ‘bad blood’ and could receive medical treatment for their condition, which consisted of nothing more than medical examinations. Subjects also received free hot lunches and free burials.”⁵³ Though a dependable treatment for syphilis was

⁵⁰ “Medical Case Overview.”

⁵¹ J. Blustein, “The History and Moral Foundations of Human-Subject Research,” *American Journal of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation* 86, no. 2 (February 2007): 82.

⁵² Shamoo and Resnik, 187.

⁵³ “Medical Case Overview.”

available in the 1940s, it was not administered to the test subjects and the experiment continued despite the ethical concerns that this raises.

In the 1950s, thalidomide, an approved drug in Europe, was given to pregnant women because physicians believed it to help with nausea and sleep deprivation. Unfortunately, it was soon learned that exposure to thalidomide during the first trimester of pregnancy could cause severe deformities in the fetus. Most the women did not know that thalidomide was still an experimental drug and did not give informed consent. Thalidomide caused many of the babies to have shortened and/or missing limbs. It is estimated that “some 12,000 babies were born with severe deformities due to thalidomide.”⁵⁴

From 1956-1980, “a team of infectious disease experts from New York University working under a distinguished researcher, Dr. Saul Krugman, had been doing hepatitis research at the Willowbrook School on Staten Island, New York.”⁵⁵ Willowbrook was a state-run facility for mentally handicapped adolescents and children. In “trying to find a way to protect people from hepatitis, Krugman and his colleagues deliberately infected some of the children with the virus.”⁵⁶ Though hepatitis isn’t generally life threatening, it can cause permanent damage to the liver. The conditions at Willowbrook made headlines in the 1960s; “viral hepatitis was endemic... most children who entered Willowbrook became infected within 6-12 months of admission.”⁵⁷ Though Krugman and his team did acquire informed consent from the parents of the children, critics of the experiment felt that the parents were coerced into acceptance because they could not care for their special-needs children on their own and were not fully aware of the stipulations of the study.

In 1964, The Nuremberg code would be revisited in order to create a new model for human medical experimentation. The “World Medical Association met in Helsinki, Finland to... add... 2 novel elements [to the basis of the Nuremberg code]: the interests

⁵⁴ Schneider, “History of IRB.”

⁵⁵ Jonathan D. Moreno, *Undue Risk: Secret State Experiments on Humans* (New York: W. H. Freeman and Company, 2000), 249.

⁵⁶ Moreno, 250.

⁵⁷ Shamoo and Resnik, 187.

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of the subject should always be placed above the interest of society; [and] every subject should get the best known treatment.”⁵⁸ The Declaration of Helsinki, however, did not put an immediate end to the unethical human experiments that were still transpiring, or to future unethical medical experiments. In fact, experiments seemed to increase at an alarming rate. For example, continuing through the 1960s was the Jewish Chronic Disease Hospital Study in which twenty-two elderly, severely ill, and mostly demented patients with weak immune systems were injected with live cancer cells in order to see the effects and spread of cancer on those with compromised immune systems.⁵⁹ Between 1963 and 1973, a million-dollar Atomic Energy Commission study used prison inmates from Oregon and Washington and had their testicles irradiated.⁶⁰ The government used “approximately 6,700 human subjects... in experiments involving psychoactive chemicals [like LSD]... Other agents were also used, including morphine, Demerol, Seconal, mescaline, atropine, and psilocybin.”⁶¹ Pregnant women and mentally handicapped children were fed radioactive iron, and cereal, respectively; all without informed consent or an awareness of their participation in the studies.

Though many tests were under the individual supervision of the directing scientists or physicians, the Department of Defense (DOD) “and other national security agencies conducted or sponsored extensive radiological, chemical, and biological research programs.”⁶² Since these were largely for military intelligence, the scientific and military communities cooperated together for more than thirty years to attempt to stay ahead of the United States military rivals.⁶³ Because of their secretive nature, the exact number of experiments and test participants remained hidden from public knowledge.⁶⁴ The secret nature of the programs and

⁵⁸ TW Rice, “The Historical, Ethical, and Legal Background of Human-Subjects Research,” *Respiratory Care* 53, no. 10 (October 2008): 1325.

⁵⁹ Rice, 1327.

⁶⁰ Jonathan D. Moreno, “Lessons Learned: A Half-Century of Experimenting on Humans,” *The Humanist* 59, no. 5 (1999): 15.

⁶¹ Moreno, 9.

⁶² *Human Experimentation: An Overview on Cold War Era Programs*, 1.

⁶³ Goliszek, xiii.

⁶⁴ *Human Experimentation: An Overview on Cold War Era Programs*, 1.

experiments has also made it difficult for test subjects to acquire deserved medical care later in life. While the government does offer compensation for its employees (military and civilian) who have been injured on the job, the lack of information, risks, and centralized information has caused difficulty for those who had experiments performed on them from 1940-1974 and are attempting to claim poor health as a result.⁶⁵ The scope of tests conducted under military or federal direction served to “support weapon development programs, identify methods to protect the health of military personnel against a variety of diseases and combat conditions, and analyze U.S. defense vulnerabilities.”⁶⁶

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Project Operation Whitecoat was a project to identify and protect civilians and the military from biological and chemical agents. Since the use of these agents in earlier wars, the desire to investigate these weapons and their effects became a military priority.⁶⁷ Project Operation Whitecoat originated from a smaller test called CD-22. CD-22 was a coordinated effort between the “Chemical and Medical elements of the Army and involved the supervision of the Secretary of the Army, Army Chief of Staff, and the Secretary of Defense.”⁶⁸ In October of 1954, Lt. Colonel W.D. Tigertt of the U.S. Army contacted Theodore R. Flaiz, M.D., Secretary of the Medical Department of the General Conference of SDAs. In a memorandum from Tigertt to Major General George E. Armstrong, MC, the Surgeon General of the Department of the Army, Tigertt explains the letter he wrote to Flaiz. In the memo, he states he contacted Dr. Theodore R. Flaiz, Secretary of the Medical Department for the General Conference of Seventh-Day Adventists as he wrote:

⁶⁵ *Human Experimentation: An Overview on Cold War Era Programs*, 2.

⁶⁶ *Human Experimentation: An Overview on Cold War Era Programs*, 1.

⁶⁷ U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases, “Project Whitecoat: A History,” February 14, 1974, section 1.

⁶⁸ U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases, section 1.

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To ascertain the views of his church organization as they relate to the use of volunteers in medical research...Dr. Flaiz proposed that it should be considered by a small group of the Conference Officers and agreed to bring such a group together during the week of 18 October. Dr. Flaiz appeared to be extremely interested and to consider that it was a real opportunity for members of the Seventh-Day Adventist group to assist in the national defense. It is possible that the Church will actively support the project and assist in obtaining the necessary volunteers.⁶⁹

Major General Armstrong, too, followed up with a letter to Dr. Flaiz that expressed his hope that the General Conference of SDAs would find the program acceptable and suitable for SDA participation. Participation, Major General Armstrong stated, would allow SDAs to “make yet another significant contribution to our nation’s health and to our national security.”⁷⁰

On October 19, 1954, Dr. Flaiz replied to Major General Armstrong. In the letter, he stated that the General Conference “appreciated very much Colonel Tigertt’s clear and patient delineation of the plan for the medical research project... If any one should recognise [*sic*] a debt of loyalty and service for the many courtesies and considerations received from the Department of Defense... Adventists, are in a position to feel a debt of gratitude for these kind considerations.”⁷¹ He continued that the General Conference felt that “the type of voluntary service which is being offered to our boys in this research problem offers an excellent opportunity for these young men to render a service which will be of value not only to military medicine but to public health generally... It should be regarded as a privilege to be identified with this significant advanced step in clinical

⁶⁹ W.D. Tigertt, “Memorandum For Major General George E. Armstrong, MC,” October 14, 1954.

⁷⁰ Major General George E. Armstrong, “Draft of Letter from Major General Armstrong to T.R. Flaiz,” n.d.

⁷¹ T. R. Flaiz, M.D., “Letter to Major General George E. Armstrong.”

research.”⁷² The letter ends stating that the General Conference would work on releasing a statement regarding the subject within a few days. In the statement, it is expressed “it is the attitude of Seventh-Day Adventists that any service rendered voluntarily by whomsoever in the useful necessary research into the cause and the treatment of disabling disease is a legitimate and laudable contribution to the success of our nation and to the health and comfort of our fellow men.”⁷³

There are several reasons that might indicate why the military sought out SDAs. One aspect, that many like to focus on, is that SDAs were considered an ideal control group. With so many church principles focusing on health and wellness, SDAs refrained from drinking, smoking, most ate a vegetarian diet and most were in general good health. According to “Colonel Dan Crozier, then commander of USAMRIID [U.S. Army Medical Research Institute for Infectious Diseases, previously USAMU, U.S. Army Medical Unit]... ‘because of high principles and temperate living, Adventist men are more nearly uniform in physical fitness and mental outlook.’”⁷⁴

Another aspect is the commitment of the SDA church to medical advancement. Over the course of its history, the SDA church had established itself as a premiere health-serving institution. Presently, “the SDA church organization owns and operates a health care system that includes 168 hospitals, 433 clinics, and 130 nursing homes or retirement centers. SDA educational institutions include 55 nursing schools... [with] approximately 7300 nursing students currently enrolled...”⁷⁵ According to a report by the National Service Organization of the General Conference of SDAs, SDAs were recruited because the “volunteers must be men in good health who are motivated to

⁷² Major General George E. Armstrong, “Draft of Letter from Major General Armstrong to T.R. Flaiz,” n.d.

⁷³ *Statement of Attitude Regarding Volunteering For Medical Research.*

⁷⁴ “Seventh-day Adventists and Project Whitecoat,” *The Winds*, http://www.apfn.org/thewinds/1998/11/project_whitecoat.html (accessed May 23, 2010)

⁷⁵ Elizabeth Johnston Taylor and Mark F. Carr, “Nursing Ethics in the Seventh-Day Adventist Religious Tradition,” *Nursing Ethics* 16, no. 6 (November 2009): 707.

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hazard some risk for a humanitarian cause.”⁷⁶ Further, the fact that most of the SDA men recruited for POW had similar backgrounds, lifestyle, education and morals allowed for favorable research conditions on a group requiring minimal disciplinary actions.

Another possibility is the relationships that had been formed with SDAs and the military through the years of established cooperative noncombatancy and Red Cross training academies. Also, it is important to note “Adventist basic trainees at Fort Sam Houston, Texas...[were] the largest single group of 1-A-O soldiers.”⁷⁷

SDAs may have also decided to embark on this project because medicine was seen as a form of evangelism. According to Francis McLellan Wilcox, former editor for the *Review and Herald*, an SDA magazine, “this work [of evangelism] has been carried forward in four great divisions, namely, evangelistic, publishing, educational, and medical... all of these agencies should be used for the accomplishment of one end,—the salvation of souls.”⁷⁸ Regardless, with the approval from the General Conference, recruitment and testing began almost immediately. In November of 1954, Lt. Col. Tigertt recruited twelve individuals from Fort Sam Houston, San Antonio, TX. On December 30, 1954, the twelve recruits left Fort Sam Houston to Camp Detrick near Frederick, Maryland and on January 14, 1955, the secretary of the Army granted the authority to permit “research investigation utilizing volunteers in defense against biological warfare.”⁷⁹ In all, Tigertt “indicated that approximately 80% of Seventh Day Adventists who qualify and are approached by him do volunteer for this particular assignment.”⁸⁰

CD-22 was a series Q-fever tests. Q-fever is a “zoonotic disease... [and is transmitted to] humans usually... by inhalation.”⁸¹ Once an individual was designated for CD-22, and later, Project Operation Whitecoat service, they were forbidden

⁷⁶ Taylor and Carr, 707.

⁷⁷ Taylor and Carr, 3.

⁷⁸ Wilcox, 18.

⁷⁹ U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases, “Project Whitecoat: A History,” section 1.

⁸⁰ *Minutes of Operation Whitecoat Meeting* (Washington, D.C., 1959), 3.

⁸¹ “Q fever,” *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*, <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvrd/qfever/> (accessed June 25, 2010).

from receiving vaccines for typhus, yellow fever, cholera and the plague while in basic training. For CD-22, volunteers from Camp Detrick were flown to Fort Dugway, Utah and were exposed to Q-fever via wind measures. Others remained at Camp Detrick and were exposed via aerosol measures in the notorious eight ball sphere, used for containment and disbursement of airborne pathogens and directed to the inhaler.

In the experiments, the volunteers were “ordered onto wooden platforms at various levels. When the atmospheric conditions were right... medical officers conducting the tests put on their gas masks and radioed to overhead aircraft to commence dispersing the infectious agent onto the test sight.”⁸² The purpose of the experiment was to acquire “dose-response data on... Q-fever in humans.”⁸³ After being exposed to the infecting bacteria, *Coxiella burnetii*, the men returned to Fort Detrick for “monitoring and observation.”⁸⁴ Exposure to *C. burnetii* can cause fever, nausea, vomiting, chest pain, chills, sweat, weakness, and malaise. When the men returned to Fort Detrick, they “were left to develop fever for three days before antibiotic therapy was initiated.”⁸⁵ Q-fever investigations were “terminated... in 1956 after yielding the first scientific data of its kind, gathered by U.S. military investigations from experiments conducted on human volunteer subjects.”⁸⁶ Tigertt and Beneson (another doctor involved in the experiments) published the results of the Q-fever tests in *Transactions of the Association of American Physicians* in 1956.

When tests for CD-22 were terminated, a new phase of tests was to begin but with a much broader scope. Project Operation Whitecoat was designed to test:

The vulnerability of man to biological agents;
prevention and treatment of BW (biowarfare)
casualties; and identification of biological agents.

⁸² Goliszek, 52.

⁸³ U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases, “Project Whitecoat: A History,” section 1.

⁸⁴ Goliszek, 52.

⁸⁵ Goliszek, 52.

⁸⁶ U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases, “Project Whitecoat: A History,” section 1.

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Information such as the minimum infectious dosage, effectiveness of prophylactic and therapeutic measures, serologic responses to infection and the effects of various doses of inoculum, eventually provided answers to most initial questions contained within the research objectives.⁸⁷

Again, Camp Detrick would serve as the experimental test center. Camp Detrick came into existence in the early 1940s and was intended to serve as a large-scale, militarized research facility. The location was ideal because of its close proximity to Washington DC and the Edgewood Arsenal, a chemical warfare research center.⁸⁸ Camp Detrick, officially named in April 1943, was the center for early military research of “vaccines, toxoids, antibiotics, disinfectants, and antiseptics... all the while developing techniques for detecting, sampling, and identifying many pathogens and their toxic products. Simultaneously, sterilization procedures and decontamination protocols required development and improvement.”⁸⁹ The termination of CD-22 and the beginning of Project Operation Whitecoat coincided with the changing of name from Camp Detrick to Fort Detrick, making it a permanent facility.⁹⁰

Project Operation Whitecoat was no secret to the SDA community. In an October 17, 1966 issue of the *North Pacific Union Gleaner*, an article was devoted entirely to POW. POW was described as a study “aimed at developing protective measures against disease-producing organisms which might be disseminated by an enemy in the event biological warfare is ever used against this country.”⁹¹ Even youth Bible lessons discussed POW. On October 8 and 15, 1963, a two-part lesson plan was given on POW. POW, “after eight... years of continuous work... is still going... The project simply involves medical experimentation. But as a

⁸⁷ U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases, “Project Whitecoat: A History,” section 1.

⁸⁸ Robert L. Mole, D. Min and Dr. Dale M. Mole, *For God and Country: Operation Whitecoat: 1954-1973* (Brushton: TEACH Services, Inc., 1998), 11.

⁸⁹ Mole, Min and Mole, 12.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁹¹ “Project Whitecoat,” *North Pacific Union Gleaner*, October 17, 1966, 16.

result of this activity the Army Medical Service has made material advances in the development of suitable methods of prevention and treatment of infectious diseases... Thus all citizens benefit from the program, not only members of the armed forces.”⁹² It describes the experience of Tom Kopko, a young GI, and his first experiences as a POW volunteer. The article follows him from his plane ride from Fort Detrick to his testing area. It describes a wind experiment similar to the aforementioned CD-22 experiment. When the conditions for the experiment were right, the experiment commenced. After the experiment, the men were taken back to their test center and ““were told to remove our clothing as quickly as possible. A warm shower came next... we then went through an ultra-violet-light area and found ourselves in a room where our regular Army clothes were waiting for us.”⁹³ The duration of the individual test was short. When the men returned to Fort Detrick, they were placed in isolation where they were monitored throughout the day for several weeks or months, depending on the individual.

Throughout the duration of POW, the volunteers “were involved in 153 research projects to determine the safety of vaccines and antibiotics and prevention and treatment of... Q Fever, Tularemia, Sandfly Fever, Typhus Fever, Typhoid Fever, Rift Valley Fever, Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever, Yellow Fever, Plague, and Eastern, Western and Venezuelan Equine Encephalitis.”⁹⁴ Other tests and experiments sought to test the effectiveness of protective materials such as masks and suits, others endured hypothermia and sleep deprivation tests and other tests sought to develop appropriate “decontamination processes... [for use] in the space program, in hospitals, biological outbreaks (e.g., present bioterrorism) and for the protection of research workers.”⁹⁵

The SDA church’s participation in POW did not go without consequence or insult. In *University Scope*, the newspaper for Loma Linda University, an article entitled “GC panel denies aid

⁹² Don A. Roth, “Operation Whitecoat,” *The Youth's Instructor*, October 15, 1963, 15.

⁹³ Roth, 16.

⁹⁴ *The Whitecoat Project Information Sheet* (The Whitecoat Foundation, n.d.).

⁹⁵ *The Whitecoat Project Information Sheet*.

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charge to biological warfare test” explains one of the more prominent accusations against the church for its participation in POW. During the turbulent social unrest of the 1960s and 1970s, links between church and government brought heated debates and accusations, one of which charged SDAs with helping the government create biological weapons. In light of these attacks:

A committee of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, under the chairmanship of Neal C. Wilson, vice-president of the North American division, was appointed to investigate the project. On September 11, Mr. Wilson and six other members of the committee, including two physicians, visited Fort Detrick and the commanding officer of Project Whitecoat, Colonel Daniel Crozier, U.S. Army.⁹⁶

The committee visited Fort Detrick, acquired material evidence and was to issue a report of its findings to Adventist colleges and universities. Dr. Winton Beaven, one of the physicians on the committee, was responsible for reporting the findings. When:

Speaking for the committee [he said], ‘...the project has no relationship to...chemical or biological warfare, either directly or indirectly... the Army directive which established Project Whitecoat clearly reads that it is related to defensive aspects in developing... biological protective measures, diagnostic procedures, and therapeutic methods... None of the work in this project is used to improve bacteriological weapons of the United States.’⁹⁷

He stated that POW was not classified. He also stated that professionals, both within and outside of the armed forces, performed the tests that were based on sound research, and these same professionals conducted the monitoring after the

⁹⁶ “GC panel denies aid charge to biological warfare test,” *University Scope*, October 23, 1969, 1.

⁹⁷ “GC panel dies aid,” 2.

experiments. According to the article, Dr. Beaven explained, criticism was being directed towards POW because its experiments were being performed in the building adjacent to the one housing the top-secret experimentation. According to Beaven, POW was freely accessible and not top-secret.⁹⁸ According to Clark Smith, director of the NSO, “less than one percent of the Whitecoat work is classified... the only reason so much remains unpublished is that it is not complete.”⁹⁹ As experiments were completed, many were published in highly reputable journals. For example, in 1966, the American Society for Microbiology published a POW study for peer review. At the end of the article entitled “Antibiotic Prophylaxis and Therapy of Airborne Tularemia,” the scientists specifically stated “these studies were supervised by the commission on Epidemiological Survey of the Armed Forces Epidemiological Board. The cooperation of the War Service Commission of the Seventh Day Adventist Church... [is] gratefully acknowledged.”¹⁰⁰

The church was greatly involved in the operations of POW. When Tigertt went to Fort Sam Houston to recruit more SDAs to POW, Elder Clark Smith of the NSO went with him to assure the men that, while their service to this project was voluntary and up to their own personal discretion, the church approved it as a form of noncombatant service. When a man wanted to participate in POW, he was interviewed to examine psychological health and was requested to fill out a questionnaire provided by Elder Smith. An SDA chaplain was allowed to be present during briefings and interviews. The local SDA chaplain was provided with a finalized list of POW participants “...for posting on [the] church bulletin board.”¹⁰¹ Elder Smith was also allowed to answer questions should they arise, and the local SDA chaplain helped arrange housing for married recruits.

In an early U.S. Army Medical Research and Development Command meeting regarding POW, Col. Tigertt knew right away

⁹⁸ “GC panel dies aid,” 2.

⁹⁹ Seymour Hersh, “Germ Warfare: for Alma Mater, God and Country,” *Ramparts*, December 1969, 23.

¹⁰⁰ William D. Sawyer et al., “Antibiotic Prophylaxis and Therapy of Airborne Tularemia,” *Bacteriological Review: A Publication of the American Society for Microbiology* 30, no. 3 (September 1966): 547.

¹⁰¹ “Resume Whitecoat Volunteer Recruitment Procedure,” n.d., 2.

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that it was essential to maintain amicable terms between USAMRIID and the SDA church. In the minutes of that meeting it states “this relationship was essential to continue work at his laboratory...”¹⁰² Tigertt felt that failing to keep up on their part of the bargain would be a blow to the relations between the government and the cooperation with the SDA church. Further, in order to maintain these good relations, Col. Tigertt recommended that those POW men who wished to stay on assignment after their experiment be allowed to do so in order to gain medical experience. According to Tigertt, “...these personnel are good men, educated and in a number of cases will continue their education in medicine... If it were the policy that personnel who... participate in Operation Whitecoat would be denied the additional specialized training... a large number of those personnel who had ordinarily applied... would no longer apply.”¹⁰³ By maintaining a mutually beneficial relationship, USAMRIID would get the volunteers it needed to conduct its research, the SDA church would maintain its right to noncombatancy, and volunteers would be allowed experience with medical research.

The church was even involved at the local level. Frederick SDA Church, being the closest SDA church to Fort Detrick, provided these men with a church community away from home. Even though medical aid was seen as an acceptable form of ‘work’ on the Sabbath, POW volunteers got Saturdays off. Frederick SDA church members Dr. Frank Damazo and his wife took it upon themselves to take care of these fellow SDAs for the duration of their stay, and the duration of the project itself. Very quickly, the entire “...congregation provided interest, care, and support for all Whitecoat members... This church gave special help to those men and families nearby during the entire time the program was in operation.”¹⁰⁴ Frequently, potlucks and fellowships would be held at church members’ homes so that the POW volunteers and church members could have the opportunity to become acquainted on an individual basis.

¹⁰² *Minutes of Operation Whitecoat Meeting*, 1.

¹⁰³ *Minutes of Operation Whitecoat Meeting*, 2.

¹⁰⁴ Mole, Min and Mole, 126.

Guarded Secret or Misunderstanding?

Because of the openness of the experiments and the ability for the men involved to associate with other volunteers and people outside of the experiment, there was no element of secrecy in POW. With the wide variety of primary sources (both religious and secular) offering articles and experimental research findings, it is seemingly incomprehensible to conclude that POW was a secret government experiment to create biological offensive weapons.

It was in the church's best interest to maintain contact with military personnel to ensure that their support of a particular program was not given under false pretenses or inaccurate information. It was also in the best interest of military personnel to ensure that POW was performed with the utmost ethical standards. The informed consent forms for volunteers were very explicit and clear. The volunteer had written permission to "revoke... consent, and withdraw from the study without prejudice."¹⁰⁵

Another clear indication of a difference between POW and other military medical experiments is the bond and community that POW test subjects still have today. POW volunteers have engaged in reunions for approximately two and a half decades. Reunions are typically alternated between east and west coast, with most east coast reunions at Frederick SDA church. POW volunteers are not anonymous; they have names, files, informed consent forms, photographs, reunions, and mailing lists. If the military attempted a secretive biological offensive warfare program with POW, then they failed to do so. This is quite evident in the amount of correspondence and literature that was out at the time: the church leadership and the church members knew about it.

POW was created with the intent to serve as a defensive measure against biological warfare. Whether or not information acquired from POW was used as a measure of offensive biological warfare is a matter of debate, but with all advancements in science, information can be used as easily for both good and evil. Radiation can be harmful, but when used effectively can cure cancer. Surgical advancements in reproductive health can allow a couple that no longer wishes to conceive to sterilize themselves, but

¹⁰⁵ John E. Hill, Jr., M.D., "Volunteer Agreement for Prophylaxis of Sandfly Fever Experiment," 1973.

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people were forcibly sterilized in the early 20th century around the globe for being genetically inferior. POW is no different from these aforementioned examples. If the knowledge is there to help someone, then the information can just as easily be construed to harm someone. The dialectic of medical theory applies no more to POW than it does to studies of other medical conditions.

POW was disbanded in 1973. Some sources indicate this date because it was the year the draft ended. Others, however, cite Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention of 1972 and the resulting treaty calling for the end of all biological weapon production, development and stockpiling as another possible reason for the formal end of this program. However, if the latter of the two options is correct in determining why POW ended, this is disconcerting to those who believe POW to be directed for the purpose of defensive measures. For according to the treaty, all signatories must destroy or “divert to peaceful purposes” all biological agents, toxins, weapons, etc.¹⁰⁶ If POW were purely defensive or peaceful, said treaty obligations would not have applied to it. Further, no documentary evidence linking the two events has been found. However, the end of the draft may also have caused a disbanding in POW, as the end of conscription would limit the influx of 1-A-Os, thereby depleting their exclusive test group and necessitating a new, more open biological test program, making it a much more viable reason for termination.

Conclusion

Presently, the SDA church’s position on the military has shifted dramatically. While it still does not encourage its members to actively enlist in the military, it recognizes free, individual choice. Ideally, it would have its members serve in noncombatant roles, but it does not castigate those who choose combatant roles; “while the church ministers to noncombatant members in the army, as well as to pacifists and combatants, it recognizes that individuals

¹⁰⁶ “Biological Weapons Convention,” Article II, <http://www.state.gov/www/global/arms/treaties/bwc1.html> (accessed June 25, 2010).

make free choices...”¹⁰⁷ As a result, the SDA church is still actively involved in its members’ military affairs. According to an article in the SDA Biblical Research Institute website, theologian Angel Rodriguez states, “when service in the military may result in an open conflict with religious convictions... we [the church] must be willing to enter into dialogue with government officials in an effort to obtain for our members the right to practice their religious convictions while in the military.”¹⁰⁸

While some may question the church’s involvement in government and/or military affairs, one thing remains certain: were it not for the SDA church’s active involvement in Project Operation Whitecoat, it is feasible that the many men who volunteered could have become unidentifiable statistics and numbers, without names, faces or voluntary consent forms, subject to medical health uncertainties—anonymous, and only remembered or represented as figures at a congressional hearing for restitution and identification of former military medical experiment test subjects. The SDA church played an important and integral role in ensuring the ethical standards prescribed by the Nuremburg Code and the Helsinki Declaration were followed in the dealings with its members as test subjects in POW. Further research is necessary to determine the full extent of church involvement and to gain a clearer understanding of why POW was disbanded. Doing so could prove that some U.S. government and military experimentations were not buried under a dark shroud of mystery and deception.

¹⁰⁷ Ekkehardt Mueller, “Noncombatancy,” *Biblical Research Institute*, October 2003, <http://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/documents/noncombatancy.htm> (accessed May 24, 2010).

¹⁰⁸ Angel Manuel Rodriguez, “Christians and War,” *Biblical Research Institute*, April 10, 2003, <http://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/Biblequestions/Christians%20and%20War.htm>. (accessed May 25, 2010)

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A Watershed Event For a Watershed Community: The Development of Flood Control for the Santa Ana River Basin

BY ADAM SCOTT MILLER

ABSTRACT: Southern California receives the vast majority of its yearly rainfall in the relatively short time period between the months of December and March. Occasionally, this intense rainfall creates floods that have historically threatened and devastated the communities of this region. The twentieth century proved challenging for local flood control agencies. California experienced tremendous population growth, resulting in migrants settling on the existing floodplains. Unaware of the periodic, hidden menace, newcomers were ruined when rivers and their tributaries flooded. It became clear that a significant change in flood control methods was required. In 1936, Congress passed the Flood Control Act appropriating funds for flood control. The Army Corps of Engineers took authority on flood control issues and began investigating the best possible solutions to assist communities like the Santa Ana River basin with the funds Congress authorized. The Army Corps devised a plan that they believed, at the time, was sufficient to protect Orange County. However, in March of 1938 a major flood struck southern California and demonstrated the need for a larger comprehensive flood control program. Ultimately, the affect of this program was the creation of immeasurable wealth for southern California. Property values increased, as did property taxes. Land deemed unusable because of floods could now be utilized. The creation of a modern comprehensive flood control program greatly aided the development of California's economy—an economy which today ranks 8th in the world. This is the story of the implementation of modern flood control in the Santa Ana River basin and the devastating storm that demonstrated the need for such extraordinary measures.

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Southern California's environmental faults are widely known; these include prolonged drought periods, intense earthquakes, destructive Santa Ana winds, and detrimental wildfires. Enormous storms capable of producing floods seem to be the least of southern California's problems. In fact, if these disasters are ranked thematically on the basis of concern today, flooding stands an excellent chance of causing the least amount of anxiety for the residents of southern California. Yet, if this question were proposed 80 years ago, the flood nuisance would have caused the foremost alarm and panic for the residents during that time period. To prevent the annoyance of floods, the solution lay in updated flood control projects.

Flooding was a way of life for the sparse population of southern California in the 19th century. At the turn of the 20th century, however, the Golden State grew in population to such an extent that those affected by floods increasingly pled for help. Because of rapid urbanization, it was difficult to maintain the balance between nature and civilization, and the encroachment of humanity into the floodplains was increasing. Policymakers were forced to decide whether or not to appropriate funds to develop long-term flood control projects. In a semiarid region, flood control was only a concern when periodic intense rainfall occurred. Flood control was viewed advantageously by most officials but because floods only posed a temporary threat, the millions of dollars required to develop flood systems was considered impractical at that time. Additionally, not much was known about the intervals at which flooding occurred. In other words, floods happened unexpectedly and with varying strength; they could strike two or three times in a decade or twenty years apart. California's lexicon categorizes floods into periods such as: 20-year, 50-year, and 100-year floods. This means that, on average, within those specified time frames a particular sized flood would occur. The infrequent flood, like the 100-year flood, resulted in a greater flood being produced than a flood that occurred during a 20-year interval. Because southern California covers thousands of square miles and has a diverse topography, a storm's intensity could differ among the numerous regions within southern California resulting in differentiated flooding. In other words, the

Los Angeles basin could receive heavier rainfall than the San Bernardino basin, causing a difference in flooding levels.

Southern California's large, diverse regions made implementation of flood control a complex issue that would require unique solutions to each particular basin. Therefore, it would be monotonous and tedious to discuss flood control on such a grand scale, but a condensed perspective will establish significant insight into the development of modern flood control. This paper will focus on the Santa Ana River basin, which originates in the San Bernardino and San Gabriel Mountains and continues through San Bernardino, Riverside, and Orange Counties, and examine the critical role the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers played in managing and attaining flood works projects in a rapidly developing region. Ultimately, a comprehensive flood control plan was approved, providing a boost in usable land no longer subjected to floods. This increased property values, which brought a great deal of revenue back to the state in the way of property taxes.

The term flood control is synonymous with the Army Corps of Engineers. To truly grasp the birth of modern flood control a close investigative look is required of the Army Corps' documents. At what point did flood control become modern? Moreover, at what point did an aggressive approach to contain flood waters occur? Often in history, a defining moment or catalyst takes place that explains a sudden change in events. This precipitating event took place in the month of March 1938 during the Great Depression.

The 1938 flood happened at a crucial point in history, bringing with it national attention and making the front-page headlines in many states' newspapers. In response to the widespread devastation encountered by southern Californians, Congress passed an additional flood control act directly benefiting the Santa Ana basin. The 1938 flood effectively redefined flood control in southern California. After the flood it was imperative that the flooding be managed, not only to protect the citizens of southern California, but for economic reasons.

This paper will show that the Army Corps of Engineers played a vital role in the design of flood control and persuaded lawmakers that short-term appropriations for flood works projects would result in long-term savings. It will further argue that

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modern flood control was seen as an investment for the government. Flood control is a complex issue, spanning thousands of square miles and affecting different basin regions. The limited scope of this paper will be confined to analyzing flood control efforts in the Santa Ana River region, which includes the Inland Empire and Orange County.

To comprehend the subject matter, a quick lesson in the history of California's flooding problem prior to 1938 will be useful, as well as an overview of the role the Army Corps of Engineers played—and still plays—in society. From that point the paper will focus on events prior to the 1938 flood, then discuss why the 1938 flood changed perceptions and led to modernized flood control. Thereafter, the paper will delve into the construction advancements that took place after 1938, and then reveal the subsequent land-use benefits of flood control. The implementation of a comprehensive flood control system is critical to explaining the development of southern California's shift from an agricultural to industrial-based economy and the subsequent creation of incredible wealth within the region.

Geographic Background

Flooding occurs in southern California because of an uneven landscape. From the coastline, headed inland, the terrain gradually slopes upwards until reaching the transverse mountain ranges, which encompass the region and, thus, create a basin. In a mere 70-mile distance, the elevation soars from sea level to peaks of over 10,000 feet. The two most prominent mountain ranges affecting the Santa Ana basin are the San Bernardino and San Gabriel Mountain range. The San Bernardino Mountain range's maximum height, at San Geronio peak, reaches 11,503 feet (3,506 meters). West of the San Bernardino Mountains are the San Gabriel Mountains. The highest point is at San Antonio's peak, also referred to as Mt. Baldy, at 10,068 feet (3,069 meters). The picture below gives an excellent example of the Los Angeles basin. The San Gabriel Mountains reach to the far right of the picture cutting off the San Bernardino Mountain range.



Figure 1. Enhanced Satellite Photo from Jet Propulsion Laboratories (JPL) depicting steep transverse mountain ranges in comparison to the relatively flat land of southern California.

Nevertheless, the enhanced satellite image, as a visual aid, illustrates the formation of a basin in relation to steep mountain ranges. Notice the Los Angeles River right of center next to the L.A. Harbor as it makes its way to the San Gabriel Mountains and the Santa Ana River at the far right. High elevations allow the water to run off quickly and then form natural waterways. These waterways or tributaries converge to form rivers like the Santa Ana and Los Angeles River. Much like the ancient expression, “All roads led to Rome,” all the Inland Empire’s tributaries lead to the Santa Ana River, making it a formidable and potent river when heavy rain occurred.

Tributary Problems

When addressing flood control, the Civil Works project focuses on both the mainstream and lesser tributaries. For example, the Prado Dam, completed in 1941, is located at a choke point on the Santa Ana River, which restricts and minimizes water flow reaching into Orange County. The Santa Ana River acts as an artery for water. It is a combination of all the water collected from its tributaries.

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However, it is not the only factor contributing to regional floods. Flooding affects regions miles away from the Santa Ana River. Tributaries are the veins of the Santa Ana River and also unleash havoc on local residents. Case in point, the San Timoteo Creek is a tributary to the Santa Ana River. The two converge near the I-10 and I-215 freeways in the city of San Bernardino. Even within the San Timoteo Creek other creeks converge on it like Wilson and Wildwood Creek. When the region experiences heavy rainfall the San Timoteo Creek overflows its banks and/or undermines manmade levees, which leaves the residents of Loma Linda and surrounding communities in turmoil. The photograph below depicts a large wave as it approaches the Anderson Street Bridge in Loma Linda during the February 1969 floods.¹



Figure 2. Flood of February 1969. “Wave action approaching Anderson Street Bridge” in Loma Linda, CA

The example of the San Timoteo Creek illustrates how dispersed flooding can happen. Floods are not confined to just the main river flow, but can also occur in the vicinity of the tributary. Therefore, a comprehensive flood control plan needs to recognize and undertake projects for both the mainstream and tributary waterways in order to reduce the risk of floods.

¹ U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Los Angeles District, *Flood Plain Information: San Timoteo Creek, Vicinity of Loma Linda San Bernardino County California*, June 1973. Prepared for San Bernardino County Flood Control District, 35.

Southern California's Population and Flood History

Southern California's population began to change after 1900. Only 93,000 people lived in California just after the state gained admission to the union in 1850. A half-century later that number rose to 1.5 million and by 1960 almost 16 million people called California their home.² The 1920's became a pivotal point for population in southern California. The state's population grew by 2 million during that decade. Most new migrants headed for southern California because of new employment opportunities in filmmaking, shipping, and manufacturing.³ Southern California saw another wave of migrants in the 1930's and 1940's as well. The Dust Bowl perpetuated the displacement of Midwest farmers in 1930's and over a million came to find work in the fertile agricultural lands of California.⁴ The Pacific Front in World War II brought an abundance of vital defense industry jobs to help in the war effort. Out-of-work citizens throughout the country were attracted to these new opportunities. Even after the war, the defense industry beckoned newcomers to the state in search of prosperity.⁵ In 1970, the census confirmed that California's population overtook New York as the largest in the union.⁶ The state's tremendous population growth required officials to reexamine flood control. As the population soared so did new housing, businesses, and other means of infrastructure to support an urban sprawl. This unprecedented growth meant more people and property were endangered when periodic flooding occurred. Prior to the 1938 flood, the 1916 flood showed the disastrous effects of a population encroaching on the flood plains.

The January 1916 flood was the first large event in the twentieth century for the Santa Ana River basin. Two separate storm systems each produced six consecutive, intensive days of

² Larry N. Gerston and Terry Christensen, *California Politics and Government: A Practical Approach*. Ninth ed., (Belmont, CA: Clark Baxter, 2007), 6.

³ Gerston and Christensen, 6.

⁴ Gerston and Christensen, 6.

⁵ Gerston and Christensen, 7.

⁶ James D. Hart, *A Companion to California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 397.

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rain that month. In total, January 1916 had 19 days of rain.⁷ In the Santa Ana basin rainstorms of high intensity for short durations of time caused severe flooding. In 1916, according to the U.S. Weather Bureau, 16.71 inches of rain in a 24-hour period was recorded at a small hotel, named the Squirrel Inn, located near the crest of the San Bernardino Mountains. The concentrated rainfall received at the Squirrel Inn demonstrates the tremendous magnitude of some southern California storms.⁸ Such intense rainfall swiftly descends to the base of the mountain and drains into the already-enlarged Santa Ana River. Furthermore, the total amount of water runoff is concentrated to a maximum of 20 square miles of drainage area, thus creating a flood.⁹ Even natural lakes such as Lake Elsinore overflowed.¹⁰ According to the Army Corps the magnitude of a 1916 flood happened only once in every 30 years' time.¹¹ The total monetary loss due to the 1916 flood was estimated at \$7,580,000 million.¹² Four people in Orange County succumbed to the flood; in addition, five bridges were destroyed, electric and telegraph services were interrupted, and a gas line broke at the Chapman Street Bridge.¹³ In other regions, railroad tracks, roads, homes, and orange groves washed away. Ontario, Redlands, Anaheim, and other communities remained isolated; the

⁷ Colonel R.C. Hunter, Chief Engineer Los Angeles, 11/1/1946, "Report of Survey of Santa Ana River and Tributaries, California, for Flood Control," 7; Santa Ana River (CA) SR Enclosures 1-8, 11-1-46; Records on the Office of the Chief of Engineers Los Angeles District Survey Reports 1935-1979, box 161; Record Group 77; Nation Archives Pacific Region, Perris, CA (hereafter RG 77, NARA).

⁸ Major Theodore Wyman, Chief of Engineers Los Angeles District, April 15, 1937, "Flood Control Report, Santa Ana River and other streams, for the protection of the metropolitan area in Orange County, Calif.," 4; Santa Ana River, CA FC-Hydraulics April 15, 1937; box 160; RG 77, NARA

⁹ Wyman, "Flood Control Report, Santa Ana River and other streams, for the protection of the metropolitan area in Orange County, Calif.," 3.

¹⁰ "Flood Control," page 15; Santa Ana River, CA Flood Control July 1939 [1/2]; box 160; RG 77, NARA.

¹¹ "Flood Control", 20.

¹² Colonel R.C. Hunter, Chief Engineer Los Angeles, 11/1/1946, "Report of Survey of Santa Ana River and Tributaries, California, for Flood Control," 12; Santa Ana River (CA) SR Enclosures 1-8, 11-1-46; box 161; RG 77, NARA.

¹³ "Orange County Flood Control Report," 4; Santa Ana River + other streams, CA 1937 (ENCL.) [3/5]; box 505; RG 77, NARA.

flood eliminated all means of communication and transportation.¹⁴ Disneyland, referred to as, “the happiest place on earth” would simply not exist in Anaheim if flooding persistently devastated the city. The picture below is an example of how the population coped with flooding.



Figure 3. Reproduced from the Holdings of the National Archives at Riverside. “Evacuating the Mexican quarter, 4th and Artesia, Santa Ana, CA.”

The Role of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

The Army Corps of Engineers plays a vital role managing Federal mandated projects, tracing their roots back to Chief Engineer Colonel Richard Gridley. In 1775, Colonel Gridley oversaw the fortifications for the Battle of Bunker Hill during the American Revolution.¹⁵ The Corps’ function has significantly increased over time. The Corps’ primary focus was designing military fortifications, such as Bunker Hill and Fort McHenry, but gradually their responsibilities expanded in the newly developing nation.¹⁶ In the nineteenth century, the Army Corps continued to build fortifications, but also began surveying roads, canals, and the

¹⁴ Colonel R.C. Hunter, Chief Engineer Los Angeles, 11/1/1946, “Report of Survey of Santa Ana River and Tributaries, California, for Flood Control,” 7; Santa Ana River (CA) SR Enclosure 1-8 11-1-46; box 161; RG 77, NARA.

¹⁵ *The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers: A History* 2nd Edition, U.S. (Alexandria, Virginia: Army Corps of Engineers Office of History, 1998), 1.

¹⁶ *The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers: A History*, vi.

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western frontier. They oversaw the design and construction of monuments and buildings in the nation's capitol.¹⁷ In the twentieth century, especially after World War II, the Army Corps turned their attention to non-defense activities focusing, for example, on shoreline projects. They engineered and improved major shipping harbors, in addition to smaller harbors used for pleasure craft. Developing harbors drastically changed the function of the Army Corp of Engineers.¹⁸ As a federal agency, the Army Corps' primary focus was for the benefit of the nation. Therefore, it was involved in the construction of interstate projects such as navigable waterways—not state and local projects, such as marinas. However, in 1932 Congress amended the River and Harbor Act of 1902 to include the phrase, “the use of waterways by seasonal passenger craft, yachts, house boats, fishing boats, motorboats and similar craft whether or not operated for hire.”¹⁹ Slowly, the Corps' authority reached to localized areas within a state, and was no longer restricted to projects spanning state lines where jurisdiction problems could occur. The Army Corps steadily became the federal government's authority on water, taking the responsibilities out of state and local hands. From building harbors, marinas, and dams it would only be a matter of time before the Army Corps added flood control to their extensive resume.

In 1936 Congress passed the Flood Control Act, which authorized the federal government to take responsibility for flood control activities.²⁰ Instead of creating a new agency on flood control, Congress assigned the Secretary of War, who oversees the Army Corps of Engineers, to the task of building flood control structures. The Act appropriated \$320 million for 250 projects and surveys throughout the nation to boost the national economy.²¹ For the people living in the Santa Ana River basin, this meant help was on the way.

When the Army Corps began their investigation of the Santa Ana River basin, they quickly discovered the “deficiency” of

¹⁷ *The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers: A History*, iii.

¹⁸ Turhollow, 77.

¹⁹ Turhollow, 77.

²⁰ *Army Corps of Engineers: A History*, 247.

²¹ *Army Corps of Engineers: A History*, 247.

information compiled by local officials on the behavior of flooding rivers and tributaries.²² In essence, the Army Corps started from scratch without any previous knowledge of how much water flowed at a given point in the waterways. In March of 1938, the Army Corps of Engineers was coincidentally blessed when they received their immense study case: a rare 100-year flood. From that point on, the Army Corps took the lead role in a progressive flood control effort. Today, according to the Army Corp of Engineers, “[their] mission areas include planning, designing, building, and operating water resources and other civil works projects... providing immediate and long-term support to the public during natural disasters and national emergencies.”²³ Thus, the Army Corps emerged as an authority on waterworks projects and continues to maintain their presence as a principal engineering organization in this field.

The past acts as a window to the future allowing us to compare floods to one another. A storm’s intensity is always variable and there is a great deal of uncertainty as to when another large flood will occur. In that regard, floods are very much like earthquakes. Therefore, it is important for researchers to identify which flood was historically the largest, not necessarily in terms of the most destruction, but which flood created the most discharge of water. Identifying this flood will give the Army Corps of Engineers a benchmark so they can, in turn, develop flood control to meet that point of reference.

In an effort to better understand California’s past flooding the Army Corps began looking at prior reports delineating the different floods. They turned to a report compiled on September 21, 1931 named “Big Tujunga Creek” written by consulting engineer Franklin Thomas.²⁴ The records indicated that 34 floods occurred in a period of 168 years, giving an average expectancy of one flood occurring in southern California every five years.²⁵ The historical data Thomas used for his report was previous rainfall

²² Army Corps Los Angeles District, “Flood Control,” page 53; Santa Ana River, CA Flood Control July 1939 [1/2]; box 160; RG 77, NARA.

²³ *Army Corps of Engineers: A History*, iii.

²⁴ Survey Report, page 45; Santa Ana River, CA Flood Control July 1939 [1/2]; box 160; RG 77, NARA.

²⁵ Survey Report, page 45; Santa Ana River, CA Flood Control July 1939.

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records, Mission Priests' reports, and notes in explorers' diaries.²⁶ The data also indicated that the flood of 1861-62 was considered to be the greatest flood on record. A chart created by the San Bernardino County Flood Control District analyzes past floods by the amount of water that discharged through a place known as the Riverside Narrows. The graph, below, clearly illustrates the 1861-62 flood as being "off the chart" compared to other floods. In addition, the 1862 flood had three times more water discharge through the Riverside Narrows than the 1938 study case.

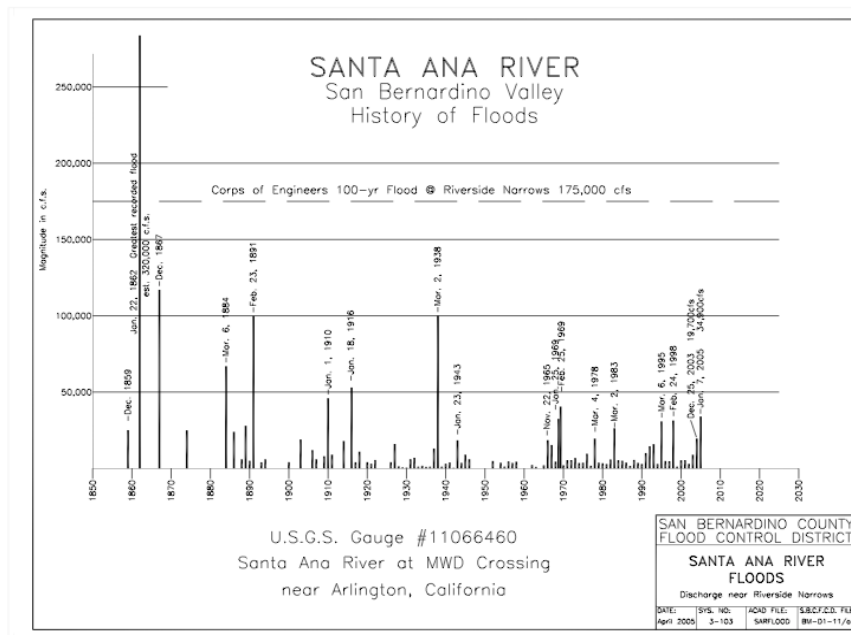


Figure 4. The chart represents past discharge rates of water on the Santa Ana River at the Riverside Narrows location.

The primary question arising from using this chart is: How were these measurements gathered in 1862? First hand witnesses wrote what they experienced during the flood:

There were billows 50 feet high. The waters from the vast drainage area found themselves forced

²⁶ Survey Report, page 45; Santa Ana River, CA Flood Control July 1939.

abruptly into a narrow channel, and just above Agua Mansa the river filled the valley from bluff to bluff, reaching the little church. Father Borgoatta, then the pastor, heard the roar in the distance, rang the bell frantically and the people fled to high ground. Some of the last ones had to swim.

For scientists, the crucial part of the text is the description of the Santa Ana's water flow reaching the "little church." The church's location was known when the Army Corp compiled their data. To legitimize the story about the little church the Corps retrieved helpful information from Mr. Celso Robidoux, grandson of Louis Robidoux, an early settler of Riverside.²⁷ In fact Louis Robidoux purchased the region known as Jurupa from a man named Don Benito Wilson between 1846-1848.²⁸ Wilson, an early pioneer/mountain man, helped develop and soon became the second mayor of Los Angeles. The land he sold to Louis Robidoux was named Rancho Jurupa, part of greater Riverside, located in and around the city of current day Rubidoux and the location of Agua Mansa Mission, where the little church of San Salvador lay.^{29 30} The Corps' documents state Mr. Celso Robidoux:

Accompanied engineers to the site of Agua Mansa Mission and identified landmarks which had been pointed out to him in childhood by his parents, which then showed evidences of the 1862 flood. He corroborated the high water level which of that flood at Agua Mansa as determined from other sources by the Advisory Committee on Flood Control in San Bernardino County, and told of the sweeping away of settlements and cultivated lands, evidences of which he saw in his boyhood. The peak discharge of Santa Ana River at Agua Mansa,

²⁷ Tab 23, page 2; Santa Ana River+ tribs, (ENCL.) [1/5]; box 508; RG 77, NARA.

²⁸ Nat B. Read, *From Mountain Man to Mayor: Don Benito Wilson Los Angeles 1841 to 1878*. (Santa Monica: Angel City Press, 2008), 40.

²⁹ Read, 40.

³⁰ Report, "History of Past Floods Santa Ana basin, Feb. 15, 1939, tab 23 page 2; Santa Ana River + tribs., CA 1939 (ENCL.) [1/5]; box 508; RG 77, NARA.

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computed by engineers of the agency referred to above, was 338,000 c.f.s. on January 22, 1862.³¹

Other first-hand accounts gathered by the Army Corps for their report describe the following:

In the town of Anaheim, four miles from the river, the water ran four feet deep and spread in an unbroken sheet to the Coyote hills, three miles beyond. The inhabitants sought safety in the second stories of their houses, and those who were not fortunate enough to have an upper story quartered themselves upon those who had. One unfortunate was carried down by the current and drowned.³²

The above story mentions that the floodwater was four feet deep four miles away from the Santa Ana River. The magnitude of this flood sounds astonishing, almost unbelievable to those that had not experienced a large flood. The March flood would legitimize these incredible stories. The rain that produced this flood started on December 25, 1861 and continued for 25 consecutive days, ending on January 18, 1862.³³ The information the Army Corps of Engineers acquired from a reliable source about the 1861-62 flood establishes the benchmark that flood control structures would need to withstand.

The above graph is also helpful when analyzing the outcomes of the 1938 flood; a flood that was pivotal in determining the levels of flood control necessary in southern California. For example, no other flood after 1938 is equivalent in water discharge, but three floods prior to 1938 were equal or greater than the 1938 flood at the measurements taken at the Riverside Narrows. This comparison illustrates how the old system of flood control became outdated and a new “modern”

³¹ As a comparison, the Columbia River on the boarder of Washington and Oregon flows at a rate of 225,000 c.f.s. (cubic feet per second).

³² Report, “History of Past Floods Santa Ana basin, Feb. 15, 1939, 3.

³³ San Bernardino County Flood Control History, <http://www.sbcounty.gov/dpn/floodcontrol/history.asp> (accessed on January 5, 2010).

approach was implemented, making a difference in the graph. These changes were necessary since a significant population growth was occurring in California.

With a general understanding of the cosmetic makeup of southern California and past flooding history, in addition to comprehending the function of the Army Corps of Engineers, this paper will narrow its scope to examine the flooding events prior to 1938 and analyze the Army Corps' study on the Santa Ana River basin. The Army Corps gathered evidence to demonstrate the benefits of flood control in the Santa Ana River basin. By no means does this paper suggest that flood control never existed in southern California. In fact, local agencies attempted to subdue and channel water runoff for more than 80 years prior to 1937.³⁴ They built, maintained, and improved channels from time to time in order to manipulate the flow of water caused by seasonal rain for drinking and irrigation purposes. Despite these efforts, on occasion the flood menace struck and overwhelmed the manmade devices, crippling the swelling communities. The Army Corp classified these existing flood control structures to withstand floods of five to eight year intervals.³⁵ Not until Congress authorized the federal government to finance flood control projects did the Army Corp of Engineers intercede on existing flood problems to find long-term comprehensive solutions for the benefit of the cities, states, and the nation.

Flood Control Before the March 1938 Flood

When the Army Corps of Engineers began their investigation into flood control in 1937 they asked district flood control agencies to compile reports explaining how they perceived flood control and the flood menace. Flood Control Engineer for Orange County M. N. Thompson wrote such a report for the County Board of

³⁴ Major Theodore Wyman, Chief of Engineers Los Angeles District, April 15, 1937, "Flood Control Report, Santa Ana River and other streams, for the protection of the metropolitan area in Orange County, Calif., page 10; Santa Ana River, CA FC-Hydraulics April 15, 1937; box 160; RG 77, NARA.

³⁵ Wyman, "Flood Control Report, Santa Ana River and other streams, for the protection of the metropolitan area in Orange County, Calif.," 9.

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Supervisors and the Army Corps. His report reverted back to the impacts of the 1916 flood and stressed the future impacts on the Orange County area:

Since 1916 the development of the District has proceeded at a rapid rate. The population has more than doubled the assessed valuation [(property values)] has increased more than 300%. More than half the present inhabitants have no personal knowledge of the area that would be overflowed or the resulting damage. Intense cultivation, brought about by high returns from citrus fruits and other crops, has extended to land where flood waters once had the opportunity of spreading without causing much damage... The financial losses that would result under the present conditions, from a flood similar to that of 1916 would not only cause hardship to owners and residents of the lands and improvements directly concerned, but would affect the County as a whole. Funds for the repair of flood damaged public property must come from taxes, and to make up the deficiency in tax returns from private property, reduced in value from flood damage, the tax rate on other property of the County must necessarily be increased.³⁶

Exponential population growth in southern California was the core problem according to Chief Engineer Thompson's report. A flood's increasing capability of causing destruction is linked directly to the upsurge of population. With every new flood, the damage becomes more severe and costly to southern Californians. For example, an Army Corps' report reiterates these facts by providing additional evidence:

The flood damage measured in dollars has increased somewhat out of proportion to the severity of the

³⁶ M.N. Thompson, Chief Engineer of Orange County, "Report for Board of Supervisors;" Santa Ana Riverside, CA 1937-1939 (ENCL.); box 506; RG 77, NARA.

several floods reported, owing to the extensive development that has taken place since 1862 and 1884. Over large areas in the cities and towns about 30 to 60 percent of the ground surface has been covered by buildings, paved streets, sidewalks, etc.³⁷

As the population continued to grow and encroach on the flood plains of the Santa Ana River basin, it became apparent to officials that the region needed updated flood control structures. The ongoing replacement of temporary wooden bridges, like those lost in 1916, had to change. Not necessarily because of the monetary loss, but the various counties' increasing populations could no longer afford to lose crucial transportation infrastructure.³⁸ This was especially relevant since America's infatuation with the automobile began to materialize. As a result, the need to control unpredictable floods became much greater than before. Temporary wooden bridges would not suffice in the wake of the 1916 flood, which according to Army Corps "forced the thickly populated communities into quite serious circumstances."³⁹ Natural water channels proved too challenging to control. When floods occurred, water overflowed its natural channels and created a new path to reach the ocean. For the cities located in the Santa Ana River basin to further develop, the necessity of carefully engineered flood control devices was required. A comprehensive approach to manage a multi-county problem fell to the hands of the Army Corps of Engineers.

Under the 1936 Flood Control Act, Congress authorized the Army Corps of Engineers to take charge in surveying and developing flood control projects. Before Congress appropriated money to the Santa Ana River basin, the Army Corps had to survey the land, suggest improvements, and analyze the region's

³⁷ Tab 25, "Damage from Future Floods Santa Ana River Basin Above Prado Dam, February 15, 1939, 1; Santa Ana River + Tribs., CA-1939 (ENCL.) [1/5]; box 508; RG 77, NARA.

³⁸ "Flood History," 3; Santa Ana River + other streams, CA 1937 (ENCL.) [3/5]; box 505; RG 77, NARA.

³⁹ "Flood History," 3; Santa Ana River + other streams, CA 1937 (ENCL.) [3/5]; box 505; RG 77, NARA.

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economy and population. Army Corps Los Angeles District engineer, Major Theodore Wyman Jr. composed a report dated April 15, 1937 entitled, *Flood Control Report, Santa Ana River and other streams, for the protection of the metropolitan area in Orange County, Calif.*, calling for Congressional approval to allocate funds for improvements on the Santa Ana River and its tributaries.⁴⁰ Wyman asserted that his report was, "...submitted as a basis for consideration of plans for flood control works for the protection of the metropolitan area in Orange County, California authorized by Section 5 of Act of Congress, Public No. 738, approved June 22, 1936."⁴¹

From this point on, the Army Corps began to build a case on behalf of those affected by floods on the Santa Ana River basin, but only for those residents living in Orange County. His report did not include studies of Riverside or San Bernardino Counties where the Santa Ana River originates. Initially, Congress must have singled out Orange County specifically to protect from floods, not realizing the vast amounts of terrain that contributed to the flood problem. After investigating the causes of flooding in Orange County, Major Wyman concluded that the required protection Orange County (lower basin) needed would not even be located in the County itself, but upstream in Riverside and San Bernardino Counties (upper basin).⁴² Major Wyman immediately broadened the area of flood control on the Santa Ana River. He argued that in addition to protecting Orange County it was necessary to consider the upper Santa Ana River basin, since past floods had caused loss of life and a significant destruction of property in that area as well.⁴³ "In the upper basin, bridges have been destroyed, channels eroded, and debris deposited on the improved areas near the mountains; in the lower basin in Orange County the greatest damage has been from overflow, erosion and deposition of debris on large areas occupied by cities, towns and citrus groves."⁴⁴ Thus, the Army Corps Los Angeles District engineer Major Theodore Wyman was instrumental in incorporating Riverside and San

⁴⁰ "Flood History," 3; Santa Ana River + other streams, CA 1937 (ENCL.), 1.

⁴¹ "Flood History," 3; Santa Ana River + other streams, CA 1937 (ENCL.), 1.

⁴² "Flood History," 3; Santa Ana River + other streams, CA 1937 (ENCL.), 7.

⁴³ "Flood History," 3; Santa Ana River + other streams, CA 1937 (ENCL.), 7.

⁴⁴ "Flood History," 3; Santa Ana River + other streams, CA 1937 (ENCL.), 7.

Bernardino Counties in a comprehensive plan for flood control along the entire Santa Ana River.

The Army Corps' 1937 report proposed that a crucial dam should be built in the upper basin of the Santa Ana River to protect Orange County. The Prado Dam became the centerpiece of flood control along the Santa Ana River and essentially restrained the mighty river during major storms. First proposed in April 1931 by Orange County Flood Control District's general plan for flood control, the Army Corps of Engineers agreed with the dam's location and adopted Orange County Flood Control's method to contain floodwaters.⁴⁵ The 1936 Flood Control Act allotted \$13 million for Orange County flood control projects, and the Army Corps recommended the appropriation of the funds.⁴⁶ The Prado Dam would be completed in May 1941 for \$9,450,000, as a result of the 1936 Flood Control Act.⁴⁷ The remaining money was spent widening channels. In addition, Chief Engineer Wyman believed \$18,000,000 (\$13.2 million federal and \$4.6 million local contribution) was sufficient to establish flood works projects. However, the various county governments viewed flood control differently. After Wyman's report was released (1937) and days before the March flood, local agencies asserted their belief that \$44,525,600 was required for full protection from the Santa Ana River and its tributaries above the Prado Dam site in Riverside and San Bernardino Counties.⁴⁸ The subsequent flood affirmed for the local communities the need to suppress the flood menace.

Another interesting aspect the Army Corps' report examines is the monetary value of the regions they proposed to protect. In 1937, were the areas affected by flooding in the Santa Ana River basin worth protecting? Were they of enough sustainable value to warrant using federal money to ensure protection? From 1940 to 1970 the southern California economy shifted from an agricultural to an industrial base. Population and

⁴⁵ "Flood History," 3; Santa Ana River + other streams, CA 1937 (ENCL.), 11.

⁴⁶ "Flood History," 3; Santa Ana River + other streams, CA 1937 (ENCL.), 2.

⁴⁷ Colonel R.C. Hunter, Chief Engineer Los Angeles, 11/1/1947, "Report of Survey of Santa Ana River and Tributaries, California, for Flood Control," 5; Santa Ana River (CA) SR Enclosure 1-8 11-1-46; box 161; RG 77, NARA.

⁴⁸ Tab 22, "Improvements Desired by Local Interests, Santa Ana River Basin Above Prado Reservoir" Feb 15, 1939, 1; Santa Ana River + Tribs., CA-1939 (ENCL.) [1/5]; box 508; RG 77, NARA.

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property values soared and so did the need to protect them. According to Major Wyman's 1937 report, the assessed value of land to be protected in San Bernardino was estimated at \$111 million; the highest of the counties affected by the Santa Ana and Los Angeles River.⁴⁹

An important question arises when analyzing the Army Corps' reports: what is the correlation between the value of a county's land and flood control? Foremost, flood control is for the protection of the people. A group letter composed by Major Wyman on January 25, 1938 titled, "Notice of Public Hearing" held on February 25, 1938 in Riverside, CA reiterates this fact. In a list of requirements, bullet point "c" states, "The economic and other justification for the expenditures that may be entailed by the desired improvements, based upon: Saving of life and protection to property, improvement to drainage, conservation of water, the development of power."⁵⁰ However, concern eventually shifted from a strict focus on saving lives and property to other beneficial factors—for example, how the government might benefit from investing funds in flood control. At the heart of this argument are property taxes.

Visualizing the devastation the Santa Ana River basin experiences periodically, one can obviously see how floods hinder the government's ability to prosper. The population in southern California was growing immensely during this time period and, therefore, it was presumed the economy of southern California was experiencing the same level of growth. An investor could see the increasing prosperity as an investment. The federal government is the investor and flood control is the investment. Yet, property taxes create revenue for state and local governments. How, then, does the federal government benefit from subsidizing flood control? To elaborate, the basic function of Congress needs to be evaluated. The framework describing the Legislative Branch's basic function may sound elementary, but is critical in order to comprehend the

⁴⁹ Major Theodore Wyman, Chief of Engineers Los Angeles District, April 15, 1937, "Flood Control Report, Santa Ana River and other streams, for the protection of the metropolitan area in Orange County, Calif., 14; Santa Ana River, CA FC-Hydraulics April 15, 1937; box 160; RG 77, NARA.

⁵⁰ Major Theodore Wyman, tab 31, "Notice of Public Hearing", Jan. 25, 1938; Santa Ana River + tribs, CA (ENCL) [1/5]; box 508; RG 77, NARA.

federal government's interests in flood control. Congress is comprised of representatives from within a state. The Senate serves the state as a whole and the House of Representative's members serve the individual districts. Representatives have a vested interest in their district. By protecting areas from the flood nuisance, property values increase, thus benefiting their district.

Beginning with Major Wyman's 1937 report, the Army Corps introduced direct and indirect benefits of flood control that soon became a major theme in flood control projects. The Corps' first report to Congress in 1937 briefly mentioned the increase of land values as a direct benefit of flood control. The Army Corps realized that if the Santa Ana River was tamed and disastrous floods occurred less frequently, then property values and property tax revenue would increase. However, the Army Corps acknowledged that their investigative role in 1937 was to devise a flood control plan with \$13 million—not analyze the benefits of flood control. Nevertheless, the report states, "Although a comparison of economic benefits with economic costs is not considered necessary, because the works of improvement have been authorized by Congress, the following is submitted for purpose of record."⁵¹ The report predicted that after new modern flood control improvements were completed, Orange County would experience greater security from flooding, thus increase property values by \$480,000 on average per year.⁵² Furthermore, the report mentions a crucial indirect benefit when modern flood control is implemented for southern California. The 1937 report, with foresight reads:

In addition to the direct increase in value due to the removal of the flood menace, there would be an indirect benefit from additional future improvements in the area now subject to overflow, due to change to a higher use. These

⁵¹ Major Theodore Wyman, Chief of Engineers Los Angeles District, April 15, 1937, "Flood Control Report, Santa Ana River and other streams, for the protection of the metropolitan area in Orange County, Calif.," 32; Santa Ana River, CA FC-Hydraulics April 15, 1937; box 160; RG 77, NARA.

⁵² Wyman, "Flood Control Report, Santa Ana River and other streams, for the protection of the metropolitan area in Orange County, Calif."

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changes...would create an increase in taxable wealth, not otherwise obtainable. No estimates have been made of the value of such indirect benefits.⁵³

Unbeknownst to Major Wyman, California's growth would continue to multiply decade after decade nearly doubling between 1950 and 1970.⁵⁴ When the report was written just prior to the 1940 census, California's population stood slightly under 7 million; according to the 2000 census California's population reached almost 34 million residents.⁵⁵ Today, California's economy is ranked 8th in the world, which directly relates to the diversely skilled population.⁵⁶ There is a direct correlation between California's economy, flood control, and the ability to support a growing population. Major Wyman's report predicted an indirect benefit between flood control and future developments on the Santa Ana floodplain. Land that was not usable prior to modern flood control would be utilized to house residents and support various businesses, thus creating incredible, taxable wealth. With hindsight, the 1938 flood changed the perception of flood control on the Santa Ana River basin. The 1937 report speculated on the possible damage to the region that could be caused by future floods of the magnitude of the one in 1916. Their predictions can then be compared to the outcomes of the 1938 flood.

Floods are evaluated on two criteria: magnitude and destructiveness. To predict the outcomes of future flooding, both parts need to be evaluated separately. Historically speaking, the two conditions are not interlinked. For instance, the 1862 flood had the largest magnitude of any known documented flooding, yet the destructiveness was less than that of the 1916 flood, which had

⁵³ Wyman, "Flood Control Report, Santa Ana River and other streams, for the protection of the metropolitan area in Orange County, Calif."

⁵⁴ U.S. Census Bureau. Resident Population and Apportionment of the U.S. House of Representatives. www.census.gov/dmd/www/resapport/states/california.pdf (accessed 4/10/2010).

⁵⁵ U.S. Census Bureau.

⁵⁶ State of California, Department of Finance. California Population. http://www.dof.ca.gov/HTML/FS_DATA/HistoryCAEconomy/index.htm (accessed 4/10/2010).

a lesser magnitude. The missing part in this equation is population. The Army Corps of Engineers needed to analyze all three factors to calculate damage from future floods. Because of the intensive development of land on the Santa Ana River basin, a flood occurring in 1936 could be more destructive and, therefore, more costly than the 1916 flood, even if of a lesser magnitude.⁵⁷ In their calculations, the Army Corps estimated a maximum probable flood on the Santa Ana River in Orange County of more than twice the magnitude of the 1916 flood.⁵⁸

Under time constraints to submit the report, evidence had yet to be gathered to determine damages for Riverside and San Bernardino Counties.⁵⁹ If a flood with the same magnitude as the 1916 flood struck in 1936, the Army Corps estimated the damage in Orange County would be approximately \$4 million.⁶⁰ In addition, the hypothetical flood would, without a doubt, cause a loss of life between 40 to 50 residents of Orange County.⁶¹ The Army Corps' initial investigation came to a close less than a year before the 1938 flood. Their estimates of damages from a future flood in comparison with the magnitude of the 1916 flood doubled the amount of property damage and caused ten times the loss of life. The flood experienced by the residents of southern California and studied by the Army Corps of Engineers forever changed a region decimated by periodic flooding.

News spread throughout the Santa Ana River basin that the Army Corps of Engineers had begun a comprehensive investigation to improve flood control. Local governments and water districts cooperated with the Army Corps by disclosing any information the Corps requested. Moreover, local businesses submitted their perspectives and dilemmas when faced by floods. For example, in a letter dated February 34, 1938, days before the March flood, addressed to Chief Engineer Major Wyman, Pellissier Dairies in Riverside, gave their assessment of how the Santa Ana River affects the dairy's operations. Pellissier Dairies

⁵⁷ Inclosure (sic) 3-E, "Damage from Future Floods," page 1; Santa Ana River + other streams, CA 1937 (ENCL.) [3/5]; box 505; RG 77, NARA.

⁵⁸ Inclosure (sic) 3-E, "Damage from Future Floods," 1.

⁵⁹ Inclosure (sic) 3-E, "Damage from Future Floods," 2.

⁶⁰ Inclosure (sic) 3-E, "Damage from Future Floods," 3.

⁶¹ Inclosure (sic) 3-E, "Damage from Future Floods," 3.

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attempted to warn Major Wyman that if another flood like those in previous years occurred, not only would it result in a loss of life, but the Santa Ana River, at flood levels, would eat away the dairy's property, hurting the business.⁶²

Another business affected by floods in the Santa Ana River basin was the Italian Vineyard Company located in Guasti, CA. Guasti is located slightly north of present-day Ontario Airport. In a letter dated February 24, 1938 the company stated that during floods, the Santa Ana's tributaries, which passed through the property, slowly eroded parts of the vineyard's immense 5,000-acre property.⁶³ The vineyard claimed, "in order for us to put this property back in shape it will be necessary that we cut a straight channel through one hundred sixty (160) acres, putting us to quite a bit of expense."⁶⁴ What the letter fails to say but implies is that the vineyard wants the Army Corps to appropriate funds to build the concrete channel with federal money. Moreover, the letter recommended that the Army Corp not build a concrete channel from the foothills directly to the Santa Ana River, but to first add a "spreading area" or catch basin to allow water to sink underground and be conserved.⁶⁵

In fact, most of the area's drinking and irrigation water came from underground artesian well sources known as aquifers in the Santa Ana basin.⁶⁶ M. A. Martinez, General Superintendent of Italian Vineyards and author of the letter, showed concern that if the Army Corps decided to build a concrete channel per his suggestion, water would not have a chance to percolate underground. Thus, the ability to conserve water in a semi-arid region would be diminished, as would the agricultural business. In the region, water is a scarce commodity but also destructive when floods occur. Since most of the region was agricultural based, landowners depended on the slow meandering water flow, but

⁶² Letter from Pellissier Dairies addressed to Major Wyman, Feb. 24, 1938; Santa Ana River, CA 1937-1939 (ENCL.) [5/5]; box 506; RG 77, NARA.

⁶³ Letter from Pellissier Dairies addressed to Major Wyman, Feb. 24, 1938.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.; Santa Ana River, CA 1937-1939 (ENCL.) [5/5]; box 506; RG 77, NARA.

⁶⁶ "Where does my water come from?" Water Education Foundation. <http://www.water-ed.org/watersources/subpage.asp?rid=8&page=19> (accessed 4/10/2010).

when the Army Corps proposed building channels to expediently evacuate the water to the Pacific Ocean, “much litigation resulted from the objections.”⁶⁷ In summary, the balance between natural conservation and protective flood control needed to be reached. The Army Corp of Engineers held a meeting to discuss the problems arising from these multi-county dilemmas in Riverside on February 25, 1938, just days before the March flood.

Riverside proved a halfway point for the areas affected by the Santa Ana River. The public meeting allowed the numerous water agencies and businesses affected by floods to discuss their concerns about water rights. In addition, they proposed their solution for flood control. An Army Corps 1939 report stated:

According to testimony and data presented at the public hearing:

At Riverside, California, on February 25, 1938, local interests desire that flood control improvements combined with improvements for maximum practicable water conservation be made in the basin of the Santa Ana River to provide protection to all localities now exposed to flood damage. The improvements desired include seven reservoirs for reduction of flood peaks, and numerous debris basins, channel improvements, storm drains, and spreading grounds, the total cost of which, as estimate by local interests, is \$44,525,600. This cost is based primarily on the type of structure, which they considered adequate prior to the March 1938 flood.⁶⁸

In 1937 Major Wyman believed \$18 million would provide “adequate flood control for the metropolitan area of Orange County,” but local officials believed the cost to be more than

⁶⁷ Colonel R.C. Hunter, Chief Engineer Los Angeles, 11/1/1947, “Report of Survey of Santa Ana River and Tributaries, California, for Flood Control,” 22; Santa Ana River (CA) SR Enclosure 1-8 11-1-46; box 161; RG 77, NARA.

⁶⁸ Tab 22, page 1; Santa Ana River + tribs., CA-1939 (ENCL.) [1/5]; box 508; RG 77, NARA.

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double the Major's estimate.⁶⁹ A week later, the March flood reaffirmed the local agencies prediction. All three factors determining the outcome of a flood were put to the test in March 1938: magnitude, population, and destructiveness. The results were astonishing. The March flood became a wake-up call for change. The flood forced the Army Corp of Engineers to re-examine how to implement a more powerful system of flood control. More projects were needed, and therefore stronger support from the federal government was required.

By March of 1938 preparations for a comprehensive flood control plan began to take shape. Congress approved eight crucial projects after Major Wyman's April 15, 1937 report.⁷⁰ Days before the rain began, concerned businesses implored the Army Corps of Engineers to help limit the potential damage that could be caused by the Santa Ana River. The Army Corp of Engineers and Department of Agriculture organized a meeting in Riverside, February 24, 1938 attended by the counties who had a vested interest in the Santa Ana River.⁷¹ The counties were brought together to discuss a comprehensive approach to flood control, to talk about concerns, find solutions, and resolve their differences. However, the litigious nature of feuding counties over water rights caused delays in building flood control structures. The various counties' flood control agencies had a grander approach to flood control than the novices at the Army Corps of Engineers, yet it required the involvement of the Army Corps to put a comprehensive plan in place. This lack of coordination between counties was presumably rooted in cross-county suspicions.

Orange County's fix to the flood lay in Riverside County—with the construction of Prado Dam—and this caused anxiety between the two counties. Why would Orange County pay for a dam not even located in their county? On the other hand,

⁶⁹ Major Theodore Wyman, Chief of Engineers Los Angeles District, April 15, 1937, "Flood Control Report, Santa Ana River and other streams, for the protection of the metropolitan area in Orange County, Calif., 1; Santa Ana River, CA FC-Hydraulics April 15, 1937; box 160; RG 77, NARA.

⁷⁰ Colonel R.C. Hunter, Chief Engineer Los Angeles, 11/1/1947, "Report of Survey of Santa Ana River and Tributaries, California, for Flood Control," 34; Santa Ana River (CA) SR Enclosure 1-8 11-1-46; box 161; RG 77, NARA.

⁷¹ Hunter, "Report of Survey of Santa Ana River and Tributaries, California, for Flood Control," 55.

what purpose would the Prado Dam serve for Riverside County? The purpose of the dam was to restrict the flow of floodwater by allowing it to collect behind the dam and then regulate its discharge into Orange County. Once Federal authorities took jurisdiction on the matter, disputes between county authorities, such as the dispute between Orange and Riverside Counties over the Prado Dam, disappeared. The Army Corps provided the necessary funds (appropriated by Congress) which neither county wanted to appropriate for the construction of Prado Dam. Changes in flood control began slowly, but made progress. On February 27, 1938 rain began to fall over a fearfully concerned region abused by floods. The resulting March flood would accelerate the development of flood control.

The Flood

The March flood will be discussed in several different ways. The first goal is to focus on the basic facts of the storm. The magnitude of the storm is crucial because it illustrates the intensity needed to produce a catastrophic flood. The second objective is to analyze the human impact of the flood vis-à-vis the destruction and loss of life caused by the flood. The widespread devastation affected every county in southern California. Newspapers in various states ran front-page stories, which informed their readers about the horrors faced by the residents. The March flood demonstrated to the nation the need to protect the growing state of California. Finally, the Army Corps studied the flood to see how the Santa Ana River basin behaves during such events. Their investigation of the March flood changed the Army Corps' perspective on flood control. The original eight project plan proved insufficient for the Army Corps. A new, extensive investigation began as a result of the 1938 flood.

Three separate storms brutalized the southern California landscape beginning February 27 and ending March 3, 1938. According to the Los Angeles Weather Bureau, the intensity increased between each storm.⁷² The greatest recorded rainfall

⁷², Lawrence H. Daingerfield, "Monthly Weather Review: Southern California Rain and Flood, February 27 to March 4, 1938," May 1938, 139,

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during the storm period was 32.2 inches at Kelly's Kamp in the San Gabriel Mountains: 17.55" fell in a 24-hour period.⁷³ In addition, the average rainfall in the mountain ranges varied between 20 and 30 inches.⁷⁴ San Bernardino received 5.47", Riverside reported 5.26", and Anaheim collected 8.63" over the four-day period.⁷⁵ The severity of the flood reached its pinnacle on the last day because a warm tropical air front brought tremendous rainfall and raised the altitude of snowfall.⁷⁶ The Santa Ana River and its tributaries absorbed 56 percent of the mountain and foothill run-off above the Prado Dam site, raising the water table, but they reached their breaking point when the final storm unleashed its power.⁷⁷ Harold Willis, former president of San Bernardino's city Water Board and eyewitness to the March flood at age eleven was quoted in the local newspaper in 2003 claiming, "We had this cold, cold winter... the snow stacked up and stacked up. Then we had this warm rain come in from the south. The snow was like a huge sponge. It caught all the water and could hold no more, and it turned to slush and just came right on down."⁷⁸ As a result, the tributaries overflowed and levies breached on the Santa Ana River causing widespread devastation and loss of life.

The heavily saturated mountains brought down untold amounts of debris. Debris included, silt, rocks, and foliage, which covered many parts of the counties. The Lytle Creek community located on the San Gabriel Mountain side of the Cajon Pass received incredible damage. A mountain community named after the tributary, Lytle Creek, washed away 200 cabins tearing the community apart.⁷⁹ At the Lytle and City Creek, and Santa Ana River junction lays the communities of San Bernardino and Colton

<http://docs.lib.noaa.gov/rescue.mwr/066/mwr-066-05-0139.pdf> (accessed 12/14/2009).

⁷³ Daingerfield, 139, 142.

⁷⁴ Daingerfield, 139.

⁷⁵ Daingerfield, 140-141.

⁷⁶ Daingerfield, 139.

⁷⁷ *San Timoteo Creek: Vicinity of Loma Linda*, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 22.

⁷⁸ Mark Muckenfuss, "Spanning the Centuries; 1929-1950; Environment; The Inland flood of the century; Spring rains and runoff inundated Southern California in the spring of 1938, claiming the lives of 175 people," *The Press-Enterprise*, June 29, 2003, CC.10.

⁷⁹ Muckenfuss, *The Press-Enterprise*, June 29, 2003.

where the flood destroyed between 200 and 300 homes.⁸⁰ In San Bernardino County a hundred bridges collapsed and two miles of railroad track were undermined, crippling the rail system.⁸¹ The flood not only brought quick moving destructive water, but vast amounts of debris that adversely affected the communities. The Army Corps gathered hundreds of photos of the Santa Ana River and tributaries flooding devastation and compiled them in a report titled “Photographs of Damage from Storm of February 27-March 3, 1938.”⁸² The photos themselves provide an excellent pictorial record, capturing the detail and widespread damage incurred by the March flood.



Figure 5. Reproduced from the Holdings of the National Archives at Riverside. “View of damaged cabins in Lytle Creek below Glenn Ranch, after March 1938 flood.”

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² Major Theodore Wyman, May 28, 1938, All Reports; LA 800.73 Storm Damage (Photos) 14-18; box 40; RG 77, NARA.

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Figure 6. Reproduced from the Holdings of the National Archives at Riverside. "Upstream view of damage in Lytle Canyon at 17.8 miles below Glenn Ranch, after March 1938 flood."



Figure 7. Reproduced from the Holdings of the National Archives at Riverside. Photo taken 3/3/1938. Merging point of Lytle Creek and Santa Ana around the City of Colton. Notice the bridge failures.



Figure 8. Reproduced from the Holdings of the National Archives at Riverside. Photo taken 3/3/1938 View from Orange County looking west. Notice the breach in the levy submerging nearby cities in water.



Figure 9. Reproduced from the Holdings of the National Archives at Riverside. Photo taken 3/3/1938. View from Orange County looking west. Notice the mouth of the Santa Ana River to the top-left.

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Figure 10. Reproduced from the Holdings of the National Archives at Riverside. Picture was taken 3/3/1938 by the Army Corps illustrates widespread flooding over Northern Orange County looking northwest. Notice the flood waters reflection-covering most of the County.

The 1938 March flood devastated southern California. These images are just snap-shots of the areas affected by the Santa Ana River and its tributaries, but the flood's destructiveness impacted the Los Angeles community as well. Total damage and loss of life figures vary depending on which source one examines. The *San Mateo Times* headlines on March 4, 1938 read, "Death Toll Now Near 250."⁸³ The *Nevada State Journal* claimed 400 dead on March 6, 1938.⁸⁴ In recent years the death toll is still debated. An article appearing in *The Press-Enterprise* indicates that the number of dead was at least 175 people, but recognizes that the "death toll is difficult to pin down."⁸⁵ The reporter refers to Suzie Earp,⁸⁶ who at the time (2003) was a master's student at

⁸³ *San Mateo Times*, "State Asks U.S. Flood Aid: L.A. Feels Food Shortage; Death Toll Now Near 250," (March 4, 1938): 1.

<http://www.newspaperarchives.com> (accessed April 23, 2010)

⁸⁴ *Nevada State Journal*, Reno, Nevada, "Flood Dead 400 Says Red Cross," (March 6, 1938): 1. <http://www.newspaperarchives.com> (accessed 4/23/10).

⁸⁵ Muckenfuss, 10.

⁸⁶ Suzie Earp, archivist at the Water Resource Institute (WRI) at California State University San Bernardino, has conducted extensive research pertaining the March 1938 flood.

California State San Bernardino, “it’s hard to know...just how many people died...’this was the Depression...and a lot of people were camped out by the river. We don’t have any official numbers.”⁸⁷ In addition, to the above statement another perception arises to help uncover the reasons why an official death toll was not sought after. An article written by the *Nevada State Journal* on March 6, 1938, about the southern California flood, reveals the racial attitudes of the time period. The article reads, “The Red Cross spokesman said: ‘You must realize that most of the dead are Mexicans, and when one of their race disappears, they are not likely to report the disappearance.’”⁸⁸ This quote is a prime example of racial stereotyping during that era. Therefore, it can be assumed organizations like the Red Cross may not have fully investigated the specific total of casualties caused by the flood because of racial indifference.

Another aspect of flood damage is the monetary costs of such an event. These numbers too vary depending on the source. The City of Ontario, CA Risk Management department currently compiled historical data estimating \$78,602,000 in damages and 87 deaths resulted from of the March 1938 flood.⁸⁹ The Army Corps of Engineers estimated the direct and indirect damages at \$48,133,278 in 1939. Today (2010) that converts to approximately \$740 million.⁹⁰ The Army Corps figure of \$48 million is twelve-times greater than their 1936 prediction of \$4 million. Even though the Army Corps calculated their predictions to a 1916 caliber flood, the 1938 flood was not twelve-times the magnitude (see figure 3). The numbers vary between the death toll and financial loss incurred from the March flood. Either way, the storm’s magnitude and destructiveness changed perceptions on flood control. This is illustrated in newspapers articles at the time of the 1938 flood.

News of the flood prompted various newspapers to run headlines informing their readers of the devastation in southern

⁸⁷ Suzie Earp, Cal State San Bernardino, 2010.

⁸⁸ *Nevada State Journal*, “Flood Dead 400 Says Red Cross,” 44, no. 117 (March 6, 1938): 1. <http://www.newspaperarchive.com> (accessed May 15, 2010)

⁸⁹ Risk Management: Hazard Profile, City of Ontario. <http://www.ci.ontario.ca.us/index.cfm/8311/16527> (accessed 12/14/2009).

⁹⁰ I used this website to calculate the conversion. “Dollar Times,” <http://www.dollartimes.com/calculators/inflation.htm> (accessed 4/25/2010).

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California. The *New Castle News* in New Castle, Pennsylvania ran a front page headline in bold print “CALIFORNIA HIT BY FLOOD: Estimate 45 Dead As Waters Sweep Over Part Of State.”⁹¹ *Freeport Journal-Standard* of Freeport, Illinois headline in bold writing read “FLOOD LOSS MOUNTS IN CALIFORNIA,” the article describes the number dead or homeless and the untold millions in damages.⁹² The natural disaster even caused social upheaval. For instance, the *San Mateo Times* on March 3 ran a headline “L.A. Looting Starts.”⁹³ Then on March 5, 1938 the headline read “L.A. Issues Orders To Shoot Looters.”⁹⁴ The same article also describes the problems communities like Riverside had over contaminated water for drinking purposes and “stagnant, disease-breeding pools” of water.⁹⁵ Corroborating the story, *The Hayward Review* on the same day ran the headline, “Disease Perils Flood’s Victims: Town’s Drinking Water Condemned.”⁹⁶ Communities were isolated due to the flood. The Santa Fe Railroad traffic came to a halt because either their tracks washed away or fell victim to landslides, thus cutting off supplies.⁹⁷ Means of communication were severed as power lines gave way. The devastation felt by southern Californians and reported through various newspapers across the nation informed readers of the growing problem of the flood menace in southern California. The need for a modern flood control system, capable of withstanding floods like that of March 1938, became imperative.

After the March 1938 Flood: A Lesson Learned

⁹¹ Ralph Jordan, “California Hit By Flood,” *New Castle News*, March 3, 1938, 1.

⁹² “Flood Loss Mounts in California,” *Freeport Journal-Stanford*, March 3, 1938, 1. <http://www.newspaperarchives.com> (accessed May 25, 2010).

⁹³ “L.A. Looting Starts; 45 Now Dead in Flood,” *San Mateo Times*, March 3, 1938, 1. <http://www.newspaperarchives.com> (accessed May 25, 2010).

⁹⁴ “L.A. Issues Orders To Shoot Looters,” *San Mateo Times*, March 5, 1938, 1. <http://www.newspaperarchives.com> (accessed June 1, 2010).

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ “Disease Perils Flood’s Victims: Town’s Drinking Water Condemned,” *The Hayward Review*, March 5, 1938, 1. <http://www.newspaperarchives.com> (accessed June 15, 2010).

⁹⁷ “Hunger Menaces L.A. Area,” *The Hayward Review*, March 4, 1938, 1. <http://www.newspaperarchives.com> (accessed June 15, 2010)

A newspaper in Alberta, Canada, *The Lethbridge Herald* on March 24, 1938 criticized Los Angeles as having a “lack of flood control” and moreover argues that; “. . . monies Los Angeles City and County will have to find to develop flood control projects to prevent flood damage in the future!”⁹⁸ What the article did not say was that flood control did exist, but was insufficient. The Army Corps had already began establishing ideas for a comprehensive flood control system, but in the wake of the March flood they and other experts realized they had underestimated the extent of construction projects needed. The Army Corps began to pressure the federal government to appropriate additional funds for flood control. On June 28, 1938 Congress modified the Flood Control Act of 1936 to provide an addition \$6,500,000 for a ninth construction unit that would control floods on the San Antonio and Chino Creeks.⁹⁹ Yet, shortly after Congress’s decision the Army Corps compiled a new report that analyzed the information gathered from the March flood. Their proposed plan in 1936 proved insufficient. The report reads:

The plan of improvement in the approved project for San Antonio-Chino Creeks. . . is the only one in the Santa Ana River above Prado that is considered adequate for the flood protection of the areas subject to damage from floods. The estimates for all other basin subdivisions considered in this enclosure are based on the type of structures considered adequate by local interests prior to the March 1938 flood. It is evident that these structures and therefore the respective estimates are inadequate. A survey will be required to determine the improvements that should be included in a comprehensive plan for flood control on the Santa

⁹⁸ *The Lethbridge Herald*, March 24, 1938, 4.

<http://www.newspaperarchives.com> (accessed June 5, 2010).

⁹⁹ Colonel R.C. Hunter, Chief Engineer Los Angeles, 11/1/1947, “Report of Survey of Santa Ana River and Tributaries, California, for Flood Control,” 46; Santa Ana River (CA) SR Enclosure 1-8 11-1-46; box 161; RG 77, NARA.

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Ana River and tributaries, together with estimates of cost.¹⁰⁰

Major Wyman submitted a preliminary report on February 15, 1939, which nearly negated all previous assumptions to provide adequate flood control. His report explained how the March flood was a learning lesson for the Army Corps and local water authorities:

As a result of this flood, local engineers and interested parties within the basin believe that the improvements sponsored at the public hearing are inadequate to provide the desired protection and that improvements which will provide such protection would cost considerably more than the amount estimated [\$44,525,600] by them and as presented at the hearing [February 24, 1938]... Plans upon which this estimate was based were prepared by local interests prior to the flood of March 1938, and as has been explained, local interests now believe that their original plans would be inadequate and that the total cost of adequate improvements would be considerably more than the amount mentioned above...\$69,000,000, it is believed that most of the improvements desired by local interests may be warranted.¹⁰¹

However, Major Wyman's 1936 report "concludes that the essential features for adequate flood control...can probably be accomplished within the limits of funds authorized," \$18 million in total.¹⁰² In three years time Major Wyman perspective changed dramatically. Adequate flood control now "warranted" \$69 million

¹⁰⁰ "Local Interests," tab 22, p. 14; Santa Ana River + Tribs., CA 1939 (ENCL.) [1/5]; box 508; RG 77, NARA.

¹⁰¹ Major Theodore Wyman, "Preliminary Examination Report Flood Control on Santa Ana River and Tributaries California," February, 15, 1939, pp.36-37, 39-40; Santa Ana River, CA 1937-1939 (ENCL.); box 506; RG 77, NARA.

¹⁰² Major Theodore Wyman, Chief of Engineers Los Angeles District, April 15, 1937, "Flood Control Report, Santa Ana River and other streams, for the

to develop flood control structures for the Santa Ana River basin. Furthermore, local interests realized their estimates fell short for adequate flood control. The March 1938 flood demonstrated a change in attitude toward a modern flood control system. Before 1938, it was clear to the people that a flood problem existed. After March 1938, it was evident that a serious flood problem existed that would require tens of millions of dollars to correct. Subsequently, Congress authorized a multitude of appropriations under Flood Control Act¹⁰³ after the March flood.¹⁰⁴ In the wake of another disastrous flood in 1969, Congressman, 33rd District Jerry Pettis wrote in the *Montclair Tribune*, “The 1938 flood triggered the construction of \$38,700,000 in federal and local projects in our country, all designed to prevent a repetition of that disaster.”¹⁰⁵ After the March flood the Army Corps quickly began surveying the land to find new solutions to prevent another disaster.

Immediately after the storm the Army Corps thoroughly investigated the extent of the damages from the March flood.¹⁰⁶ They took aerial photos, conducted interviews with property owners, and wrote field surveys to determine the total damages caused by the flood in addition to studying how floodwaters behaved. These surveys are evident in the above photographs of the March flood. Hundreds of additional photos were part of Major Wyman’s May 28, 1938 report on the March flood. The preliminary report by Major Wyman in February 1939 outlines the direct and indirect damages of the March flood and specifies which tributary caused what damage. This helped the Army Corps classify which areas were at the greatest risk of destructive damage

protection of the metropolitan area in Orange County, Calif., 1; Santa Ana River, CA FC-Hydraulics April 15, 1937; box 160; RG 77, NARA.

¹⁰³ “Flood control Act of June 28, 1938, Public Law No. 761, 75th Congress; Flood Control Act of August 18, 1941, Public Law No. 377, 77th Congress; Flood Control Act of May 29, 1944, Public Law No. 318, 78th Congress; Flood Control Act of December 22, 1944, Public Law No. 534, 78th Congress; Flood Control Act of March 2, 1945, Public Law No. 14, 79th Congress; Flood Control Act of June 12, 1945, Public Law No. 82, 79th Congress.”

¹⁰⁴ Turhollow, 386.

¹⁰⁵ Jerry Pettis, “Jerry’s Journal,” *Montclair Tribune*, March 5, 1969.

¹⁰⁶ Tab 24, p. 2; Santa Ana River + Tribs., CA-1939 (ENCL.) [1/5]; box 508; RG 77, NARA.

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at the time. The most volatile areas affected by floods were investigated to find solutions to prevent future devastation. Another important lesson learned was the behavior of water. A July 1939 report established a conundrum to southern California's flood problem. To control floods, construction of additional channels and storm drains were needed to prevent flooding in localized areas. However, these channels allowed water to quickly flow downstream at concentrated levels, straining levies downstream in Orange County. When a storm's intensity hits the hardest it creates a surge of water funneling downstream, resulting in overflow or broken levies. In support of improved or concrete lined channels, they allowed the water to move as one continual mass, which allowed for a smaller storage capacity. In other words, concrete channels were useful in some places, but not others. Upstream dams or reservoirs would collect water even during intense periods to minimize high concentration downstream. Prado Dam is a key example.

After the March flood, the Army Corps sought out new locations for dams or reservoirs. In addition to dams and reservoirs, spreading grounds would also be utilized. Spreading grounds are located at both the foothill of a mountain and at the canyon's mouth. Their purpose is to disperse water as it flowed out of the canyon mouth, thus slowing down the water's velocity. Moreover, spreading grounds could catch much of the debris that devastated most of the Santa Ana basin community.¹⁰⁷ Also, spreading grounds allowed water to seep underground, which helped replenish the aquifer. The picture on the next page is an example of one spreading ground utilized in the Santa Ana River basin. In today's standards, spreading grounds require an enormous amount of valuable land, but their benefits far outweigh the disadvantages. Thus, spreading grounds act as a buffer during intense rain periods and help solve a variety of problems pertaining to debris, floods, and water conservation. Dams and reservoirs also became a tool of flood control.

The solution was not as simple as building a concrete channel or a single dam as the Army Corps first had intended. A

¹⁰⁷ "Flood Control," July 1939, pp. 57-61; Santa Ana River, CA Flood Control July 1939 [1/2]; box 160; RG 77, NARA.

study case was required to comprehend how flooding waters behave. Then the Army Corps could take their findings and establish a reliable approach for flood control.

Re-modernization

Development of adequate flood control structures is a learning process. The Army Corps learned tremendously from the March 1938 flood, but their system was not bullet-proof. In other words, other floods had to occur to put these improvements to the test. Besides, Army Corps historian Anthony Turhollow states, “LAD [Los Angeles District Army Corps] and local agencies have barely kept pace in providing necessary flood control works to protect the momentous growth of population and industry in southern California.”¹⁰⁸

In January and February of 1969, two large storms comparable to the March flood struck the region. Depending on one’s viewpoint, flood control was either a success or a failure. The City of Ontario Risk Management report claimed the two floods created the most damage of any previous flood on record. Damage in San Bernardino County was estimated at \$54 million and caused at least 13 deaths.¹⁰⁹ “Nineteen inches of rain fell in Ontario over a 24-hour period.”¹¹⁰ For historian Anthony Turhollow, success or failure of flood control does not depend on the damages and costs of the flood, but how much money was saved and damage was prevented as a result of flood control.¹¹¹ “The system more than paid for itself by preventing more than \$1.5 billion in flood damages and preventing the loss of many lives.”¹¹² Former Los Angeles County Board Supervisor Frank G. Bonelli stressed “in 1969 that ‘the overall flood control system prevented

¹⁰⁸ Turhollow, 170.

¹⁰⁹ “Risk Management,” <http://www.ci.ontario.ca.us/index.cfm/8311/16527> (accessed 12/14/2009).

¹¹⁰ “Risk Management,” <http://www.ci.ontario.ca.us/index.cfm/8311/16527> (accessed 12/14/2009).

¹¹¹ Turhollow, 187.

¹¹² Turhollow, 187.

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one of the worst catastrophes in the history of Los Angeles County.”¹¹³

Today, southern Californian’s experience a near worry free environment as compared to those who lived here in the early part of the 20th century. Many residents probably never realized that southern California has a flood problem. Truth be told, we still do not understand completely. The Army Corps of Engineers and local water districts are continually improving flood control.

In 1979, the Army Corps realized flood control was insufficient on the Santa Ana River. The Prado Dam was targeted for improvement. Increased urbanization downstream and a stronger understanding of the Santa Ana basin hydrology led the Army Corps to conclude, “that a greater degree of protection than the dam now affords is needed.”¹¹⁴ Their recommendations required raising the dam by 30 feet and increasing the output release of water from 5,000 to 30,000 c.f.s.¹¹⁵ The work proposed in 1979 was finally completed in recent years. Another major project for the Army Corps of Engineers was the Seven Oaks Dam in Mentone, CA. The dam is located in the foothills at the canyon opening of the Santa Ana River. Compared to Prado Dam, the Seven Oaks Dam dwarfs the 1938 flood control centerpiece. The Mentone Dam was first mentioned as a future construction endeavor in 1979 and the Army Corps began construction of the Seven Oaks Dam (Mentone Dam) in September 1995.^{116 117} Completed in 2000 the Seven Oaks Dam measures 550 feet high and 2,980 feet across and was built at a cost of \$420 million.¹¹⁸ The Seven Oaks Dam became the centerpiece in a renewed effort to provide greater protection for the Santa Ana basin community. Almost \$1.4 billion was appropriated in 1986 to re-modernize flood control along the Santa Ana River and its tributaries.¹¹⁹

¹¹³ Turhollow, 187.

¹¹⁴ U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in California, *Water Resources Development*, (South Pacific Division, 1979), 80.

¹¹⁵ U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in California, 80.

¹¹⁶ U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in California, 80.

¹¹⁷ “Corps Begins Work on California Dam,” *Civil Engineering* 66, no. 2 (February 1996): 17.

¹¹⁸ “Seven Oaks Dam Project,” San Bernardino County. <http://www.co.san-bernardino.ca.us/flood/damage.htm> (accessed 5/1/2010).

¹¹⁹ “Seven Oaks Dam Project.”

Is spending an additional \$1.4 billion on flood works' projects justified? Does the cost outweigh the benefits? For those who remember 1938, the money was well spent. Just as the March 1938 flood illustrated to the Army Corps the dire need for a serious approach for flood control, the floods of 1969 demonstrated the constant need for flood control improvements. The solution became the \$1.4 billion program to prevent possible future loss of life and damage. Anthony Turhollow indicates the same attitude toward flood control, "Because floods sometimes do not occur for a number of successive years, the question of the need for a flood control system is invariably raised. However, when the inevitable floods do occur, then public appreciation for the foresight of engineers is openly and gratefully manifested."¹²⁰ The benefits of flood control are not limited to the protection of life and property, but are indirectly linked to increased wealth and taxes.

Uncovering the Indirect Benefits of Flood Control

Since adopting a proactive approach to flood control after the March 1938 flood, southern California's available land use has spread remarkably. As discussed earlier, Major Theodore Wyman introduced the direct and indirect benefits of flood control as a side note in his April 15, 1937 report. After the completion of the Army Corps proposed projects, to a certain extent floodwaters could be contained. Colonel R.C. Hunter in a November 1, 1946 report illustrated that the Army Corps shifted its focus to analyzing benefits of flood control in addition to flood control improvements. The report reads:

A study of growth in population and of business and industrial trends indicated that as a result of future development the total average value of residential, business, and industrial property in the overflow zones during the next 50 years, 1947-96, generally will increase 50 percent and that the total average value of highway property and public utilities, including sewers and water systems, generally will

¹²⁰ Turhollow, 187.

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increase 30 percent. Property values were estimated on the basis of prewar (1940) conditions. Based on 1946 replacement costs, present property values are estimated to be from 50 to 100 percent greater than prewar values. The 1940 true value of nonmilitary property in the principal overflow zones is estimated at \$167,213,000, including \$55,864,000 for residential, business, and industrial property, \$68,080,000 for agricultural property.¹²¹

Over time, flood control allowed an increase in property values, and a corresponding rise in property tax revenue. Local governments, such as the County of San Bernardino, realized the positive impacts of flood control. A Board of Supervisors meeting held on December 22, 1947, urged the federal government to embark on new flood control improvements. By law, local interests have to fund a portion of flood control improvements. Yet, the recorded minutes illustrated that the local interests were willing to contribute their portion of funds to lure Congress to contribute monies for new channel improvements:

Minutes of the Board of Supervisors of San Bernardino County acting as ex-officio Board of Supervisors of San Bernardino County Flood Control District” meeting held December 22, 1947. BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that, if the above described channel improvements be authorized by the said Congress, then the San Bernardino County Flood Control District, to the best of its ability, will assist the Federal Government in undertaking said flood control improvements by assuming the following obligations, to-wit:

- (1) Those non-Federal contributions, which are required by Federal laws.
- (2) In addition---and in recognition that property values would be increased by the improvement with

¹²¹ Colonel R.C. Hunter, Chief Engineer Los Angeles, 11/1/1947, “Report of Survey of Santa Ana River and Tributaries, California, for Flood Control,” 34-35; Santa Ana River (CA) SR Enclosure 1-8 11-1-46; box 161; RG 77, NARA.

increased utilization of the land protected from flooding --- and if such payment shall be required by Congress in authorizing the improvement, contribute \$200,000.00 of the first cost of the project.¹²²

The crucial part of this document is that it does not state that flood control improvements are for the protection of the residents; instead the supervisors recognize the land use and property benefits only. Then the Board entices Congress to appropriate funds, because they have already agreed to provide the county's financial contribution for flood control. As a hypothetical question, this type of behavior can also breed corruption in local governments worthy of investigation. If property values are low because its location is on a floodplain and local officials knowingly ask for improvements that will undoubtedly increase property value, one could buy the land cheaply before the flood control improvements are made and then later and sell it for a substantial profit.

Examples of increased land use can be seen throughout southern California. The City of Yorba Linda is a prime example of floodplain land that is utilized for residential and business use. Below is an illustration, using Google Earth, of the current development that has taken place in the City of Yorba Linda. The other is a photograph that was taken by the Army Corps during the March 1938 flood. The two are taken from virtually the same perspective. Compare the Santa Ana River's size while in flood and the land developments that have taken place. Clearly, the untold wealth Major Wyman noted in his April 1937 report was discovered. Thus, flood control allowed for future developments on the floodplain creating an immeasurable amount of wealth.

¹²² "Minutes of the Board of Supervisors of San Bernardino County acting as ex-officio Board of Supervisors of San Bernardino County Flood Control District," December 22, 1947; Santa Ana River (CA) SR Enclosures 1-8 11-1-46 [3/3]; box 161; RG 77, NARA.

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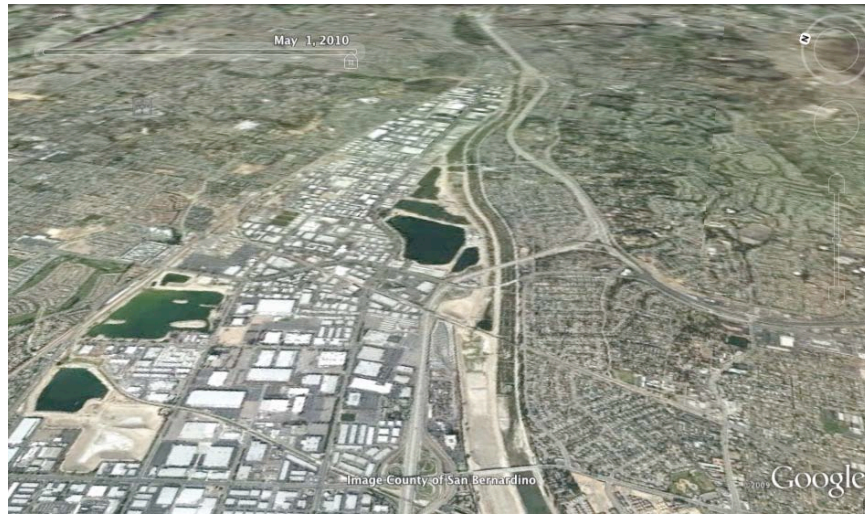


Figure 11. Image Captured from Google Earth. City of Yorba Linda as of 2010: Note the Arrow pointing to Yorba Bridge. The blue line marks the path of the Santa Ana River.



Figure 12. Reproduced from the Holdings of the National Archives at Riverside. Photo taken 3/3/1938. View looking northeast on Santa Ana River. Note the arrow pointing to Yorba Bridge. Compare the two photos, the size of the Santa Ana River and permanent developments encroaching on the floodplain as to agricultural land.

Conclusion

The question as to whether the region was worth protecting from flooding might sound superfluous after analyzing flood control on the Santa Ana River basin. The untold wealth created from extended land use and the drastic increase in property tax revenue certainly improved the region. Flood control allowed the region's economy to shift from primarily agricultural to industrial. The defense industry prospered in southern California, bringing with it skilled workers. In fact because the defense industry was so critical in southern California flood control became a matter of national security.¹²³ During World War II, the Cold War, the Korean War, and Vietnam, the United States relied on southern California's defense material and technology output. If a large flood disrupted the defense industry, it could cripple the U.S. military and hinder its ability to supply equipment to the troops at home and abroad.

Of course some criticism arises when discussing flood control projects. The mere sight of concrete channels and dams take away from the beauty of the southern California landscape. Mike Davis's book, *Ecology of Fear*, argues that flood control was a political construct. "The Los Angeles River- the defining landscape of the nineteenth-century city-was sacrificed for the sake of emergency work relief, the preservation of industrial land values, and a temporary abatement of the flood problem."¹²⁴ Moreover, flood control benefited wealthy large landowners who forced "the natural river into a concrete straitjacket-destroying the riparian ecology and precluding use of the riverway as a greenbelt."¹²⁵ Inversely, in densely populated, flatland areas such as Orange County and Los Angeles, unsightly concrete channels might be the only option to assist water out of the area rapidly. The debate may still continue today, but after the residents of southern California and the nation experienced or witnessed the affects of the March 1938 flood, perceptions changed.

¹²³ Turhollow, 165.

¹²⁴ Mike Davis, *Ecology of Fear* (New York: Metropolitan Books Henry Holt and Company, 1998), 71.

¹²⁵ Davis, 69.

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The timing of the March flood was critical. Since the region's population was large enough to warrant concern about flood control, yet was not developed to the size of the 1950's California, a national calamity was averted. Had the circumstances been different, the 1938 flood might have done to southern California what Hurricane Katrina did to New Orleans in 2005. The March flood marked a turning point in southern California. Modern flood control began just before an industrial and population explosion occurred. Those devastated by the flood may not agree with such a positive outlook, but future residents should be made aware of California's natural flooding occurrences. As historian Anthony Turhollow wrote, another lesson the March flood provided was the need for a permanent disaster agency. The dependence on volunteers became outdated. "Plans for an emergency relief organization began as a result of the 1938 flood to cope with sightseers and looters, as well as to provide emergency aid."¹²⁶ Only sporadic flooding occurred in the wake of the major storm that passed through southern California in January 2010. The most severe images reported on television were a neighborhood in Long Beach submerged in two feet of water: enough to cause damage, but nothing compared to prior floods.

If comparing rainfall from the past and superimposing it on the southern California of today, 2010, one wonders what the possible outcome might be. The rainfall that caused the 1862 flood caused insignificant damage, but what if that storm occurred in today's vastly developed area? The Army Corp believed in the 1940's that the structures they built could withstand maximum probable floods. The flood of 1969 proved their calculations wrong, which then sparked the construction of the Seven Oaks Dam and increase of the Prado Dam's overall height. In the past decade the Inland Empire has grown tremendously. That growth has caused numerous housing projects and roads covering the bare ground with asphalt and concrete, furthermore adding sewers and storm drains that ultimately empty into the Santa Ana River. Since severe flooding has not occurred in recent decades, as a result of flood control developments, the population may not be aware of

¹²⁶ Office of the Chief of Engineers Los Angeles District General Administrative files 1935-1950 800.73, box 40; RG 77, NARA.

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the potential of major rainstorms. Historians need to educate and remind the community of the region's past flood disasters.

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Figure 1. Southern California basin. Accessed March 20, 2010.

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Figure 2. Loma Linda Wave. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Los Angeles District, *Flood Plain Information: San Timoteo Creek, Vicinity of Loma Linda San Bernardino County California*, June 1973 Prepared for San Bernardino County Flood Control District, p. 35.

Figure 3. Picture 63; Santa Ana River + other streams, CA 1937 (ENCL.) [5/5]; Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers Civil Works Projects 1935-1979, Box 505; Record Group 77; National Archives Pacific Region, Riverside, CA.

Figure 4. Santa Ana River, San Bernardino Valley, History of Floods Chart. Accessed March 20, 2010.
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Figure 6. Picture 81; Santa Ana River + tribs., CA-1939 (ENCL.) [1/5]; Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers Los Angeles District Civil Works Projects 1935-1979, Box 508; Record Group 77; National Archives Pacific Region, Riverside, CA.

Figure 7. Major Theodore Wyman, May 28, 1938, Flood of February 27 to March 3, 1938 Above Prado Dam Site, photo 19A; LA 800.73 Storm Damage (Photos) 15; Box 40, RG 77, NARA.

Figure 8. Major Theodore Wyman, May 28, 1938, Flood of February 27 to March 3, 1938 Below Prado Dam Site; LA 800.73 Storm Damage (Photos) 14 [1/2]; Records of the

Office of the Chief of Engineers Los Angeles District
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Figure 9. Major Theodore Wyman, May 28, 1938, Flood of
February 27 to March 3, 1938 Below Prado Dam Site,
photo 52; LA 800.73 Storm Damage (Photos) 14 [1/2];
Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers Los
Angeles District General Administrative files 1935-1950
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Figure 10. Major Theodore Wyman, May 28, 1938, Flood of
February 27 to March 3, 1938 Below Prado Dam Site,
photo 57; LA 800.73 Storm Damage (Photos) 14 [1/2];
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Angeles District General Administrative files 1935-1950
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Figure 11. Satellite Image from Google Earth of the City of Yorba
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Figure 12. Major Theodore Wyman, May 28, 1938, Flood of
February 27 to March 3, 1938 Below Prado Dam Site,
photo 104; LA 800.73 Storm Damage (Photos) 14 [2/2];
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Angeles District General Administrative files 1935-1950
800.73, box 40; Record Group 77; National Archives
Pacific Region Riverside, CA.

A Watershed Event



Adam Miller graduated with a B.A. in History in Spring 2010 with Departmental Honors. He also possesses an A.A. from Riverside Community College. Adam's future plans include attending the Single Subject

Teaching Credential Program at California State University, San Bernardino next fall and continuing on for a graduate degree. His future career plans include teaching at the secondary level or working as a historian in a government agency. He wishes to thank his professors and fellow students who pushed him to do his utmost academically and especially his wife for the loving support she has given to him in his academic journey and greatly looks forward to their three-week vacation to London and Paris this summer.

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Preserving Local History: The Important Role of the Small Museum **"Unofficial" McDonald's Museum and Original Store Site.**

Albert Okura, owner and director, San Bernardino, California
Route 66 Museum. Paul Chassey, board of directors, Victorville, California.



Original sign at the first McDonald's Restaurant (personal photo by author)¹

The proliferation of historical museums attests to human fascination with the past and the desire to be in the physical presence of history. In Southern California, one has access to numerous large, world-class institutions where stunning collections are abundant, artfully displayed, and arranged in such a fashion that a visit feels more like a profound experience. Often overlooked in the search for cultural experience and historical preservation is the small museum, which plays a role in the community that a larger institution cannot attempt. In the area of

¹ All photos of the McDonald's Museum taken by the author and printed with permission from Jack Markus.

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greater San Bernardino, California, a handful of these little attractions are working to diligently preserve and promote local history, providing a common ground for the surrounding communities to come together, and greatly enhancing the cultural landscape.

One such institution engaged in this noble pursuit is the Unofficial McDonald's Museum on E Street in downtown San Bernardino. Built on the site of the original McDonald's Hamburgers restaurant, which opened in 1948, the unassuming building boasts the large sign that drew customers into the first drive-through establishment beginning in 1953. Though the building itself is not original, as the restaurant was torn down in 1972, it marks the very spot where the birth of a pop culture icon and the fast food industry took place. Inside, visitors find a veritable mountain of material, including photos, retired playground equipment, advertising signage, Happy Meal toys, and literature. As is often the case with small institutions such as this, every available corner and surface is utilized to display the abundant artifacts.



"Unofficial" McDonald's Museum (personal photo by author)

The site was purchased in 1998 by Albert Okura, owner of the local chicken restaurant chain, Juan Pollo. According to Jack Marcus, the Juan Pollo product developer and animator who runs the museum part-time, Okura admired the tenacity and business

plans of the restaurant's founders, the McDonald brothers, and Ray Kroc, who purchased the chain and created the corporation that remains in place today.² However, Okura's museum must be careful to make clear that it is not associated or affiliated with the McDonald's Corporation, and it is actually regularly monitored to make sure this condition is upheld.³ In spite of this restriction, there is no denying the importance of the site to the history of San Bernardino, and Markus is actively involved in keeping that history alive. He listens intently to the personal stories of people who remember the original restaurant and then relates those same stories to other visitors to the museum, displaying the characteristic back and forth exchange of culture and information distinctive of a small, local institution. He states that, in this way, he is able to impart information that many people have never heard and may find surprising, such as the fact that the original McDonald's BBQ restaurant of 1948 was staffed by carhops who were always attractive, young females that carried bottles of white shoe polish with them to keep their work boots looking spotless.⁴



Signage outside the Route 66 Museum in Victorville, California (personal photo by author)⁵

The birthplace of the iconic fast food giant draws visitors from all over the world on a regular basis, showing that the museum is much more than a simple piece of kitschy Americana.

² Personal Communication, Jack Marcus to Jennifer Ferguson, May 8, 2010.

³ Personal Communication, Jack Marcus to Jennifer Ferguson, May 8, 2010.

⁴ Personal Communication, Jack Marcus to Jennifer Ferguson, May 8, 2010.

⁵ All photos of the Route 66 Museum taken by the author and printed with permission from Paul Chassey.

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As well, its simultaneous popularity with locals belies its function as a source of local history, pride, and community. Markus notes the institution's "open-door policy" despite its residence in a part of the city known for a fairly high level of crime, and states that Okura would not charge a fee for admission "out of respect" for both the community and the men who made the location famous.⁶ It is this level of bravery and esteem for one's neighbors that makes the "unofficial" McDonald's museum a local treasure and provides a cultural "common ground" on which the diverse populations of the greater San Bernardino area can come together and celebrate that which has shaped the area and its residents.

The growth of the first McDonald's restaurant was partially contingent upon its location on Route 66, which channeled travelers through downtown San Bernardino, and this connection is evident in the small section in the museum's rear that showcases Route 66 memorabilia as part of its permanent collection. One cannot escape the influence of the Mother Road in San Bernardino and the surrounding communities, and a short trip north into the High Desert warrants a visit to the Route 66 Museum in Victorville, California. This small institution is also a free attraction filled with local artifacts, though its focus is entirely on the influence and legacy of Route 66.

Celebrating its fifteenth anniversary this year (2010), the Route 66 Museum boasts a diverse, eclectic collection and a clientele that travels from all over the world to learn about the history of the famous route. Board of Directors member Paul Chassey estimates that around ninety percent of the total visitors are non-locals, with fifty to sixty percent of those non-locals coming from outside the United States.⁷ When they arrive, patrons are treated to a visual representation of the Mother Road and how it shaped the greater San Bernardino area, particularly the High Desert. Road and advertising signs adorn all available wall spaces, numerous artifacts sit neatly in glass cases, and many larger items are unencumbered by enclosures and thus available for closer scrutiny.

⁶ Personal Communication, Jack Marcus to Jennifer Ferguson, May 8, 2010.

⁷ Personal Communication, Paul Chassey to Jennifer Ferguson, May 13, 2010.



Route 66 Museum in Victorville, California (personal photo by author)

In a place such as California, which Chassey feels is "notorious for tearing things down," he states that the museum's main goal is to save whatever it can for the benefit of future generations.⁸ When there are large historical pieces they are unable to save, such as buildings, the museum endeavors to document such artifacts in pictures and written descriptions. In this way, they are preserving as much history as they possibly can, and providing the community with a sense of its origins and its importance. It is likely that, in their absence, much of the cultural artifacts and knowledge that they have accumulated would have been lost forever. Despite their considerable contribution to the community, the Victorville Route 66 Museum faces several challenges with regard to finances, community support, and adequate numbers of volunteers.⁹ Hopefully the museum can continue to achieve its goal and survive, as its presence in the High Deserts constitutes fully half of the area's museums.

Both the Route 66 Museum and the McDonald's Museum boast a relaxed and friendly atmosphere that is common to small institutions of local history. The experiences of visitors are more personal and individual than is usually possible at a larger, for-profit museum thanks to passionate staff members and self-proclaimed goals of community service and education. What these institutions may lack in polish and prestige is more than compensated for by their distinctiveness and personality. Their

⁸ Personal Communication, Paul Chassey to Jennifer Ferguson, May 13, 2010.

⁹ Personal Communication, Paul Chassey to Jennifer Ferguson, May 13, 2010.

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efforts are preserving local history, both for residents and visitors, and give the residents of the greater San Bernardino area a cultural anchor to strengthen their senses of self and their relationships with each other. If you are searching for something fulfilling, interesting, and inexpensive to do close to home, consider patronizing one of the small, local museums in your area. You never know what you might discover.

Jennifer Ferguson
California State University, San Bernardino

Greater San Bernardino Area Museums

<p>"Unofficial" McDonald's Museum and Original Restaurant Site 1398 North E Street San Bernardino, CA 92405 (909) 885-6324</p> <p>Route 66 Museum 16825 South D Street Victorville CA 92393 (760) 951-0436 www.califrt66museum.org</p> <p>Robert V. Fullerton Art Museum California State University, San Bernardino 5500 University Parkway San Bernardino, CA 92407 (909) 537-7373 museum.csusb.edu</p> <p>A Special Place Children's Museum 1003 East Highland Avenue San Bernardino, CA 92404 (909) 881-1201</p> <p>Redlands Historical Glass Museum 1157 Orange Street Redlands, CA 92373 (909) 798-0868 www.historicalglassmuseum.com</p>	<p>Lincoln Memorial Shrine 125 West Vine Street Redlands, CA 92373 (909) 798-7636 www.lincolnshrine.org</p> <p>California Museum of Photography University of California, Riverside 3824 Main Street Riverside, CA 92501 (951) 827-4787 www.cmp.ucr.edu</p> <p>Harrison Exhibit Center 16367 Main Street Hesperia, CA 92345 (760) 244-5488</p> <p>San Bernardino History & Railroad Museum 1170 West 3rd Street San Bernardino, CA 92408 (909) 537-7373</p> <p>Victor Valley Museum & Art Gallery 11873 Apple Valley Road Apple Valley, CA 92307 (760) 240-2111 www.vvmuseum.com</p>
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**Art, Activism, Access: 40 Years of Ethnic Studies at UCLA.
Fowler Museum, UCLA.**

Marla C. Berns, director; Betsy Quick, director of Education; Sebastian Clough, director of Exhibitions. February 28, 2010-June 13, 2010.

The city of Los Angeles is known for its ethnically diverse population. Consequently, L.A. has often been a focal point for discussions regarding ethnicity. It seems appropriate, therefore, that the exhibit, *Art, Activism, Access: 40 Years of Ethnic Studies at UCLA* should detail the history – as the title suggests – of ethnic studies at the University of California, Los Angeles. The exhibit is part of the 2009-2010 celebration of forty years of ethnic studies at UCLA. The purpose of the exhibit is to present the history of ethnic studies at UCLA to a general audience of museum patrons.¹

The exhibit's history begins in 1969, when social tensions created by the Civil Rights Movement increased public demand for an ethnic studies program at UCLA. UCLA Chancellor Charles Young established the university's four ethnic studies centers in response to this demand. These were among the first ethnic studies programs in the United States. The four centers – the Asian American Studies Center, American Indian Studies Center, Bunche Center for African American Studies, and the Chicano Studies Research Center – were established in order to study issues facing ethnic minorities and to raise public awareness regarding these issues.

Art, Activism, Access: 40 Years of Ethnic Studies at UCLA is a collaborative effort between the four ethnic studies centers, the UCLA Institute of American Cultures, and the Fowler Museum at UCLA. The wide variety of artifacts and images on display in the exhibit are testaments to the depth of interdepartmental cooperation; each of the four ethnic studies centers' archives provided books, films, journals, murals, newspapers, photographs and many other materials for exhibition.

¹ Betsy Quick, interview by author, by phone, April 27, 2010.

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The exhibit is situated in a spacious room adjacent to the museum courtyard. A room-sized display case in the center loosely divides the exhibit into four sections representing the ethnic studies centers. Immediately upon entering the exhibit, patrons will see a glass case containing newspaper articles detailing the founding of UCLA's ethnic studies program.

The exhibit uses such primary written materials to narrate its complex history. Interspersed throughout the exhibit are glass cases displaying newspaper articles, academic journals and books. One campus newspaper recounts UCLA students' reaction against the 1996-1997 state legislation curtailing affirmative action in California. Another article describes the American Indian Movement's (AIM) occupation of Alcatraz Island in 1969. The written materials are not presented in chronological order, but patrons who circle the room and read each exhibition will gain a broad idea of the exhibit's history. A limitation on some written materials is their relative inaccessibility. Many texts are closed and neatly shelved inside glass display cabinets, leaving patrons to infer content from book titles. Without accessibility, these particular texts do not contribute to the exhibit's history in a significant way.

Despite its reliance on primary written sources, the exhibit does not neglect other sources of media. In terms of visual media, the exhibit showcases a variety of material, including three large murals. Two fourteen-year-old students attending a summer session at UCLA painted one of these murals around 1970. This untitled mural depicts the ethnic pride and solidarity of a black community.

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Untitled, 1971. Los Angeles, CA. Mural by Richard Wyatt and Guillermo Anderson. Photograph courtesy of Stacey Abarbanel.

The exhibit effectively uses its vibrant and evocative visual media to supplement its history. An example of this historical narration using visual media can be seen in the photo series, “Life in a Day in Black L.A.,” which documents the grim repercussions of the Los Angeles Riots in 1992 for L.A.’s black communities.

The exhibit also makes effective use of visual media using film. Most of the exhibit’s films are displayed in two media centers containing a total of seven televisions. Patrons are free to watch clips from films such as Marco Williams’ “In Search of Our Fathers,” Duane Kubo and Robert Nakamura’s “Hito Hata: Raise the Banner,” as well as other documentaries. The use of film is limited by the fact that only one pair of headphones is available per television. This discourages groups from watching the same film simultaneously. This is only a minor limitation; the films provide a human voice to the exhibit, even when viewed by one person at a time.

The exhibit’s overall presentation is exceptional; it balances artistic materials with written materials, thus patrons are exposed to both the cultural and academic accomplishments of the ethnic studies centers. The exhibit does not, however, leave patrons with a clear idea as to the impact of UCLA’s research. After forty years of ethnic study, what can UCLA tell Americans about where

ethnic minorities stand today? The answer is inconclusive, but the history presented at the exhibit suggests that progress has been made. UCLA's campus newspaper, *The Daily Bruin*, explains the exhibit's lack of closure in quoting Claudia Mitchell-Kernan, vice chancellor of the UCLA graduate division: "We need to be aware that the struggle is not complete. We all wish for a more just society ... This [the exhibit] represents to many of us the contributions we have made towards that end."²



Education Through Struggle, 1995. Los Angeles, CA. Mural by Darryl Mar and students. Photograph courtesy of Stacey Abarbanel.

UCLA's exhibit, *Art, Activism, Access: 40 Years of Ethnic Studies at UCLA*, accomplishes its stated goal; it successfully presents the history of ethnic studies at UCLA. The largest flaw in the exhibit is in the history it covers. UCLA's research on the political and social struggles of ethnic minorities is ongoing, thus the exhibit feels incomplete. In other words, the exhibit tells an unfinished story. Despite minor issues in presentation, the exhibit makes excellent use of its materials to tell this unfinished story.

Chris Moreland
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² Aly Holmes, "Exhibit Honors UCLA Ethnic Studies," *The Daily Bruin*, February 26, 2010, under "A&E," <http://www.dailybruin.com/articles/2010/2/26/exhibit-honors-ucla-ethnic-studies/> (accessed May 12, 2010).

Home Lands: How Women Made the West

CAROLYN BRUCKER and VIRGINIA SCHARFF, curators. Autry National Center of the American West April 16 – August 22, 2010.

Companion Volume: *Home Lands: How Women Made the West* by VIRGINIA SCHARFF and CAROLYN BRUCKER Berkeley: University California Press, 2010.



When we think of women in the old west we think of the rugged and brave pioneer wife or perhaps the clever and spiritual Native American woman. But do we ever consider women in the old West as doctors, mayors, authors or builders? As we move beyond the stereotypical Little House on the Prairie and Pocahontas, we uncover a rich and diverse history of women in the West shaped by the choices they have made, each individual and remarkable in its own right.

Home Lands exhibit at the Autry National Center offers the visitor a unique perspective on how women have shaped the west based on their choices as providers and leaders. The exhibit focuses on three themes that have integrally influenced the lives of women in the West: earth, transportation and water. To highlight

the themes, three regions in the west were chosen as focal points for the exhibit: northern New Mexico for earth, the Colorado Front Range for transportation and Puget Sound, Washington for water. Patrons are exposed to a multitude of mediums including vision, sound, and tactile experience that delight the senses and inspire the mind.

On the day of my visit to the museum the exhibit halls were full of people, men and women, all from different ethnic backgrounds, each one admiring this unique perspective of women's history. One of the curator's goals in designing the exhibit was to create a space that would appeal to a wide audience range.¹

Earth

Entering the exhibit hall the smell of wood hits your olfactory sense from the simple peg board that displays the title of the exhibit. Dr Brucken, one of the curators, explains that simple, home materials that would be accessible to women were the inspiration behind the entrance wall and all of the walls in the exhibit.² Moving on, the visitor sees an immense wall covered in corn husks, underneath of which is displayed a massive grinding stone and pottery of the southwest, handmade from the earth by women. This area brings the visitor right into two main themes of the exhibit: home and the earth. In a side room, a visitor can sit and enjoy a projection of the stories of one woman's experience as a mixed-blood woman growing up in the southwest—read from her diary by her granddaughter—which celebrates the diversity and rich culture of the region. The room's walls are made of burlap, purposely wrinkled to create texture and bring it to life. Along a large wall in the back of the exhibit area, a mural celebrates the twentieth century generations of women of the southwest. Dr. Brucken pointed out that instead of creating a handrail to protect the mural, a floor mosaic made of multi colored corn spells out “Earth remained a potent symbol for twentieth century New

¹ Interview and tour of the exhibit with Dr Carolyn Brucken May 11, 2010.

² Interview and tour of the exhibit with Dr Carolyn Brucken May 11, 2010.

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Mexican women” and keeps the visitors at a safe distance, while adding living texture.

One aspect of the exhibit was particularly challenging: how to display books in an interesting way that could create an interactive space for the visitor. The result is ingenious: a wall of glass encases the books, each with their own microphone sticking out with the voices of women reading from the text. As part of the same exhibit, the cookbooks of Fabiola Cabeza de Baca, an independent southwestern author, educator, and home economist who lived from 1894 to 1991, are displayed while her voice is projected through a special speaker hanging from the ceiling. This speaker is made specifically to optimize a woman’s voice range. On one of the walls in this section is a rope, along which visitors are encouraged to hang their favorite foods or recipes from safety pins. Alive with texture, sound and color, the southwest area of the exhibit brings the visitor closer to the earth and home.

Transportation

As the visitor enters the next section, the Colorado Front Range, the eyes are immediately drawn to the mustard-yellow life size figure of a Native American woman elevated on a horse. Behind her, small lights hang in the distance across the room while strips of blue dyed cloth flutter on the wall creating the illusion of a sky. This section highlights women on the move and change in the 19th and early 20th century. The visitor is struck by the manner in which transportation changed the way of life for women via horses, the railroad, and automobiles. The exhibit tells the story of Owl Woman, a Native American girl who went to live at an American fort, and it even displays her tea set; immediately upsetting the normal images of a Native American’s home. Moving on, the visitor also learns about Dr Justina Ford, the first female African American doctor in the late nineteenth century, Colorado.

One of the more popular interactive areas on the day I visited was a wall of rear-view mirrors with air fresheners hanging from them. Guests are allowed to write sayings on the air fresheners. Another striking feature of this area is the contrast between old and modern. The curators wanted to emphasize how

the landscape and women's experience has changed with each stage of transportation progress. Yet another important theme in this section shows how spaces have changed from the flat expanse of the prairies to the rectilinear spaces that occupy the landscape now with roadways and housing developments.

Water

Moving from the plains to the lush, damp region of the Puget Sound the exhibit takes us into the importance of water in women's lives, from producing income in the form of fishing and farming, to energy. Electricity in the form of hydropower transformed the lives of women through modern conveniences such as washing machines and vacuum cleaners. The navy is also highlighted in this section, as well as the women working in canneries. Telephone receivers allow the visitors to listen to the stories of one woman's experience as a Japanese immigrant in the Puget Sound. Another important theme in this area is how women from many different cultures co-existed. From Scandinavian immigrants to Japanese immigrants, the Northwest was a melting pot of independent women on the cutting edge of technology. Seattle was also home to the first female mayor in the United States and this area tells her story. The wall treatment in this area is can lids to represent the industry that allowed independence for many women in the Northwest region.

Home Lands is a beautifully unusual exhibit displaying different and lesser known aspects of women's lives in the west. The exhibit artfully employs various mediums that are fun and accessible for people of any gender and age. The goals of the curators have been masterfully met, even if a person is unaware of the underlying themes, the exhibit allows the patron to immerse themselves into the themes using the senses, so that the patron walks away with the sense that their understanding of women's experience in the west has been transformed, if even just a little.

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