

“War for Peace”:  
Race, Empire, and the Korean War

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A dissertation  
submitted in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

University of Washington

2014

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Program authorized to offer degree:  
History

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**Abstract**

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The Korean War (1950–1953) offers an apparent paradox in U.S. historical memory. Termed a “war for peace” by President Harry S. Truman and a “forgotten war” by historians, there was not much limited about the Korean War, for its extensive bombing campaign and counterinsurgent ground combat killed two million Korean civilians and displaced five million more. This dissertation asks how the war’s scale of violence could become forgotten and unremarkable in American culture. Using the conflict’s “forgotten war” moniker as a point of departure, *“War for Peace”* argues that the contradictory processes of mobilizing, justifying, and eliding state violence proved endemic and central to the projection and constitution of American empire after World War II. This dissertation proposes that forgetting was a historical and cultural process that expressed and generated the production of American power, emerging in the post-World War II moment as the application of communist containment policy.

*“War for Peace”* first traces the arc of American policy from military occupation to outright war, arguing that this history constituted a continual, repressive,

counterinsurgent war against indigenous Korean political formations. In this moment of global decolonization and early cold war positioning in East Asia, American power was exercised through its own contradictions as the U.S. military occupation of South Korea (1945–1948) formed the route to postcolonial liberation, and democracy was practiced and preserved by inflicting wartime, racial, and sexual violence on Asian bodies. The second half of the dissertation examines how the racial and gender violence of the Korean War was both referenced and obscured in U.S. culture, exploring popular films and sociological studies of black soldiers and Asian war brides that used the Korean War as a backdrop to make national claims about racial integration. When peace activists sought to oppose the interlinking violence of the Korean War and American racial politics, anticommunist repression functioned as a mechanism of forgetting, forcing radicals' broader critiques into a nationalist cold war frame.

Based on extensive research in archival and published sources—military papers, war correspondents' accounts, activists' pamphlets, popular films, and sociological studies of racial integration—this interdisciplinary study relocates the study of U.S. racial formations across the Pacific. *“War for Peace”* proposes that the U.S. project of liberation and democratization in East Asia sustained and advanced the U.S. empire by expanding its capacity to commit racial and sexual violence on Asian bodies, and that U.S. empire was reproduced through the historical and cultural forgetting of this same violence. This dissertation challenges and expands histories of U.S. power, racial integration, and sexual politics after 1945 and suggests new ways to think about the intersection of military violence, culture, and memory in the United States.

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### *A note on terms*

I use the McCune-Reischauer method of romanization to refer to place names, with the exception of well-known locales like Seoul, Incheon, and Pyongyang. South Korea has recently switched to a revised romanization system, so those currently familiar with Busan, Jeju Island, and Yeosu will here find them rendered as Pusan, Cheju Island, and Yōsu, spellings that are in keeping with their reference in American documents from the occupation and war. I have also kept the somewhat redundant practice of describing Korean villages with the usual Korean appellation “Ri.” I refer to “the villages of No Gun Ri and Im Ke Ri” in order to be accessible to non-Korean readers and to align place names most closely with the names used in English-language literature.

I have followed the Korean system of giving proper names with the family name first, except in the case of famous figures like Syngman Rhee, who were commonly referenced in English-language texts with names in the Western style.

I capitalize ‘Communist’ and ‘Communism’ in the text only when referring to a particular governmental formation, like the U.S.S.R., or to a member of the Communist Party, USA. I do not capitalize ‘communist’ when referring to an activist political milieu or fellow travelers’ politics and sympathies.

## *Organizational abbreviations*

### *Military*

FEC	Far East Command
KATUSA	Korean Augmentation to the United States Army program
KMAG	Korean Military Advisory Group
RAA	Recreation and Amusement Association
ROKA	Republic of Korea Army
SCAP	Supreme Commander of Allied Forces
USAFIK	United States Armed Forces in Korea
USAMGIK	United States Military Government in Korea

### *Governmental*

HUAC	House Committee on Un-American Activities
KDP	Korean Democratic Party
KPR	Korean People's Republic
PRC	People's Republic of China
ROK	Republic of Korea (South Korea)
UNCACK	United Nations Civil Assistance Corps in Korea

### *Activist*

ACLU	American Civil Liberties Union
ADL	Anti-Defamation League
AFSC	American Friends Service Committee
APC	American Peace Crusade
AWP	American Women for Peace
CAA	Council on African Affairs
CAW	Congress of American Women
CP	Communist Party, USA
CRC	Civil Rights Congress
FOR	Fellowship of Reconciliation
JACL	Japanese American Citizen's League
KNRP	Korean National Revolutionary Party
PIC	Peace Information Center
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
WIDF	Women's International Democratic Federation
WRL	War Resisters League

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“Good pieces,” a series of snapshots by American GIs on rest and relaxation leave in Japan during the Korean War (courtesy of the Center for the Study of the Korean War):

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## *Acknowledgments*

Writing this dissertation has been inseparable, for me, from defining my own sense of political ethics and commitments, and has been a way to account for my own very vexed journey of reckoning with the world in which I live. This is perhaps not a healthy relationship to have to one's dissertation, but I think it is the only worthwhile approach to take toward intellectual production. To do such a thing takes a life's worth of people, both inside the university and without. I owe so many people so many thanks.

My first debts as a historian are to Howard Zinn and Anthony Arnove, whom I was fortunate enough to work for as an undergraduate, and who employed me for several years as a research assistant for *Voices of a People's History of the United States*. Howard's work taught me to always think of historical narrative, to always ask whose voices are heard and whose are not. The examples Anthony and Howard both set, as activists, public intellectuals, scholars, and kind friends influenced me far more than they ever knew. I wish Howard were still alive for me to finally be able to tell him.

I could not ask for a PhD and dissertation committee more committed to my work or whose input I value more highly. Jim Gregory first welcomed me into graduate school and has consistently supported my research interests, even as they have ranged widely from social movement history to interdisciplinary theory. I continue to be grateful for Jim's faith in me and in my work, signified by his constant encouragement of this project and by his continual urging that I attend more closely to the broad historical claims that I make. In particular, Jim's intellectual mentorship has always emphasized social and political formations as a necessary part of ideological and discursive production, and this

continued emphasis has materially grounded my work and shaped the questions I ask. I am deeply indebted to Jim for his generosity, scholarship, and friendship.

Vince Rafael has always reminded me of how very interesting most everything is, and his form of widely read (and slightly irreverent) cultural and political critique has become a model for my own. Working with Vince has allowed me to bring all my various interests—photography, music, empire, violence, language, film, theory— together into a coherent whole. Uta Poiger encouraged my study of gender, sexuality, and cultural theory, and I am grateful for her patience as I worked toward achieving the high standards she set for my work. I am a much better scholar and thinker because of both of them.

Finally, Moon-Ho Jung has been a rigorous and engaged advisor and interlocutor. I am grateful for his continual attention to this project at all stages, from PhD exam essay to dissertation chapter to job application and book proposal. Working with Moon has allowed me to see this work as part of a political intervention that resituates U.S. history as imperial history, and that sees racial formation as central to American power. I am very appreciative to him for always pushing me to more clearly articulate my arguments, for sometimes seeing my claims before I could, and for his dry, sarcastic wit.

A few colleagues deserve special recognition for their capacious intellects and their open hearts, and I have benefitted from their comments on the manuscript, from their enduring interest in this project, and from their care. This dissertation would not have been possible without them. Erik Wallenberg encouraged this project from beginning to end, and has always reminded me that another world than the one I write about is possible—one not only less violent, but resolutely more fun. From my earliest

days in graduate school, Trevor Griffey has been a true colleague and a valued friend, and I place great store by his thoughtful judgment. Alice Pedersen has been an incredible interlocutor throughout this process, and I am thankful for her enduring recommitment to projects of work and of friendship. Simeon Man and I have worked so closely over the years that we are, indeed, fellow (conference) travelers, and I can't imagine a better intellectual companion. And I thank David Boarder Giles for sharing his best things with me: his words, his brain, and his compassion.

My many collaborations with Simeon Man, Kathleen Belew, and Monica Muñoz Martinez—formalized in the founding of the Histories of Violence collective—have been an intellectual and personal joy. Not only has working with the three of them refined the methodological and theoretical arguments of this dissertation, but it has also sustained me during the research and writing process. I am grateful to have found three such brilliant, kind, and politically committed friends, and I look forward to the many projects yet to come.

I have the good fortune, at the University of Washington, of benefitting from an engaged and generous faculty, and this dissertation has developed out of sustained work within and beyond my home department. The outline and stakes of this dissertation were conceived during an immensely generative summer prospectus workshop offered by Stephanie Smallwood and Alys Weinbaum, who pushed me to think deeply about archive, silence, and violence. Hwasook Nam introduced me to Korean history, generously sent me Korean source material, and has consistently believed in the importance of this work. Chandan Reddy encouraged my interest in theories of violence and the ethics of its narration, and this dissertation first took form in a long paper for a

course with him. While in Seattle, Nikhil Pal Singh introduced me to a rigorous investigation of race and empire, particularly during the cold war period, and a summer workshop with Nikhil and Eva Cherniavsky helped me to first conceive a book-length American Studies research project. Conversations with Victoria Lawson, Danny Hoffman, Susan Glenn, and Dan Berger have helped expand and refine this project's focus and delineated its stakes.

In the History Department, my own development as a historian has been enriched by working, talking, and teaching with: Jordanna Bailkin, Stephanie Camp, John Findlay, Susan Glenn, Ray Jonas, Sandra Joshel, Linda Nash, Margaret O'Mara, Ileana Rodriguez-Silva, Laurie Sears, Stephanie Smallwood, Quintard Taylor, and Lynn Thomas. My cohort in the Society of Scholars research fellowship during 2011–2012 provided a collegial and inspiring environment in which to discuss my work, and I thank Mike Honey, Sonal Khullar, Victoria Lawson, Zev Handel, David Boarder Giles, Margaret O'Mara, John Findlay, Andrew Stone, James Tweedie, Sunila Kale, Mariá Elena Garcia, and Kathleen Woodward. As an undergraduate at Northwestern University and Barnard College, Lane Fenrich, Bashir Abu-Manneh, Jennie Kassinoff, Thad Russell, and Kathryn Jay made ideas enthralling to me, and Barbara Jeanne Fields and Eric Foner's courses at Columbia first pushed me to think critically about race in U.S. history.

The Simpson Center for the Humanities has functioned as an intellectual home for me while at the University of Washington, and has allowed me space and funding in which to pursue interdisciplinary research projects. I am immensely grateful to director Kathleen Woodward, former associate director Miriam Bartha, and the staff of the Center

for maintaining such a space on campus, and inviting me into its programs. In a very real way, the Center allowed me to write the American Studies dissertation I wanted to write. Through fellowships in the year-long Society of Scholars research cohort and two American Studies dissertation prospectus workshops, the Simpson Center has actively supported my work and helped to shape its lines of inquiry.

The History Department and Graduate School have generously funded my research and writing. Most recently, I am honored to have been the recipient of the Graduate School's Alvord Fellowship in the Humanities, and I am indebted to Dr. Ellsworth and Nancy Alvord for their generosity, and for making the completion of this manuscript possible. I would like to thank the Center for the Study of the Pacific Northwest for a research grant to begin this project, and for a quarterly stipend that allowed me to write. The History Department has granted me quarterly stipends for dissertation writing, the Maclyn P. Burg travel award for research, and numerous awards to support conference travel. Two years of funding from the department's Bullitt Graduate Fellowship allowed me to completely devote my first two years of graduate school to my own studies. It has been a luxury to have so much time to write and research without other commitments, and I am deeply appreciative of the faith the department and Graduate School have placed in my work.

Even with all the time in the world, though, this project would have been impossible without the assistance of archivists and librarians and access to the collections that they maintain. Each time I work in a new archive, I am reminded of how much is to be gained in the process of searching, culling, reading and sorting, which can never be replicated by searching through online databases. At the National Archives in College

Park, Eric Vanslander helped to guide me through the labyrinthine papers of the U.S. Army. His patience, enthusiasm, good humor, and detailed understanding of the military's workings in East Asia made my time at the National Archives immensely productive. Paul Edwards and Gregg Edwards have devoted much of their careers to curating and maintaining the Center for the Study of the Korean War in Independence, Missouri, and the collection they have amassed is a testament to their belief in the importance of continuing research on this subject. I hope that they see this dissertation as one more way to think toward a "remembering" of the Korean War.

At the University of Washington Libraries, Theresa Mudrock helped point me toward numerous databases and sources, and answered any question I could come up with, while Jessica Albano and John Vallier helped me to locate old newsreels, and Hyokyoung Yi helped me with Korean language queries. For their assistance in locating specific materials and pointing me toward relevant collections, I would like to thank Stephen Robinson at the W. E. B. Du Bois Library/Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts-Amherst; Jillian Cuellar at the Tamiment Library at New York University; Amanda Leinberger at the United Nations Archives and Records Management Section in New York City; and Tammy Kelly at the Harry S. Truman Presidential Library. And though only some of these materials made it into the final work, I conducted research at a host of other institutions, and I would like to thank their archivists and staff: the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture and the Schwartzmann Manuscript Division, both in the New York Public Library System; Special Collections at Syracuse University Library; the Library of Congress Manuscripts Division; and Columbia University's Periodicals and Microfilm Reading Room.

The central ideas in most of these chapters have been presented as conference papers at the annual meetings of the Organization of American Historians, the American Studies Association, the Association for Asian American Studies, a Histories of Violence symposium, and the American Historical Association. I learned a great deal from my panelist co-presenters and commenters, and their insights have been invaluable to this work as it progressed. I would like thank commenters Ann Fabian, Kyung-Sook Boo, Lisa Lowe, David Kazanjian, Stephanie Smallwood, Paul Kramer, Susan Jeffords, and Nikhil Pal Singh, and my co-panelists Dan Berger, Kathleen Belew, Monica Muñoz Martinez, Seonna Kim, Molly Hamer, Ned Blackhawk, Andrew Friedman, Simeon Man, Daniel Kim, and Christine Hong. During their visits to the University of Washington campus, Robin Kelley and George Lipsitz encouraged me with their enthusiasm for a study of the Korean War, race politics, and culture, and pointed me toward particular resources and points of inquiry.

I owe thanks to the many other colleagues who have created a network of solidarity during my time in graduate school. Working, teaching, writing, and thinking alongside them has been a pleasure: Annie Dwyer, Chris Patterson, Su-ching Wang, Miriam Bartha, Raj Chetty, Sue Shon, Jed Murr, Eleanor Mahoney, Mira Green, Amanda Swain, Michael Reagan, Sarah Lindsley, Julie Osborn, Balbir K. Singh, Amy Piedalue, Alex Morrow, Heather Arvidson, Chelsea Jennings, Maria Quintana, and Chong Eun Ahn. Thanks are also due to my Academic Student Employees' Union, UAW Local 4121, for working so consistently to safeguard the labor conditions of student employees.

I would also like to thank the activists in the antiwar and social justice movements in New York City, Paris, and Seattle from the past two decades, who first proposed to me

that a world of violence and inequity ought to be reckoned with. In a real way, the questions and commitments of this work were first begun protesting, talking, and leafletting alongside them.

I have been sustained over the past seven years by a community of care that goes far beyond the academy. I give my deepest thanks to Kate Johnson, Mary Howland, Michael Shope, David Brinkley, Rob Anderson, Tim Thomas, Kirsten and Daimon Eklund, Aubrey Jenkins, Alex Hoepfner, Pete Jordan, Aditya Ganapathiraju, B. Margarita and Benedict (who have been the most congenial writing-desk companions), Noora Nabil el Shaari, Bridgid Roney, Christine Schorfheide, Sarah Hines, Ashley Siple, Elizabeth Schoettle, Lori Blythe, Terilyn Ware, and Jamie Hall. For providing me with a place to stay during research and writing trips, I am grateful to Christine Schorfheide, Barbara Winslow, Erik Wallenberg, Mai Nguyen, and Ellen and Catharine Newell.

Finally, this work is dedicated to all my parents. Among other things, they taught me to read, to care, to love, and to persevere: Sheila Lukehart, Andy Kindig, Jim Kelley, Dave Phillips, Jim Brinkley, Adda and Dwight Lukehart, and Craig and Judy Kindig.

## Introduction

### *Don't you see her don't you hear her*

In July of 1950, several weeks into the Korean War, the 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment of the U.S. Eighth Army in Korea massacred hundreds of Korean refugees near the South Korean village of No Gun Ri. The story of the massacre has been difficult to bring to light, circulating in private memory and oral history and emerging only due to the concerted efforts of South Korean survivors and dedicated American and South Korean journalists. The massacre and the subsequent emergence and elision of its story illustrates two central features of the Korean War: its violence, and the ways forgetting and disavowal have obstructed the story of violence from being told.

After the beginning of the war in late June 1950, the 7<sup>th</sup> was quickly rushed to Korea from their previous mission in U.S.-occupied Japan. Its soldiers were for the most part young, not well-trained, and not suited to ground combat, though they had learned the attitudes of racial contempt and casual sexual violence fostered by the American occupation of Japan. The 7<sup>th</sup> was sent into Yongdong County, South Korea, a region known to American commanders as a “red county” and “Indian country” for its history of leftist organizing after Korea’s liberation from Japanese colonialism in 1945. “Indian country” designated the counterinsurgent character of the fighting, and American and South Korean forces had spent much time between 1945 and the start of the war in 1950 trying to pacify the region.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Charles J. Hanley, Sang-Hun Choe, Martha Mendoza, *The Bridge at No Gun Ri: A Hidden Nightmare from the Korean War* (New York: Henry Holt, 2001), ch 1. See this dissertation’s chapter three for more on the occupation of Japan.

American troops from multiple regiments entered the valley near the village of No Gun Ri on July 22, 1950 to serve as backup for the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division, who were engaging the North Korean Army near the main city of Yongdong. Positioning themselves in the small villages several miles east of the city, American troops outside the frontlines sought other forms of recreation: in Chu Gok Ri, for example, Americans sought to trade cigarettes for sex, and went in search of women. Village teenager Chung Koo-hun remembered overhearing one rape after American soldiers were led to the house of a young woman; Park Hee-sook, sixteen at the time, recalled “We girls didn’t dare walk in the open.”<sup>2</sup> Several American soldiers also desecrated the village burial ground as a form of amusement. As the American troops clashed with North Korean troops near Yongdong, the fighting expanded into the nearby villages and the already frightened and wary villagers of Chu Gok Ri were told by American soldiers that they must evacuate for the nearby village of Im Ke Ri.

On Monday, July 23<sup>rd</sup>, U.S. Army orders had gone out to evacuate all the civilians in the war zone; after the order was enacted, any Korean in civilian clothes could and would be shot. On July 24<sup>th</sup>, the commander of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division ordered troops to shoot at everyone crossing the war zone’s lines, including refugees; and the Air Force, at the Army’s request, was continuing its policy of strafing all refugees approaching American positions. Navy pilots, too, were under orders to shoot at refugee groups of eight people or more.<sup>3</sup> The inexperienced, young, frightened American troops were retreating just in front of the advancing North Korean Army. In their first two days on the front, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion of the 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment “panicked” and exchanged fire in the

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<sup>2</sup> Hanley et al, *Bridge at No Gun Ri*, 102–103.

<sup>3</sup> Hanley et al, *Bridge at No Gun Ri*, 109.

middle of the night with what they thought was the “enemy” but was likely other U.S. troops.

The next day, the refugee group—now including villagers from Im Ke Ri—was told that they must leave again, passing back through Chu Gok Ri onto the eastward road, away from Yongdong. As they approached their home village, Korean families saw their houses aflame and American soldiers hurriedly packing up jeeps: their village had been sacrificed to deny the advancing North Koreans any shelter. In shock and anger, the villagers were forced to keep walking. When people strayed from the main refugee group, even to relieve themselves, remembered survivors Chun Choon-ja, Chung Jin-myong, and Park Jong-dong, they “were shot and killed.”<sup>4</sup> The villagers—about 600 in all—spent the night by a streambed on the road eastward. When they awoke on the morning of July 26<sup>th</sup>, their American escort was gone, though they could see American troops in the hills around them. As they walked eastward toward the larger city of Hwanggan they came across more dead Korean bodies: a baby “with dust settled on her face,” three bloated corpses, a woman crushed by a vehicle “like the fattened body of a rat run over by a tire.” Hot, in the midday heat, they were again detained by an American roadblock, where soldiers roughly forced the group onto train tracks near nearby No Gun Ri, searching people’s bundles and confiscating sharp knives or other potential “weapons,” and inadvertently toppling over ox carts of people’s belongings.<sup>5</sup>

Members of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry were positioned in the hills around the train tracks. The soldiers were on edge, panicked and exhausted from their previous two nights of not-quite-combat. Some had heard that refugees had tossed a grenade at other

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<sup>4</sup> Hanley et al, *Bridge at No Gun Ri*, 109–114.

<sup>5</sup> Hanley et al, *Bridge at No Gun Ri*, 113–115.

American soldiers; others claimed that a refugee woman had been found hiding a radio underneath her baby. Their order from Eighth Army headquarters came at 10am on the morning of July 26<sup>th</sup>: “NO REPEAT NO REFUGEES WILL BE PERMITTED TO CROSS BATTLE LINES AT ANY TIME.”<sup>6</sup>

As the refugees began preparing a midday meal and gathering water from the nearby stream, U.S. warplanes unleashed bombs and machine guns on the group. Chun Choon-ja, ten years old at the time, remembered the initial strafing this way: “It looked like heaven crashed on us. I threw away the water and ran to my mother. I found her moaning, breathing her last gasps. Part of her head was gone.” The planes roared away, but the Americans in the hills had now begun firing. Chun, her mother killed, ran blindly until her grandfather grabbed her hand and pulled her down into the stream and toward the tunnel of a railroad trestle, where she became separated from him again. When she reached the trestle, she found her grandfather’s body lying just short of the tunnel entrance, killed by American gunfire. “The American soldiers played with our lives like boys playing with flies,” she remembered.<sup>7</sup>

To the infantrymen of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, watching the air strike was “very hard to take,” an image that lodged in their minds decades later. Buddy Wenzel recalled that “word came through the line, open fire on them . . . We understood that we were fighting for these people, but we had orders to fire on them and we did.” When the shooting cleared, soldiers rounded up the shocked and the wounded and herded them toward the trestle tunnels. Park Hee-sook, entering the tunnel, remembered seeing babies crawling over dead mothers. Inside the tunnel it was suffocatingly hot, and when people crawled

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<sup>6</sup> Hanley et al, *Bridge at No Gun Ri*, 89–90.

<sup>7</sup> Hanley et al, *Bridge at No Gun Ri*, 121–126.

out to get water or food, they were shot. Park was so thirsty she pushed aside bodies to drink the blood mixed with water on the tunnel floor. Several people tried to plead and reason with the American soldiers to let them leave, but to no avail. As night fell, periodic barrages of gunfire shook the tunnel and tracer bullets ricocheted inside its walls. In between barrages, people tried to camouflage themselves by smearing their white clothing with dirt and slip away unnoticed. Two women gave birth in the tunnel. One woman was too injured to take the baby with her as she tried to escape, and left it behind; her family later found her wandering village streets in a hysterical frenzy. Many infants were found smothered under their dead mothers.<sup>8</sup>

On the second day, some of the survivors in the tunnel were able to escape; Chun was part of a group of ten refugees inexplicably summoned by American soldiers and given chocolate bars and safe shelter. Park was beckoned by an American soldier over to the foxholes, where she screamed at the men in Korean and pounded them with her blood-covered fists. These two girls were saved, but American planes returned to the tunnel on this second day, and gunfire continued throughout the night. When the 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry finally retreated on the morning of the 29<sup>th</sup>, only children were left alive, guarded from bullets by the dead bodies of their parents and neighbors.

Soldiers from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion remembered hearing buddies refuse to shoot, or turn, revolted, from the order to fire on refugees. James Crume remembered battalion commander Herb Heyer “sit back” and “shake his head” in an “emotional thing” when the order was passed down to fire on the refugees. Staff Sergeant Larry Levine said it was like “a feeding frenzy took place . . . Guys were shooting because they hadn’t shot before, and they had permission to shoot . . . It’s like, ‘Hey, shoot at anything that moves out

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<sup>8</sup> Hanley et al, *Bridge at No Gun Ri*, 131–137, 210.

there.” Private First Class Delos Flint, who had been caught in the culvert as well when the firing began, refused to fire on the refugees, but recalled that “A lot of guys, the orders just went in one ear and out the other.” Machine gunner Norm Tinkler, nineteen at the time, was firing into the tunnel—“we just annihilated them,” he recalled, “about like an Indian raid, back in the old days.” But he also remembered praying, “Please God, if I make it home alive, don’t let me have sons, because I couldn’t bear for a son of mine to go through this.”<sup>9</sup>

By the morning of the 29<sup>th</sup>, less than thirty people were left alive in the trestle; decades later survivors sought to account for the near 600 people who had evacuated the two villages, and estimated that about 400 were killed in the strafing and in the trestle; perhaps 200 escaped in the four days of chaos.<sup>10</sup>

South Koreans sought for years to have this massacre recognized, but it was actively repressed in both South Korea and the United States until a team of Korean and American Associated Press journalists, working with Korean survivors and American veterans willing to speak about their actions, broke the story in 1999 that prompted American and South Korean investigations. However, the Pentagon’s subsequent review of the massacre in 2001 maintained that there were never official military orders to shoot refugees, even after being confronted with documents from the National Archives. Neither the U.S. military nor the U.S. government ever issued a formal apology or offered reparations, despite a massive effort by American and Korean journalists, Korean survivors, and American veterans still haunted by what they had done.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Hanley et al, *Bridge at No Gun Ri*, 125, 132–134.

<sup>10</sup> Hanley et al, *Bridge at No Gun Ri*, 145.

<sup>11</sup> Hanley et al, *Bridge at No Gun Ri*, 285–290. For more on South Korean efforts to have the massacre recognized, see: Koo-Do Chung, *The Truth of the No Gun Ri Massacre* (Seoul: The Committee for

These journalists' reporting won a Pulitzer Prize, and the lifetime of work of South Koreans like Chung Eun-Yong, who lost his wife and children in the massacre, has made it finally a recognized event in both countries. Yet as many scholars have noted, the Pentagon review and President Bill Clinton's lack of apology helped make the massacre forgettable again, perceived as an anomaly rather than a symptom of a much more widespread pattern of massacres, indiscriminate refugee killings, and free-fire zones. Indeed, ongoing inquiries in Seoul have determined that there were hundreds of such events during the early months of the war.<sup>12</sup> These events still remain within the circulation of private memory and oral history, rather than collective memory and public recognition, and have not yet prompted a reappraisal of the character of the Korean War itself.

Park Hee-sook, the sixteen-year-old who had beat the soldiers with her fists, escaped, but remembered sitting alone in her village home, waiting for her mother, crying "all night, day in and day out." Decades later, she could still see piles of bodies in the daytime and feel their sticky flesh. Buddy Wenzel, who had "understood that we were fighting for these people," had nightmares that never stopped, and his alcohol-fueled

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Unveiling Truth about the No Gun Ri Massacre, 2002); and the Victims' Families Association, "No Gun Ri Incident" multimedia website and activist project, <http://eng.nogunri.net/english>. The massacre is still contested, particularly by American military historians: for one such account, see Robert L. Bateman, *No Gun Ri: A Military History of the Korean War Incident* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2002).<sup>12</sup> Suhi Choi, "Silencing Survivors' Narratives: Why Are We *Again* Forgetting the No Gun Ri Story?" *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 11, no. 3 (2008): 367–388; Suhi Choi, "Communicating Trauma: Female Survivors' Witnessing the No Gun Ri Killings," *Qualitative Inquiry* 17, no. 1 (2011): 23–24; Bruce Cumings, "Occurrence at Nogun-Ri Bridge: An Inquiry into the History and Memory of a Civil War," *Critical Asian Studies* 33, no. 4 (2001): 509–526; Hanley et al, *Bridge at No Gun Ri*, 269–288; and Marilyn B. Young, "An Incident at No Gun Ri," in *Crimes of War: Guilt and Denial in the Twentieth Century*, eds. Omer Bartov, Atina Grossmann, and Mary Nolan (New York: New Press, 2002), 242–258. For an account that links the No Gun Ri killings to the larger patterns of civilian killings in the war, see Sahr Conway-Lanz, *Collateral Damage: Americans, Noncombatant Immunity, and Atrocity after World War II* (New York: Routledge, 2006), ch. 4, esp. 96–103.

hallucinations were of a little Korean girl and boy who had followed him at No Gun Ri. “Don’t you see her? Don’t you hear her?” he would shout at his wife.<sup>13</sup>

The Korean War, officially fought from 1950 to 1953, was a brutal war that resulted in more than four million total casualties, and whose after-effects of famine, division, and destruction still linger. At the end of World War II, Korea was liberated from Japanese colonialism but divided between Soviet and American spheres of influence. The Korean War was an inter-Korean struggle over different responses to liberation from Japanese colonialism, transformed by the mapping of Soviet, Chinese, and American cold war concerns onto a peninsular civil war. In both North and South Korea, the Korean War is remembered as a searing and transformative historical event. Yet in the United States, the Korean War has come to be known in history books and the popular imagination as the “forgotten war,” alternately narrated as a defeat ending in armistice, as a positive test case for theories of communist containment, or as a “forgotten” event between World War II and the Vietnam War. Because of its “forgotten” character, the Korean War has been integrated into a story of the “postwar” era, and what has been remembered in America is only the forgotten nature of the war itself.

This dissertation starts from the apparent paradox of the Korean War in historical memory. Termed a “war for peace” by President Harry S. Truman, a “limited” war for anticommunist containment by policy-makers, and a “forgotten war” by historians, there was not much limited or peaceful about the Korean War. It involved saturation bombing and tens of thousands of tons of napalm, and resulted in the deaths of two million Korean civilians and the displacement of five million more. I ask how this scale of violence could

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<sup>13</sup> Hanley et al, *Bridge at No Gun Ri*, 210–211, 234–235, 241–242.

become forgotten and unremarkable in American culture. Using the conflict's "forgotten war" moniker as a point of departure, this dissertation provides a cultural history of the war's violence.

The contradictory processes of mobilizing, justifying, and eliding state violence, I argue, proved endemic and central to the projection and constitution of American empire after World War II. I frame the Korean War within a longer history of U.S. imperial expansion in order to argue that massacres like No Gun Ri were not exceptional, but rather, part of a longer historical genealogy of creating U.S. power in East Asia, one in which race, gender, and forgetting were necessary components. The wartime violence of the No Gun Ri massacre, which relied on race and gender to make Korean refugees "suspect" and available for strafing, shooting, and rape, is emblematic of the way U.S. state power worked during the Korean War. In order to save Korea from communism, Korean bodies were made available for violence as a precondition of their saving. The centrality of violence to communist containment policy was forgotten as race and gender naturalized its deployment and cultural war stories presented the war as form of liberation and democracy.

### ***"The forgotten war"***

Thinking about the Korean War in the United States is to always think about the ways of telling history, for it is a war that is largely seen as significant only through its purported absence. Indeed, it is the forgetting that marks the war as a special occurrence. "The Forgotten War" was a phrase that has commonly circulated in Euro-American war writing since the Crimean War and the American War of 1812, but it was fastened to the

Korean War by American journalists and soldiers who were frustrated with the American public's lack of sympathy for American servicemen in Korea. Since 1951, when *U.S. News and World Reports* declared the war "half forgotten" and "receding in the minds of many," the war was known as forgotten even as it was unfolding.<sup>14</sup>

Military and popular histories, buttressed by numerous documentaries, have taken up this sense of forgetting. Almost always, American cultural and historical production describes the Korean War as unwanted, bitter, and cold, an unknowable and confusing distant conflict in a distant land—a "sour little war," President Harry Truman's adviser Averell Harriman called it. General Matthew Ridgway's 1967 somewhat melodramatic and self-laudatory account of the war was one of the first postwar texts to reinscribe forgetting into the historical story of the war, prefaced on Ridgway's concern for American troops. In a passage bemoaning the lack of military strength and effective strategy troops faced in the war, Ridgway wrote: "If any war that our country ever engaged in could have been called a forgotten war, this was it. If ever we were unprepared for a war, we were on this occasion. The primary purpose of an army—to be ready to fight effectively at all times—seemed to have been forgotten."<sup>15</sup>

Clay and Joan Blair's massive 1987 chronicle of the Army infantry's operations in Korea served to affix this memory to the war by calling their 1987 history *The*

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<sup>14</sup> It seems, actually, that every war is called "the forgotten war" as it is happening or after, if the author feels the war is not receiving whatever proper memorialization might be. But it is the Korean War, the Iran-Iraq War in the 1980s, and the Afghanistan War in the 2000s that receive the descriptive moniker "the forgotten war" more often than any other. This phraseology is based on the author's targeted phrase searches in *Time* magazine and *New York Times* databases, as well as Google's "ngram" feature, which allows for a historical search across all digitized print works under Google's aegis. "Korea: The 'Forgotten' War," *U.S. News & World Report*, 5 Oct. 1951, 21; and "The Forgotten War in Korea," *U.S. News & World Report*, 29 Feb. 1952, 22–23. The phrase also appeared frequently in editorial reports about the war from 1952 and 1953.

<sup>15</sup> General Matthew B. Ridgway, *The Korean War: How We Met the Challenge, How All-Out Asian War Was Averted, Why MacArthur Was Dismissed, Why Today's War Objectives Must Be Limited* (New York: Doubleday, 1967), 88.

*Forgotten War*.<sup>16</sup> One of the most recent popular histories to be written, journalist David Halberstam's 2007 narrative history, *The Coldest Winter*, is representative of the Korean War's narration in American culture:

Korea would not prove a great national war of unifying, singular purpose, as World War II had been, nor would it, like Vietnam a generation later, divide and thus haunt the nation. It was simply a puzzling, gray, very distant conflict, a war that went on and on and on, seemingly without hope or resolution, about which most Americans, save the men who fought there and their immediate families, preferred to know as little as possible.<sup>17</sup>

For most popular histories, then, the forgetting of the war is understood as a lack of recognition of the war's political or military importance, a lack of recognition of veterans' service, and a lack of interest from the American public. Often, American military and popular histories of the war describe their goal as working toward recognition, and this has often taken the form of arguing for the Korean War's rightful place in a taxonomy of American victories and successful military interventions. For many of these authors, sometimes veterans themselves, arguing for the successes of "limited warfare" and "communist containment" is one way to make the brutality, violence, and hardships they experienced legible to themselves and the nation, and to stake a claim for commemoration and respect.<sup>18</sup>

The Korean War has also been mobilized as a way to understand the Vietnam War, as the guerrilla campaigns, napalm attacks, high body counts, and unpopular mission were all hallmarks of this first war ostensibly fought for communist containment.

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<sup>16</sup> Clay Blair's work was dependent on his research and writing partner (and wife), Joan, who rarely receives credit for the work. Clay Blair, *The Forgotten War: American in Korea 1950–1953* (New York: Times Books, 1987).

<sup>17</sup> Halberstam, *Coldest Winter*, 2.

<sup>18</sup> Among other works by and about veterans, the most notable and thoughtful among these works are Paul M. Edwards, *To Acknowledge a War: The Korean War in American Memory* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000); David Halberstam, *The Coldest Winter America and the Korean War* (New York: Hyperion, 2007); and Max Hastings, *The Korean War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987).

General Ridgway's account was written in part to emphasize his belief in containment and "limited warfare" as a necessary and useful strategy to be employed in Vietnam. Even those works critical of the U.S. wars in East and Southeast Asia view Korea through this lens: the most widely known popular portrayal of the Korean War, the film and subsequent television series *M\*A\*S\*H*, explicitly used the Korean War as the setting from which to launch a critique of the Vietnam War.<sup>19</sup>

These ways of remembering the war—even in the service of critiquing another—function as another, deeper, form of forgetting. The collective weight of these narratives is to portray Korea and its people as little more than a backdrop for American power, a land that is unknowable and that Americans did not (and do not) care to know. Such projections erase the physical violence of the war and treat the Korean peninsula as an empty space for the exercise of American power. Furthermore, they align all Americans together in the common causes of fighting and forgetting, obscuring the divisions of race, class, and colonialism in American society. The Korean War Veterans' Memorial on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. puts this simply: "Our nation honors her sons and daughters who answered the call to defend a country they never knew and a people they never met." The story told by the monument is a narrative arc that begins with the threat of communism in an unknown land and ends by proving a steadfast American commitment. As a second wall on the memorial reads, "Freedom isn't free." Freedom as a general social fact is here equivalent to American freedom, and the costs recognized and paid here are solely American lives.

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<sup>19</sup> British historian Callum A. MacDonald titled his book *Korea: The War Before Vietnam* to underscore the point (New York: Free Press, 1986). For an extended comparison between the Korean and Vietnam Wars, see Young, "An Incident at No Gun Ri," 242–258.

This way of narrating war is so normalized as to seem self-explanatory—of course enemies are enemies, of course nations valorize their troops, of course war memorials are a kind of national propaganda. But I want to further interrogate this line of thinking, because it is a particularly limiting one, a teleology by which all wars might retrospectively be made ethically sound and morally just. Following Judith Butler’s urging to think critically about the discursive frames through which the American public understands and views war and state violence, this dissertation proposes an alternative history of the Korean War as a way to account for which lives are seen as viable and grievable, which histories are told (and how they are told) and which are not.<sup>20</sup>

### ***Forgetting as an analytic framework***

The small collection of scholarship that discusses the question of the Korean War and American memory has linked the war’s forgetting to the rise of McCarthyism,<sup>21</sup> later nostalgia for a golden 1950s era,<sup>22</sup> or the Korean War’s lack of fit with earlier narratives of military victory.<sup>23</sup> More popular histories have suggested that the war’s forgotten nature has much to do with its inadequately defined objectives, from its initial definition

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<sup>20</sup> Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* (New York: Verso, 2010).

<sup>21</sup> David McCann, “Our Forgotten War: The Korean War in Korean and American Popular Culture,” in *America’s Wars in Asia: A Cultural Approach to History and Memory*, eds. Philip West et al. (New York: East Gate, 1998), 65–83; Bruce Cumings, *The Korean War* (New York: Modern Library, 2010).

<sup>22</sup> Cumings, *Korean War*.

<sup>23</sup> Christian G. Appy, “‘We’ll Follow the Old Man’: The Strains of Sentimental Militarism in Popular Films of the Fifties,” in *Rethinking Cold War Culture*, eds. Peter J. Kuznick and James Gilbert (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001), 74–105; McCann, “Our Forgotten War”; Tom Engelhardt, *The End of Victory Culture: Cold War America and the Disillusioning of a Generation* (New York: Basic Books, 1995). This was also the contention of the first political scientists and historians who wrote about the war in the 1950s and 1960s: for an overview, see Steven Casey, *Selling the Korean War: Propaganda, Politics, and Public Opinion in the United States, 1950–1953* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 3. Paul Edwards offers a military historian’s perspective, arguing that the limited objectives of the Korean War could not be conceived of as a “victory” given long-held military strategies and concepts that relied on total victory: Edwards, *To Acknowledge a War*.

by President Truman as a “police action” rather than a war, and from its ending in armistice.<sup>24</sup>

I argue that it was not purely the Korean War’s “lack of fit” with previous American war stories or Truman’s particular language that produced this forgetting. This is not, I think, just a problem with language, or memorialization, nor is it a kind of discursive sleight-of-hand. Rather, I propose that forgetting was a historical and cultural process that both expressed and generated the production of American power.

The curious thing about the violence in Korea is that it was visible to the American public despite military and publishing censorship, both in the accounts of journalists and photojournalists, and experientially in the privately circulated stories and snapshots of American soldiers. The American press kept up a near-constant reporting on North Korean and Chinese atrocities, but occasionally stories of the “savagery” of the U.S.-allied South Korean forces or of American troops surfaced. The scale of violence was seen by Americans at the time of the war, but also understood as a kind of exceptional horror.

In an influential and well-received analytical article in *Life* from August 1950, John Osborne described in detail the “savagery” of this “ugly war” of counterinsurgency. Osborne argued that the American attempt to win the war through military might alone was to “force upon our men in the field acts and attitudes of the utmost savagery.” He went on to catalogue the types of savagery at work in the war:

This means not the usual, inevitable savagery of combat in the field but savagery in detail—the blotting out of villages where the enemy *may* be hiding; the shooting and shelling of refugees who *may* include North Koreans in the anonymous white clothing of the Korean countryside, or who *may* be screening an

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<sup>24</sup> For example, see Halberstam, *The Coldest Winter*; and the PBS series *Unforgettable: The Korea War*, premiered June 2010, produced by Arizona Public Media.

enemy march upon our positions, or who *may* be carrying broken-down rifles or ammunition clips or walkie-talkie parts in their packs and under their trousers or skirts.

And there is the savagery by proxy, the savagery of the South Korean police and . . . South Korean marines upon whom we rely for contact with the population and for ferreting out hidden enemies.

Because this war went beyond the “usual, inevitable savagery,” Osborne argued that this made it an “*especially* terrible war,” “alien to the American tradition and shocking to the American mind.” His article was widely circulated among Army commanders and soldiers, and even received praise from the commander of U.S. and United Nations forces in Korea, General Douglas MacArthur.<sup>25</sup>

Osborne was precisely wrong: it was not at all “alien to the American tradition.” Soldiers in the 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry had likened their violence to “the days of Indian warfare.”<sup>26</sup> And as General MacArthur’s intelligence chief General Charles Willoughby boasted when he was protesting the uproar over the My Lai massacre in Vietnam, My Lais happened all the time in Korea.<sup>27</sup> Willoughby was right: ongoing inquiries in Seoul have determined that there were hundreds of incidents targeting the Korean population during the early months of the war, perpetrated by South Korean soldiers and their U.S. allies.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> John Osborne, “Report from the Orient: Guns are not Enough,” *Life*, 21 August 1950, 76–78, 81–82, 84–85; John Osborne, “Men at War: The Ugly War,” *Time* 56, no. 8, 21 August 1950, 20–25; James A. Linen, “A Letter from the Publisher,” *Time* 56, no. 16, 16 October 1950, 17; Marilyn Young’s reading of Osborne’s article argues that he “concedes” the violence “in the service of a larger denial,” Young, “An Incident at No Gun Ri,” 242–258.

<sup>26</sup> Captain Walter Karig, U.S.N.R., “Korea – Tougher to Crack than Okinawa,” *Collier’s* 126, no. 13, 3 Sept. 1950, 24–25, 69–70; Eric Larrabee, “Korea: The Military Lesson,” *Harper’s* 201, no. 1206, Nov. 1950, 53.

<sup>27</sup> Sahr Conway-Lanz, “Beyond No Gun Ri: Refugees and the United States Military in the Korean War” *Diplomatic History* 29, no. 1 (January 2005): 79–80; Bruce Cumings, *Korea’s Place in the Sun: A Modern History* (New York: Norton, 1997), 294–296; Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War: The Roaring of the Cataract, 1947–1950*, vol. II (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 705, 755; Cumings, *The Korean War*, 35, 152–153; Sun-A Kim, “Life and War in Korea: Photographic Portrayals of the Korean War in *Life* Magazine, July 1950–August 1953” (PhD diss., University of Missouri-Columbia, 2008), 3.

<sup>28</sup> Cumings, “Occurrence at Nogun-Ri Bridge,” 512, 518; Cumings, *Origins* II, 705.

Again and again in American war stories, the war's central fact of state violence was made visible and then contained, subsumed, and rendered invisible again. Using "forgetting" as a framework interrogates how the violence wrought by American power moved between the known and unknown, the seen and unseen, the acknowledged and the disavowed.<sup>29</sup> Osborne's groundbreaking reporting in 1950 is one example of how such violence could be both represented and obscured at the same time. Osborne was shocked, and his piece was framed as an exposé: this allowed for public knowledge of violence at work in Korea under the aegis of American democracy. But Osborne's shock also did significant work in perpetuating American power: his shock was prefaced on the understanding of military violence as an aberration, an anomaly, a departure from previous history, when it was, in fact, precisely consonant and consistent with that history. Osborne's shock was indicative of the process of forgetting, for it helped to deploy and structure American imperial power through the partial displacement—or rather, disavowal—of its own violence.

The Korean War was not an origin point for this process of forgetting, but is a particularly rich subject for interrogating the relationship between mechanisms of disavowal and imperial violence. Often, this relationship was cemented through a projection of American universalism, which was (and is) at once a political discourse, an expansionist policy, and a cultural structure of feeling by which the United States is proposed as the model of Western modernity and the wellspring of democracy. The

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<sup>29</sup> I want to thank David Kazanjian for his eloquent formulation of this in his comments on a conference paper of mine: "For it is part of the very structure of catastrophic violence to oscillate—in myriad ways, sometimes devious and sometimes haphazard—between visibility and invisibility, between testimony and silence. We thus miss a crucial aspect of such violence if we only declare *that* we must understand, see, or give voice to historical violence; if we take as our task the bringing to light of historical violence, as if such violence had not already built into its very structure a certain coming to light." American Studies Association conference, San Juan, Puerto Rico, 16 November 2012.

United States has been since its inception an imperial power, and by posing American civilization against others' barbarism, varied projects of territorial acquisition, war, racial exclusion, and forced assimilation could be justified and coded as benevolent uplift. I draw from and expand the rich scholarship on American universalism to propose that the process of forgetting was central to its conception, practice, and continuance.<sup>30</sup> As a much longer historical process, then, forgetting was not located in one institution, nor was it a specific ideology, or one singular form of power. Instead, I understand it here as a hegemonic construct in the Gramscian sense, a lived system of meanings that was always in need of being proved, reworked, and defended against alternative systems of meaning or counter-hegemonic challenges.<sup>31</sup>

Identifying this process of forgetting—that is, using it as an analytic to interpret history—compels us to think about how wartime violence has structured American politics and culture. In this framework, violence is constitutive of social and political life not just through its presence, but through its absence—or rather, its erasure. My research also suggests that ideas of what is “foreign” or “domestic,” what is “homefront” and what is “battlefront,” are in themselves a disavowal, for U.S. racial formation and gender politics were transnationally sited, occurring as much in Seoul, Pyongyang, and Tokyo as in Montgomery, Chicago, and Seattle. I am concerned with describing when and where violence against Koreans enters public discourse in the United States, but the larger aim

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<sup>30</sup> I have found the work of Odd Arne Westad and Nikhil Pal Singh very useful to think with, here, as both site their studies in the post-World War II era but emphasize the long trajectory of discourses of American universalism. Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2007), ch. 1; Nikhil Pal Singh, “Culture/Wars: Recoding Empire in an Age of Democracy,” *American Quarterly* 50, no. 3 (1998): 471–522, esp. 490.

<sup>31</sup> Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, ed. Quintin Hoare (New York: International Publishers, 1971). Raymond Williams offers a very useful reading of Gramsci's hegemony in *Marxism and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 108–114.

is to think about how the simultaneous centrality and erasure of the Korean War's violence shaped culture and politics in the United States.

***Empire, race, sexuality: conceptual tools***

To gesture toward the long trajectory of forgetting and its continual reworking, borrowings, and adaptations, I think of American power in East Asia not as a particular policy but as a process of imperial expansion. Following Paul Kramer's injunction to "think with the imperial" as an analytic category, I understand the Korean War as one event in the shaping of American empire. In part, this is a gesture toward the historical: that is, to emphasize its specificity (*this* village destroyed, *this* photograph taken, *this* argument made) and its continuity with longer histories of expansion and violence.<sup>32</sup> I argue that it is impossible to think about the layering effects of Japanese colonialism, Western military intervention, American occupation, and civil war in Korea over the first half of the twentieth century without this framework. Toward this end, I begin with a brief overview of the first American military venture in Korea in 1871, and of Japanese rule in Korea in order to contextualize and highlight what was forgotten or disavowed during the U.S. occupation and war after 1945.<sup>33</sup>

Placing the Korean War within a history of American imperial violence also challenges the impulse to cast the war in Korea and its scale of violence as exceptional. Of course I see the war as unique, as are all historical events; but there is a very important

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<sup>32</sup> Paul Kramer, "Power and Connection: Imperial Histories of the United States in the World" *American Historical Review*, 116, no. 5 (Dec 2011): 1348–1391.

<sup>33</sup> Bruce Cumings initially made this argument in his sweeping revisionist history of the war, *The Origins of the Korean War*, volumes I–II. Though I depart from his interpretation in several ways, this work is very much indebted to his scholarship. For a very useful comparative analysis of Japanese and American imperial projects of racialization during World War II, see Takashi Fujitani, *Race for Empire: Koreans as Japanese and Japanese as Americans during World War II* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).

difference between attending to the specificity of violence and arguing that it is somehow anomalous or spectacular. To discuss the Korean War only as a strange “hot war” during the cold war period would be to reproduce the very blindnesses and forgettings of American occupation officials and military generals, who often saw the Korean civil war and mass movements for self-government as eruptions of “chaos” and “disorder,” the work of subjects “unfit for democracy.”

In delineating U.S. imperial violence, I am suggesting the need to reframe the historical periodization of the cold war, for I see this as a very limiting and nation-based frame, one that reduces complex negotiations over autonomy, freedom, expansion, and rights into the formation of national blocs. Anticommunist containment as a political rhetoric relied on the disavowal of political desires and developments outside the U.S. In the West’s historical literature of the cold war, foreign policy deliberations between the United States, Russia, and China have been the central focus, reducing the Korean War first to national debates over foreign policy, and judging only how “correctly” or “incorrectly” U.S. actions destabilized Soviet communism. In this framing, the American war in Korea (and later, in Vietnam) was an over-exaggeration of the importance of East Asia to American security, an illogical attempt to define a Western bloc.<sup>34</sup>

In this dissertation I treat the Korean War as one moment in a longer genealogy of U.S. universalism, imperial violence, and forgetting.<sup>35</sup> With the devastation and defeats

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<sup>34</sup> Robert J. McMahon has argued that U.S. policy-makers grossly exaggerated East and Southeast Asia’s importance to American security, in *The Limits of Empire: The United States and Southeast Asia Since World War II* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999). The body of work on the cold war produced by John Lewis Gaddis has come to structure the historical narrative, focusing as it does on the somewhat fatalistic argument of a battle between Soviet despotic communism and American capitalist democracy. Most recently, see John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997).

<sup>35</sup> I follow Michel Foucault’s concept of “genealogy” here, as the search not for a historical origin point but the tracing of a historical route, or map of struggle. Michel Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” in

of European and Japanese imperiums after World War II, the United States came to view itself as the foremost guardian of capitalist democracy. This was both a global and a national project, for the global was collapsed into the national through the logic of American universalism: the victory of the American way in World War II proposed (to the United States, at least) that the world wanted, and needed, an American model. The wave of national liberation and anticolonial movements precipitated by World War II gave American universalism concrete form, as American capitalism and Soviet communism waged a political, ideological, and (in the case of Korea, actual) war over the path newly liberated nations might follow.

Though indebted to much longer ideas of American universalism and the racial fitness of subjects for democracy, and practices of violence, the period after 1945 ushered in a transformative adaptation and articulation of U.S. power in the world. This dissertation locates that transformation through the framework of forgetting, and argues that forgetting emerged in this moment as the practical and cultural application of communist containment policy. Liberating Korea and making it safe for democracy was judged by the amount of violence that could be visited on Asian bodies, made suspect through a counterinsurgent war.

The idea of “containing communism” and the realities of a counterinsurgent ground war made Korean bodies always-suspect, always on a moveable continuum between what Judith Butler has identified as grievable and ungrivable lives, lives that could be salvaged for “democracy” and those that were not even considered to be fully mournable lives. Race was central to this process, for race first marked bodies (“Asian”)

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*Aesthetics, Methods, and Epistemology*, ed. James D. Faubion (New York: The New Press, 1998), 369–391.

as suspect, and then facilitated their movement along the continuum, as soldiers pondered whether to shoot, as Asian American soldiers identified and disidentified with the enemy, as pilots learned to drop napalm on civilian families. I understand race, here, as a contextual process of meaning-making in conversation with other hierarchies of difference—gender, sexuality, class—that was produced by institutional structures as much as it informed and legitimated them.<sup>36</sup> In this way, race also legitimated the violence that Asian “enemy” bodies seemed to call out for, and served to erase it: if a person was Asian and was a refugee, they were suspect, and killing them made their country safe from communism.

Communist containment was also intrinsically a domestic policy, for making American democracy appealing to the decolonizing nations of Africa and Asia also meant emphasizing racial integration and racial assimilation as part of the promise of American capitalist democracy. Race figured prominently in these discursive and cultural processes that designated certain peoples, lands, and ideas as “foreign” or “domestic,” designations that enabled and erased state violence and empire in American culture. Particularly in the second part of this dissertation, I turn to investigate how anticommunism and the Korean War shaped racial formation in the United States.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Butler, *Frames of War*. I draw from the rich body of scholarship on race, capital, gender, and colonialism, and am particularly drawn to the examples set by Tera W. Hunter in *To ‘Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women’s Lives and Labors after the Civil War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997) and Glenda E. Gilmore in *Gender and Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1816–1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996). Hunter and Gilmore’s studies treat race both as a discursive formation interwoven with gender and sexuality and as a terrain shaped by institutional structures that endowed it with meaning and everyday legibility. My concern has been to explore how categories of social difference have shaped, given meaning, excluded, and included groups of people and intersected with the changing needs of American capital, nation-building, imperial expansion, and military deployment.

<sup>37</sup> I here borrow Michael Omi and Howard Winant’s concept of “racial formation,” which attends to the shifting definitions of race and the alignment of differently racialized groups (black/Asian, for example) in a particular historical moment. I do, however, resist their understanding of race as an “autonomous field”

Cold war historiography in the United States has tended to place a stark conceptual divide between the international and the national, and to see racial formation as a solely domestic concern.<sup>38</sup> Challenging such teleological renderings of U.S. history, my work relocates the study of U.S. racial formations across the Pacific and proposes that the U.S. project of liberation and democratization in East Asia sustained and advanced the U.S. empire by expanding its capacity to commit racial violence on Asian bodies. Ideas of racial integration and assimilation at mid-century, I suggest, were wartime products that emerged from and simultaneously obscured the often violent relationships between American soldiers and Asian women and men during the Korean War. It was a national commitment to racial violence against Asian bodies—marked indelibly as “gooks” through and during the Korean War—that facilitated the integration of black and white soldiers, both on the battlefield and in cultural imaginaries. As I argue, it was anticommunist political repression within the United States that forced radical protests of the Korean War and of American racism into a national, and not international, frame.

Projects of communist containment were simultaneously articulated through gender, and linked to institutions of occupation and war through the regulation, expectation, and practices of sexuality.<sup>39</sup> In this dissertation, I investigate the regulation, procurement, and cultural narration of Asian women’s sexuality by the U.S. military in order to interrogate the scale of wartime violence and its disavowal, as well as the

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distinct from gender and sexuality. Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1980s* (New York: Routledge, 1986).

<sup>38</sup> For a critique, see Singh, “Culture/Wars,” 474.

<sup>39</sup> My thinking draws first from Michel Foucault’s insights into sexuality as a discursive framework whose deployment forms networks of power relations: Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1: An Introduction* (orig. pub. 1976 in French; orig. English transl. by Robert Hurley, 1978; repub. New York: Vintage, 1990). Latin Americanist Heidi Tinsman has usefully extended this argument to propose that sexuality is the way that gender is linked to structures of power and made visible as a site for power’s contestation: Heidi Tinsman, *Partners in Conflict: The Politics of Gender, Sexuality, and Labor in the Chilean Agrarian Reform, 1950–1973* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002).

delineation of American military power in East Asia. The simultaneous U.S. military occupations in Korea (1945–1948) and Japan (1945–1952) were defined by the expectation of sexual access to Asian women’s bodies, a supposition that borrowed from ideas of gender, sexuality, and prostitution developed by the Japanese colonial state. Military occupation was largely enacted through the simultaneous regulation and expectation of soldiers’ sexual contact with Asian women, creating a landscape of sexual violence.

My work is situated within histories of empire that see sexuality as a primary arena for the functioning of imperial power. These works argue that the negotiation of sexuality solidifies, legitimates, and defines different colonial regimes.<sup>40</sup> Gender and sexuality also lent a heightened inflection to the form of forgetting I have just outlined in regards to race. As sexual access to Asian women became seen as a necessary and predictable part of soldiering, it legitimated economies of sex work and epidemics of rape. Yet this landscape was so normalized that accounts of sexual violence were seen—if they were reported on at all—as exceptions, anomalies, and local problems. In other words, American stories of sexual violence against Asian women were often not even remembered enough to be forgotten.

This forgetting informed the gender and racial formations of Asian women in the United States. The arrival of Korean and Japanese war brides to the United States involved debates over Asian women’s potential for assimilating into the U.S. racial body politic, an assimilation enabled by emphasizing Asian women’s presumed

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<sup>40</sup> For example, see: Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880–1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Laura Briggs, *Reproducing Empire: Race, Sex, Science, and U.S. Imperialism in Puerto Rico* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

submissiveness to their white husbands. Importantly, this seemingly raced and gendered deliberation worked to obscure the origins of these relationships in a militarized landscape where sexual access to Asian women was central.

### *A cultural history of violence: methodology*

This dissertation offers a cultural history of the violence of the Korean War as a way to identify and explain the historical process of forgetting. As I have proposed, forgetting is a process that appears at the level of stories, narratives, and visual frames of reference. Understanding stories as more than reflections of policy or legitimations for a particular practice of violence, I read what Judith Butler has called the discursive and visual “frames of war” as reflective of an epistemological position.<sup>41</sup> To attend to the simultaneous seeing and disavowal of some forms of wartime violence, I look at cultural expressions: photojournalism, war correspondents’ accounts, journalism, public protest, films, social science.<sup>42</sup> Edward Said has argued that culture makes the projects of empire possible, a semi-autonomous set of practices that work to define subjectivity and construct imaginative frameworks for the staging of imperial practice.<sup>43</sup> I read cultural texts not just as a kind of staging for the physical violence of U.S. empire, but as part of its deployment. That is, forgetting was produced through the material enactment of wartime violence: to burn a village in order to save it relies on and produces a structure of forgetting.

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<sup>41</sup> Butler, *Frames of War*.

<sup>42</sup> I align myself here with more recent work on the cold war that argues that cold war politics were not simply reflected nor legitimated by culture, but that the culture and politics were inextricably intertwined and mutually constitutive: Christian G. Appy, ed., *Cold War Constructions: The Political Culture of United States Imperialism, 1945–1966* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2000); Christina Klein, *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945–1961* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

<sup>43</sup> Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage, 1993).

The methodology of this dissertation has been developed in and through the growing field of scholarship on “histories of violence,” work that takes imperial and state violence as a central subject and a method of inquiry.<sup>44</sup> The aim is not to determine where and when something called “violence” occurs nor to argue for violence as an ahistorical phenomenon of sociality. Rather, our work understands violence as an intrinsic process of state formation and ask how violence reinscribes and produces new categories of difference and social relations. Following the work of Ned Blackhawk, we see violence as the “clearest and at times only window” onto historical landscapes that have been understood only through other narrative frames: in my case, “Cold War” history, “U.S. foreign policy,” or “military history.”<sup>45</sup> By emphasizing “histories” of violence, we seek new historical narratives of state formation that do not treat violent events as anomalies or aberrations, but as emergent moments in longer imperial trajectories.

As this dissertation argues, it is impossible to understand the Korean War without attending to the massive scale of state violence directed toward Koreans during the course of the war, and to the history of multiple colonialisms, American occupation, and Soviet aid that led to the emergence of two separate states on the peninsula in 1945. My method of writing violence is both an entry point and a form of critique, a way to write against the eclipsing of Korean lives and Korean history that often occurs in American war stories. I do not intend to discount the violence visited on American bodies; rather, my aim is to focus on the forgetting and disavowal inherent in U.S. cultural narration so

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<sup>44</sup> “Histories of Violence” is a framework and method I have been developing alongside Kathleen Belew, Monica Muñoz Martinez, and Simeon Man, through conferences and collaborative writing projects, the most recent of which are a guest-edited issue of *Social Text*, currently under review; and a symposium on “Histories of Violence: War and Memory” at Northwestern University, 10 May 2013. Past conference panels include: American Historical Association-Pacific Coast Branch, Seattle, 2011; American Studies Association, San Juan, Puerto Rico, 2012; Organization of American Historians, Atlanta, 2014.

<sup>45</sup> Ned Blackhawk, *Violence Over the Land: Indians and Empires in the Early American West* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 5–6.

that the ungrievability of Korean lives in American war writing can become clear.

“Histories of violence,” then, is a method that first relies on recovering untold stories and histories. But this recovery work is not the end goal, for rather than claim to have now, finally, “told” the complete history of violence, I instead hope to create new historical narratives in which the absence of these voices—and the processes of forgetting them—can be made clear. By creating a new historical framing, my hope is that these absent stories might be allowed to emerge.

Finally, the method of writing a history of violence allows me to see erasures and absences in military archives and war stories as “creative spaces.” Drawing on but departing from literary theories of trauma, loss, and mourning, I understand the absence of Korean voices and Korean lives in American war stories as starting points from which to define and challenge structures of power.<sup>46</sup> By locating the absences and outlining the spaces where stories of violence ought to lie and do not (in the archives, in popular films and war stories, in secondary histories), this dissertation offers a more intricate framing of U.S. imperial violence. In other words, my research methodology has been to read erasures and to tell the public secrets that only partially come to light, as a way to illuminate the linkages between historical violence and public memory, and how the two are intertwined. Attending to what has been omitted, erased, and disavowed is the first step toward a historical reckoning.

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<sup>46</sup> My understanding of the “creative process” of loss follows that of David L. Eng and David Kazanjian, eds., *Loss: The Politics of Mourning* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003). I depart from theories of trauma and loss as articulated by Cathy Caruth, Shoshana Felman, Dori Laub, and others, who maintain that spaces of loss can never be accessed, and that we must stop our inquiry at witnessing, or recognizing, that they exist. As I will argue, I think witnessing is a first step, but my project is rather different: it is to reckon with spaces of loss and trauma and seek to create new historical narratives from which survivors, victims, and scholars might begin to tell and directly address the violence from which they arose. Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, eds., *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

In accordance with my methodology, my archive is constructed largely of American accounts of the war: American policy-makers, American and British war correspondents and photojournalists, military officials, sociologists, soldiers, and activists. Very rarely do Korean voices appear in the American archive of the war, and I do not aim to represent Koreans as mute victims or to speak for them. Rather, my history is an effort to disassemble and reassemble American war stories, to read sources “against the grain.” I read for what things say and what they say through omission, for what is collected in official military papers and what can only be traced through the odd footnote, found snapshot, and colloquial cultural reference.<sup>47</sup>

Because they must bring some violence to light, stories of forgetting can also be reassembled into a critique of the imperial violence they make possible. Osborne’s excellent reporting on the savage tactics of American and South Korean soldiers, for example, can be leveraged to write a history of the Korean War that claims imperial violence as the central fact, and that demands a reckoning with that violence and its disavowal. As Judith Butler writes,

When the frames of war break up or break open, when the trace of lives is apprehended at the margin of what appears or as riddling its surface, then frames unwittingly establish a grievable population despite a prevalent interdiction, and there emerges the possibility of a critical outrage, war stands the chance of missing its mark.<sup>48</sup>

This dissertation is just such an attempt at changing the frames around which the Korean War, and American warfare generally, is understood, one that allows lives other than

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<sup>47</sup> In thinking about the archive, I draw from the insights of Saidiya Hartman, “Venus in Two Acts,” *small axe* 26 (June 2008): 1–14; Stephanie E. Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007); and Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 17–53.

<sup>48</sup> Butler, *Frames of War*, xxx.

American lives to be seen as grievable and that demands an active reckoning with the structures of power that made it possible.

### *Chapter overview*

This dissertation traces the multifaceted processes of forgetting through writing the history of the Korean War and earlier occupations of Korea and Japan as a cultural history of imperial violence. The opening prologue situates the Korean War within a history of Japanese colonialism and Korean mass politics in the first half of the twentieth century. To gesture toward the imperial genealogy of the Korean War and ideas of Korean “barbarism” and American “civilization,” I explore the first U.S. military venture into Korea in 1871, and the ways Koreans first came into focus in the American political imagination.

Along with the opening prologue, chapter one describes how an American forgetting of Korea was produced, and how U.S. policies, practices, racial conceptions of self-determination, and other global commitments worked to forget Korean claims to self-government and independence. Chapters one and two then locate the specific emergence of this long process of imperial forgetting in anticommunist containment policy after 1945.

Chapter one, “A Work of Love,” details the form of imperialist internationalism embraced by U.S. policy-makers as the United States developed global hegemony in the aftermath of World War II through international, multilateralist bodies like the United Nations. This tenor of imperialist internationalism was worked out alongside the rise of communist containment policy in the American occupation of South Korea from 1945 to

1948, a counterinsurgent and highly repressive form of government that was understood as benevolence, what American General John Hodge called a “work of love.” Chapter two, “(Race) War for Peace” argues that enacting military violence on Asian bodies was the practical application of communist containment policy. The war produced and relied on race thinking to justify, fuel, and erase the war’s violence. Korean refugees became objects of suspicion, easily transformed into the “gook” on a racial continuum of benevolence and ungrievability in which “gooks” were objects to be saved and made safe for democracy through killing.

Chapters three and four explore the particular ways that gender inflected the process of forgetting, and how American military practice and cultural imaginaries after World War II relied on the sexual embrace of Asian women. Chapter three, “Rest & Relaxation,” identifies the structural reliance of the American military in East Asia—both in occupied Japan and Korea—on sexual violence, and argues that American power constituted a form of gendered imperialism. I first show the linkages between Japanese and U.S. colonial practices, as the U.S. inherited and extended institutions of sex work in occupied Japan and Korea, figuring sexual access to women’s bodies as essential to the occupation. “Venereal disease” prevention programs further institutionalized sexual access to Asian women but also promoted cultural-medical narratives of racial prophylaxis. I argue that the occupations and wars in East Asia were produced through a regime of militarized sexual violence by U.S. servicemen against Japanese and Korean women, a form of violence made invisible through the simultaneous naturalization of gender and war. Chapter four, “Happy Endings,” describes the ways Korean and Japanese war brides were welcomed as symbols of a romantic East Asian-U.S.

partnership. Their presence both referenced histories of military violence, occupation, and sexual violence in East Asia yet was used to obscure their origins through a marital “happy ending.”

Building on chapter four, chapter five, “Harmonious Integration,” suggests that American racial formation during the Korean War was a wartime project. As the first war fought by the United States with a racially desegregated military, the Korean War was described by mainstream journalists, military officers, and American policy-makers as a civil rights success story. Using the Korean War as a laboratory for studying racial integration, social scientists and government officials developed a vision of “harmonious integration” out of this wartime context, one that would be used as a blueprint for domestic integration policy. The idea of the Korean War as a story of civil rights success celebrated wartime violence and masculine violence as an arena for interracial interaction, and understood “race” as a binary social division between black/white. Importantly, this vision erased the experience of Puerto Rican, Asian American, and other nonwhite soldiers, as well as the protests of black soldiers against continued military racism. In this way, the civil rights success story legitimated a binary conception of racial formation and disavowed white supremacy within the United States.

Protests against racism in the U.S. military overlapped with radical antiwar protests within the United States during the Korean War. Chapter six, “In Battle for Peace,” explores how the small yet vibrant network of activists protesting the war sought to maintain global visions of solidarity, feminism, and anticolonialism in defiance of the narrowing nationalism of the cold war political climate. These activists sought in different ways to make wartime violence against Korean civilians visible, largely

unknown campaigns that reveal how anticommunist repression functioned as a technology of forgetting to obscure wartime violence.

The conclusion offers a brief discussion of postwar films to describe how the “placelessness” of Korea helped to inscribe forgetting into American cultural narratives, and proposes a different story of the war, one that can begin to reckon with its history of violence.

## Prologue

### *“Our Little War with the Heathen”*

“There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism. And just as such a document is not free of barbarism, barbarism taints also the manner in which it was transmitted from one owner to another.”— Walter Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History”<sup>1</sup>

The history of the Korean peninsula in the twentieth century cannot be understood apart from the multiple colonialisms that shaped it. The layering of Western military intervention, trade treaties, and Japanese colonialism, as well as mass Korean protest movements against incursions onto Korean autonomy, require a longer historical view of imperial contestation. The violent American “civilizing mission” to Korea in 1871 illustrates one moment in the development of American imperialism and its attendant disavowal. A brief overview of Japanese colonialism, Korean protest, and the preservation of Japanese colonial power over Korea in the years after World War I frames the confines through which Korean protest flowed. The Korean War emerges out of this map of struggle as one development in a longer genealogy of imperial violence and its disavowal.

Even before the eighteenth century, the Chosŏn Dynasty was known to the West as a closed “hermit kingdom,” hostile to outsiders. The unification of dynastic states in the Chosŏn Kingdom in 1392 formed a feudal bureaucracy, with a centralized state and an almost caste-like class system. The long political and cultural influence of China developed into a unique Korean neo-Confucian state that emphasized a tributary

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<sup>1</sup> This is part of the seventh thesis, a work written by Benjamin in 1940 and first published in 1950. Collected in: Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, transl. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 2007), 256.

relationship with China alongside a celebration of Korean “virtues,” independence, and political and cultural autonomy. The innovations of fifteenth-century Korea—printing techniques that pre-dated the Gutenberg Bible, codified medical, mathematical, and calendrical systems, advanced military technology—created a political and intellectual elite proud of its own achievements and history. Though politically and culturally indebted to the Chinese empire, the Chosŏn Dynasty ruled over an autonomous Korean kingdom from 1392 to 1910, carefully guarding its borders and political structures from outside influence.<sup>2</sup>

By the eighteenth century, wary of China’s “opening” to the British Empire during the Opium Wars of 1839–1842, Chosŏn was increasingly hostile to the forceful attempts of Japan, the United States, Russia, France, and Britain to integrate Korea into militarized trade relationships. The development of a regional power system in East Asia, comprising an autonomous Korean peninsula, however, was interrupted by the invasion of European and American forces seeking to force Korea into the world market system through military means.<sup>3</sup>

In 1866 an American vessel, the *U.S.S. General Sherman*, sailed into Korean waters, where the crew was killed after attempting to move into a prohibited area. In May 1871, five American naval ships left Japan’s Nagasaki harbor on a diplomatic mission headed by Frederick F. Low, the American minister to China and former governor of California, and under the command of Admiral John Rodgers. Though the mission was articulated as a humanitarian one to negotiate a peace treaty regarding American seamen in the Pacific, the memory of the *General Sherman*—as well as the recent bloody rebuffs

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<sup>2</sup> Bruce Cumings, *Korea’s Place in the Sun: A Modern History* (New York: Norton, 1997), ch. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Michael E. Robinson, *Korea’s Twentieth Century Odyssey: A Short History* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2007), 10–14.

of French ships by the Koreans—structured American planning. The American squadron of ships constituted the largest and most heavily armed Western military force yet to enter Korean territory. On board were 1,230 Marines and sailors, 85 cannons, and the famous British war photographer Felice Beato as official mission photographer.<sup>4</sup> As historian Gordon Chang has detailed, this mission was one of both military force and public spectacle: the invitation to Beato, then a correspondent for *Harpers' Weekly*, was a conscious effort to publicize the expedition along the lines of Commodore Matthew Perry's similar mission to Japan nearly two decades earlier. The American ships docked at the mouth of the Yomha River (near present-day Incheon) on the western coast, a strategically sensitive area only fifty miles downriver from the inland capital of Seoul.<sup>5</sup>

After refusing to negotiate with lower-ranking Korean officials, the Americans sent an armed surveying party up the Yomha and toward the Han River, the main waterway leading to the capital. The surveying party met with shelling from Korean forts, which Americans saw as “treachery” and evidence of Korean barbarism, and which Korean officials described as sovereign self-defense. After a series of tense negotiations, on June 10<sup>th</sup>, the Americans sent a force of twenty-two heavily armed vessels, loaded

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<sup>4</sup> Felice Beato was a Venetian-born British subject who might be considered one of the earliest war photojournalists. In Beato's time, these wars were colonial wars and wars of trade, wars to protect existing colonial governments and to open and protect markets for Euro-American capital, and his work stands as a document of the historical convergence of photographic technology and imperial warfare in the late nineteenth century: Beato was formally invited by the British colonial government to document the Sepoy Rebellion against the British in India (1857–1858), the Second Opium War (1856–1860), and the Franco-British War against China (1860). Beato is credited as the first photographer to portray dead bodies on a battlefield, and, true to his time, these dead bodies were rebellious colonial subjects, mutinous Indian soldiers killed during the final British capture of Lucknow. The wide circulation of these photographs to the public through the news media inaugurated photography as one medium through which stories of imperial power and victory could be told. Gordon H. Chang, “Whose ‘Barbarism’? Whose ‘Treachery’? Race and Civilization in the Unknown United States-Korea War of 1871,” *Journal of American History* 89, no. 4 (March 2003): 1335–1338, 1365; Stephen White, “Felix Beato and the First Korean War, 1871,” *The Photographic Collector* 3 (Spring 1982): 76–85; Frances Fralin, *The Indelible Image: Photographs of War—1846 to the Present* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington D.C., 1985), 17, 34.

<sup>5</sup> Chang, “Whose ‘Barbarism’?,” 1341.

with sailors ready for ground combat, up the river on a vindictive mission. Over two days of fighting, American soldiers captured five Korean forts, looted provisions, and burned villages when the fires from the forts' destruction spread.<sup>6</sup>

The battle for Kwangsong, the heavily fortified and most strategically located of the Korean forts, involved intense hand-to-hand combat and the near-complete annihilation of Korean soldiers. Americans counted the bodies of two hundred and fifty Koreans—though Chinese estimates put the number twice as high—and remarked on the deaths of only three Americans. Reoccupying the forts after Americans withdrew, Koreans found hundreds of mangled and burned corpses.<sup>7</sup> Writing home to his wife, Nan, Captain McLane Tilton described the scene, as well as his own limited empathy for a racialized enemy:

Some of them were burnt coal black and dreadfully mangled by 9 inch shells bursting near them. There were forty heaped in a little place not bigger than our quarter deck, most all shot in the head as they looked over the parapet, and their clothes being white the blood was to be seen in more dreadful contrast than usual. They all bled like pigs & it is supposed in about one hour we killed 200 of them. I only saw about fifty killed but strange to say at the time it didn't affect me more than looking at so many dead hogs.

Tilton sent swatches of Korean hair home to his wife as a “curio” for the mantelpiece.<sup>8</sup>

Military force on the American side was understood as a way of bringing civilization to Korea; indeed, as Chang has argued through a careful study of the military and diplomatic records, Americans assumed their mission to be one of advancing civilization and developing a “natural” system of international political and economic

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<sup>6</sup> Chang, “Whose ‘Barbarism’?,” 1352–1356.

<sup>7</sup> Chang, “Whose ‘Barbarism’?,” 1354–1355.

<sup>8</sup> Letter from Captain Tilton to Nannie Tilton, 27 June 1871, printed in Carolyn A. Tyson, ed., *Marine Amphibious Landing in Korea, 1871* (Washington, D.C.: Naval Historical Foundation, 1966), 13–17. This pamphlet also reprints, unattributed, a selection of Beato's photographs.

relations. Global market relations, trade, and Western international treaties represented a modern system of power relations to Americans, and Koreans' emphasis on sovereignty and self-defense signaled not Korea's status as an independent nation but only Korean barbarism and an unnatural penchant for isolation. Thus it was possible for Low to send a dispatch to the Korean king on June 14<sup>th</sup>, two days after the fighting, assuring him that the United States desired peaceable relations with Korea and had no interest in conquest. To the American forces, their own brutality was a performance of American civilization, and it was not thinkable that a country could exist outside of Western legal frameworks or stand outside the reach of capital's economic power.<sup>9</sup> Most major newspapers in the United States echoed the official reports of Low and Rodgers, ascribing Korean perfidy and barbarism and the righteousness of American aggression. "Our Little War with the Heathen," as the *New York Herald* labeled the episode, seemed to prove the rationality and continued necessity of globalizing American law and economic power.<sup>10</sup>

Beato's photographs were central to the cultural circulation of this version of American modernity, in which imperial aggression was both understood and disavowed as a universal virtue. Beginning with a nautical study of the "first junk seen in Corea," Beato's portfolio was a record of the role of photographic technology in telling the stories of empire. Etchings of his photographs were run alongside American newspaper reports of the episode, and the entire series of forty-seven images was marketed in a bound volume for sale in both China and the United States shortly thereafter. Beato's images were often carefully staged or incorrectly captioned in order to present more dramatic scenes of warfare and destruction, or to portray American forces and Korean prisoners in

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<sup>9</sup> Chang, "Whose 'Barbarism'?", 1353–1354.

<sup>10</sup> Chang, "Whose 'Barbarism'?", 1353. The episode was reported on in the *New York Times*, the *New York Herald*, *Harper's Weekly*, the *Illustrated London News*, and other major papers.

their respective “natural” poses of civilized and barbaric. Beato’s scenes of the Korean dead at Kwangsong involved carefully arranged Korean corpses that illustrated the intensity of the battle and the scale of American victory over Korean forces.<sup>11</sup>

Photographs of Koreans aboard American ships depicted Koreans as subordinate and unaware of the camera—in one image, Korean men in traditional white clothing stand bunched together on the ship, one kneeling and two consulting each other, seemingly unaware of the camera’s gaze. Beato alternately identified these men as “Corean officer & soldiers” or as captured and wounded prisoners, but in either case, they were depicted as adrift and foreign, cut off from any objects that could connect them to their roles or lives in Korea. In contrast, Beato photographed American officers and diplomats as heroic strategists, dressed in full military uniform and grouped around a table consulting maps of the region. Beato captioned this photograph “council of war,” though Chang argues that it was most likely taken as an afterthought nearly two weeks after the military action.<sup>12</sup>

Interestingly, this first Korean War was widely known and then rapidly and nearly completely forgotten in the United States. The incident was widely reported in the American press, and was referenced throughout the early decades of the twentieth century by diplomatic historians and journalists as a decisive moment in U.S. relations with East Asia. And indeed, it was the first instance of American military seizure of Asian territory: President Ulysses S. Grant asked Congress to consider declaring war

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<sup>11</sup> This was common practice for photographs of war and death, up until the Vietnam War: some of the most famous photographs by Mathew Brady and his team of the American Civil War were staged, as were Roger Fenton’s photographs of the Crimean War. Later, iconic photographs from World War II’s victory and Iwo Jima were also restaged to be sure they were captured correctly. They were, Susan Sontag reminds us, literally “composed”: Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003), 53–57; Exhibition, “War/Photography: Images of Armed Conflict and its Aftermath,” Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington D.C., viewed by author 28 July 2013.

<sup>12</sup> Chang, “Whose ‘Barbarism’?,” 1351, 1354, 1357; White, “Felix Beato.”

against Korea as a result of the incident, and the Korean court understood itself to be formally at war with the United States until the signing of a trade treaty between the two nations in 1882.<sup>13</sup>

Yet a classified State Department historical memo, prepared in 1947 during the U.S. military occupation of South Korea, outlined the history of Korean-American relations since 1834 without making mention of the incident. The pamphlet stated only that “American interest in opening Korea to trade was evident in some slight degree before the Civil War. It was not until 1882, however, that the United States signed a commercial treaty with Korea—the first Western power to do so.”<sup>14</sup> A history of the U.S. Marines in Korea, written in 2007 by the History Division of the Marine Corps referred only to the 1871 engagement in passing, as a “brief skirmish,” followed by other unnamed “landings” in 1888 and 1894.<sup>15</sup> And the *Foreign Relations of the United States* series, a State Department effort cataloguing the official documentary history of U.S. foreign policy decisions, mentions the first American diplomatic effort toward Korea as occurring in 1882, with the signing of the trade treaty, though Low’s 1871 mission was understood, at the time, as a diplomatic one.<sup>16</sup>

The 1871 war illustrated the entrance of Koreans into the American imperial imaginary as a barbarous “heathen” people, and proposed the Korean body as viewable to Americans through the frame of American military might. It also exemplified the

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<sup>13</sup> Chang, “Whose ‘Barbarism’?,” 1332–1333, 1359.

<sup>14</sup> Benjamin Bock, *United States Policy Regarding Korea, 1834–1941*, Research project No. 29, Foreign Policy Studies Branch, Office of Historical Policy Research, Office of Public Affairs, U.S. Dept. of State, iv. The pamphlet was declassified in 1979, and is held in the Harry S. Truman Presidential Library, Harry S. Truman Papers (HSTP), Staff Member and Office Files (SMOF): Korean War, Box 1, folder 2.

<sup>15</sup> Captain John C. Chapin, “Fire Brigade: U.S. Marines in the Pusan Perimeter,” in Charles R. Smith (ed.), *U.S. Marines in the Korean War* (Washington, D.C.: History Division, U.S. Marine Corps, 2007), 9–10.

<sup>16</sup> “A Guide to the United States’ History of Recognition, Diplomatic, and Consular Relations, By Country, Since 1776: Korea,” United States Department of State, Office of the Historian, <http://history.state.gov/countries/korea#recognition>.

historical erasure of American violence in Korea, as this mission was first celebrated in historical narrative and public opinion and then faded from view. Beato's photographs continue to "circulate uncoupled from historical events" but always reference Korean/American historical interaction: the photographs appear unattributed on the walls of the Seoul subway system, as illustrations in books on modern Korean history, and in the Korean embassy in Washington, D.C.<sup>17</sup> In addition to the physical violence of this "little war," the later erasure of the event from official American histories constitutes a form of historical violence, for the initial Korean resistance to U.S. forces is erased: the deaths of 250 Koreans is barely remembered as an event. Yet, like Beato's photographs, the ideas of barbarism and civilization, of "heathen" Korean subjects or ungrievable "dead hogs," produced around and through this first war would re-emerge in other places and other times.

### ***Japanese colonialism***

Imperial Japan, after the Meiji Restoration in 1868, was the first state to force Korea into a trade treaty. Though Korea's King Kojong had sought a new policy of containing Japanese influence in Korea by embracing Korean-Japanese "reconciliation," the trade treaty was made through military force. In 1875, the Japanese empire sent warships to Korea's western coast, near Incheon, and months later landed four hundred troops at Kanghwa Island, with four thousand more troops waiting in ships offshore. The treaty gave the Japanese rights to survey Korean waters, open ports, trade freely, and put in place protections for Japanese merchants in Korea, but offered no privileges or protections to Koreans at all. In 1882, Korea signed a similar treaty with the United

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<sup>17</sup> Chang, "Whose 'Barbarism'?", 1364.

States, followed by treaties with Britain and Germany, at the urging of Chinese diplomats who hoped to help their nominal protectorate state integrate itself into the Western system.<sup>18</sup>

The negotiation of treaties was an attempt by the Korean state to balance the influence of competing powers on the Korean peninsula, part of a broad series of reforms involving Western, Japanese, and Confucian-based proposals from the divergent centers of power in Korean politics, as well as massive peasant rebellions against foreign influence. Korea, however, was caught between the larger powers of China and Japan. The Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895 was largely fought on Korean soil, and allowed for the Japanese occupation of Seoul and the reorganization of the Korean government along Japanese imperial lines. Korea was first occupied then officially annexed by the growing Japanese empire.<sup>19</sup>

Japanese colonial rule in Korea was part of a negotiation over imperial spheres of influence in the Pacific. At the end of the Russo-Japanese War, fought from 1904 to 1905 over control of Manchuria and Korea, the United States helped to negotiate a peace treaty between victorious Japan and defeated Russia. President Theodore Roosevelt won a Nobel Peace Prize for his brokerage of the treaty in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, which recognized Japanese control over Korea. In a diplomatic exchange known as the Taft-Katsura Agreement, a part of the bargain was that the United States would not interfere with Japanese colonial control in Korea if the Japanese did not contest American control of the Philippines.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Robinson, *Korea's Twentieth-Century Odyssey*, 15–17; Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun*, 106–107.

<sup>19</sup> Robinson, *Korea's Twentieth-Century Odyssey*, 17–20.

<sup>20</sup> Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun*, 141–142.

After Japanese annexation in 1910, Koreans became subject to a rigid and severe colonial system of regulations, violence, and police surveillance. Japanese was made the official language of instruction in Korean schools, and teachers were imported from Japan to replace Korean teachers and prevent Korean nationalist organizing. Assemblies of more than three Koreans became illegal, Korean newspapers were closed, and Buddhist temples and Christian churches were tightly controlled so that they could not become centers of anticolonial organizing. What had been customary practice—the placement of family graves, for example—became regulated by the Japanese colonial state. Cities, towns, and geographic features were given Japanese names and maps were re-drawn. Two separate legal systems governed Japanese and Korean residents, enforced by physical and legal violence by the colonial police force, while the state tightly managed systems of finance, land usage, and urban policy. The vast system of colonial regulation, movement, and surveillance was accomplished through policing, interrogation, and collusion with a class of Korean recruits in the police and government forces.<sup>21</sup>

The subjugation of Korea defined Korean political life for almost four decades, and agitating for independence became a project of those in Korea as well as the large diaspora of Korean exiles and migrants around the world. If dynastic Korea had already built a unified and coherent state, the subjugations of colonialism forced a political articulation of Korea as a modern nation. Korean nationalist politics involved perpetual political divisions and heated debates over strategy, from conservative diplomacy and appeals to foreign powers to the arming and training of independence armies, sabotage,

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<sup>21</sup> Sucheng Chan, "Introduction," in Mary Paik Lee, *Quiet Odyssey: A Pioneer Korean Woman in America* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1990), xxi–lx; Robinson, *Korea's Twentieth-Century Odyssey*, ch. 2.

and assassinations. It also marked the involvement of ordinary Koreans into mass politics, nationwide protests, and the resistance of colonialism in daily life, from schoolchildren to the elderly.<sup>22</sup>

Inspired by the international rhetoric of national self-determination proposed by the United States at the end of World War I, and drawing from longer histories of political organizing, radical students in Korea joined Christian and Buddhist leaders to draft a declaration of Korean national autonomy on March 1, 1919, calling a day of mass protest to commemorate the death of King Kojong. Nearly a million Koreans took part in the March 1<sup>st</sup> demonstration, with spontaneous marches and protests continuing through the summer. The Japanese colonial police, taken by surprise at the size of the demonstrations, used brutal force to contain demonstrators, closed schools, shut down printing presses, and declared a colony-wide curfew. Korean historians claim that over 7,500 people were killed and that 12,522 arrests were made during the uprising.<sup>23</sup>

The Mansei Movement, or March 1<sup>st</sup> Movement, as it came to be known, spurred Korean nationalist activities and appeals by Koreans in the diaspora for solidarity and aid. Eyewitness reports by American missionaries of Japanese police brutality flowed into the office of President Woodrow Wilson, alongside petitions and appeals from Korean political exiles and independence organizations asking the United States to condemn Japanese actions and support Korean independence through the new League of Nations. This became a public cause célèbre in the United States, as several congressmen

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<sup>22</sup> For a synthetic overview of Japanese colonial rule in Korea, see Robinson, *Korea's Twentieth-Century Odyssey*, chs. 2–4. For more on daily life under colonial rule, see Richard E. Kim, *Lost Names: Scenes from a Korean Boyhood* (New York: Universe Books, 1988). For more on the Korean diaspora, see Bong-young Choy, *Koreans in America* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1979); and Richard S. Kim, *The Quest for Statehood: Korean Immigrant Nationalism and U.S. Sovereignty, 1905–1945* (New York: Oxford, 2011).

<sup>23</sup> Robinson, *Korea's Twentieth-Century*, 47–49.

forwarded appeals for independence to the State Department, introduced amendments to the League of Nations treaty, or held forth about the evils of Japanese colonialism on the Senate floor. National newspapers debated the issue in their editorials section: the *New York Times* questioned Koreans' "capacity for self government" and suggested that Japan was at least preventing "anarchy" among natives unfit for rule, while the *New York American*, the *San Diego Union*, and the *San Francisco Examiner* argued that Korean claims should be considered alongside other oppressed colonies in the Paris Peace Conference negotiations.<sup>24</sup>

Despite Korean appeals and public and congressional support, the State Department and the Wilson Administration refused to make Korean independence a priority, the League of Nation's postwar emphasis on national self-determination notwithstanding. This was neither historical irony nor hypocrisy, but rather an expression of the League's ambiguous interpretation of self-determination as well as its actual origins as a guarantor of British Empire and American power. In Wilson's case, his own well-documented belief in white racial superiority and his understanding of the League of Nations as a mutual security pact rather than a statement of ideals led him first to accept a version of the League of Nations covenant that preserved his allies' colonial possessions, strike down the Japanese appeal for a racial equality clause, and finally preserve Japanese support for the League of Nations over Koreans' calls for independence.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Timothy L. Savage, "The American Response to the Korean Independence Movement, 1910–1945," *Korean Studies* 20 (1996): 194–196; "Egypt and Korea," *New York Times*, 20 March 1919, 12.

<sup>25</sup> Savage charts this process in detail: Savage, "American Response," 196–204. See Mark Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace: The End of Empire and the Ideological Origins of the United Nations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), ch. 1, for an argument about the formation of the League of Nations as a primarily imperial formation to preserve British Empire and form an imperial alliance with the United States.

In the following years, the State Department requested that consular officials enforce the Department's request to "refrain from taking part in political discussions" regarding Korean independence, and it was with the military rise of the Japanese empire and World War II that Korea again entered the calculations of U.S. policy-makers.<sup>26</sup>

Since the 1860s, Koreans had negotiated, suffered, and protested various competing empires that had used the peninsula as a colony, source of conscript labor, market for goods, or bargaining chip in global power negotiations. Korean struggles for autonomy came to articulate Korea as an oppressed nation that desired national independence. Imperial powers' struggles for access to Korea had helped define Koreans' abject colonial status as "heathens" in need of civilizing, both for the United States and Japan. Disregarding Korean political desires and political will, Koreans were seen as "barbarians" and "heathens" in the U.S. imperial imagination, a representation that would shape American policy toward Korea at the end of World War II.

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<sup>26</sup> Savage, "American Response," 205.

## Chapter One

### *“A Work of Love”*

“Whatever I have done has been a work of love to help better the conditions of the people of Korea. I speak of the common people because they are my kindred spirit.”— Lieutenant General John Reed Hodge, commander of the U.S. Army occupation forces in Korea<sup>1</sup>

In February 1941, publisher Henry Luce claimed that it was the dawn of the “American Century,” asking Americans to “accept wholeheartedly our duty and our opportunity as the most powerful and vital nation in the world and in consequence to exert upon the world the full impact of our influence, for such purposes as we see fit and by such means as we see fit.”<sup>2</sup> What was good for American capitalism, Luce argued, was good for the world. Luce’s essay was an articulation of the reigning American creed, in which America itself was a cipher for progress and for the very essence of the modern: to be American was to be free and democratic, and to fail to receive this gift was to be irrational, excluded, silenced, or in need of forcible acquiescence.<sup>3</sup>

Writing six years later, eminent American philosopher and social democratic theologian Reinhold Niebuhr cautioned against the “precarious eminence” the United States had gained after World War II. According to Niebuhr, it was a world-historical

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<sup>1</sup> Richard J. H. Johnston, “Hodge is in Tears on Leaving Korea,” *New York Times*, 27 Aug. 1948, 6.

<sup>2</sup> Henry R. Luce, “The American Century,” *Life*, 14 Feb. 1941, 63.

<sup>3</sup> Odd Arne Westad makes this argument in a compelling overview of American empire on the cusp of the cold war, in *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2007), ch. 1. Penny von Eschen has argued that for this kind of American universalism as a particularly cold war product, replacing and silencing more transnational and anti-racist visions: Penny M. Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire: Black Americans and Anticolonialism, 1937–1957* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997). Similarly, Christina Klein has argued for the centrality of Asia to the American cold war imagination, and describes American universalism as twin “imaginaries” of containment and integration, in *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945–1961* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003). My argument in this chapter has more in common with Westad, as I see in American-Korean relations both a longer genealogy of American empire as well as a particular cold war–era formation.

moment of irony, in which the United States' unmatched economic, political, and military power was equaled only by "the necessity and the impossibility of achieving the kind of world community which alone would make the modern interdependence of nations sufferable." The menace of American prosperity, Niebuhr argued, was combining with American political isolationism to separate the country's concerns from the rest of the "impoverished" world. Americans, he continued, desired a "moral purity" of purpose in all actions and a happy ending in all outcomes. Warning against American naïveté and hubris, Niebuhr argued that the United States must abjure "every temptation to regard our power and our favored position among the nations as proof of our superior virtue."<sup>4</sup>

This chapter proposes that the U.S. desire for "moral purity," belief in "superior virtue," and desire for happy endings constituted a form of disavowal, for these ways of narrating U.S. power made wartime violence, occupation, and political repression markers of the United States' "superior virtue" in Korea. Contrary to Niebuhr's identification of an exceptional moment of irony, though, claims to American universality and its virtues constitute a founding tradition in American politics and culture since the nation's inception.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, Luce's conception of an American Century in 1941 was just this, the desire for the space of the nation to expand over the globe, for all to be at once global and local, for the time and space of the nation-state to obscure all else.

The space of Korea—its territorial integrity in 1871, Korean American activists' calls for American aid to combat Japanese colonialism in the interwar years, its

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<sup>4</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr, "America's Precarious Eminence," *The Virginia Quarterly Review* 23, no. 4 (Autumn 1947): 481–490.

<sup>5</sup> The examples are too numerous to cite here; Odd Arne Westad gives a comprehensive overview of this ideological tendency, borrowing Thomas Jefferson's phrase "empire of liberty," in Westad, *The Global Cold War*, ch. 1.

expressions of liberation and self-government in 1945—was made, in American policies and actions, not to matter: Korea was kept unseen and unheard. By not listening, respecting, or understanding the varied expressions of Korean politics, U.S. policy-makers were able to congratulate themselves on fulfilling the desires of imagined, grateful Korean subjects. In other words, American universalism was able to function through the erasure of Korean political protests for independence.<sup>6</sup> This universalizing project was based on the simultaneous recognition and disavowal of Korean political desires, a forgetting of those political claims that did not fit within the web of American imperial expansion, power, and desire in the post-World War II years.

Along with the earlier prologue, this chapter traces the ways an American forgetting of Korean political desires was produced.<sup>7</sup> I argue that this was made possible by bringing together longer conceptions of racial fitness for self-government, ideologies of American universalism, and imperial self-conceptions of American benevolence with the newly emergent politics of containing communism. U.S. military officers imagined that they were bringing democracy to a nation they thought to be devoid of democratic forms, and that they were providing Korea with postcolonial liberation, even as the U.S. occupation of the South formed its rule out of the institutions of the defunct Japanese colonial state. This project of saving South Korea from communism, of what Vicente Rafael has called “white love” in an older U.S.-Philippine context, linked repressive state violence to an ideology of benevolence: in the words of General John Hodge, commander

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<sup>6</sup> I would like to thank Paul Kramer for suggesting I think about the placelessness of Korea in American representations in this way, on his comments on a paper of mine at the Organization of American Historians conference, Milwaukee, WI, 24 April 2012.

<sup>7</sup> I am here inverting Melani McAlister’s provocative project in *Epic Encounters*, in which she explores how an American “interest” in the Middle East was formed; I am seeking to trace an American “non-interest,” or rather, forgetting of Korea. Melani McAlister, *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East since 1945* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2001).

of U.S. occupation forces in South Korea, his regime's repressive violence was "a work of love."<sup>8</sup> This chapter asks how repressive, imperial violence became linked to the notions of saving, love, and benevolence, and proposes that this volatile construction was sustained through the historical and cultural process of forgetting and the emergent logic of anticommunism.

Forgetting emerged after 1945 as a crucial component of communist containment policy, as longer histories of colonialism and anticolonial struggle were forgotten in the desire to "guide" postcolonial nations away from communist forms. This was a critical shift in U.S. imperial formation after 1945, as communist containment became the structuring rationale for American expansion and military interventions into East Asia. The emergent logic of containment reworked the 1871 mission of "civilizing" the "heathens" into a plan of "saving" susceptible governments from communism. Symbolized by the formation of the United Nations, U.S. policy-makers developed an imperialist internationalism that sought to direct newly decolonizing nations through a process of "trusteeship," by which they could be made safe for democracy and inoculated against communism. This chapter argues that the U.S. military occupation of South Korea from 1945 to 1948 was a proving ground for the development of communist containment policy, and consequently, of the reinvigoration and reworking of processes of forgetting.

The American military's "work of love" in South Korea was possible by framing South Korean politics in the political demonology of emerging anticommunist language of subversion, in which Koreans were either *loyal* and *orderly*, or alternately, *subversives*

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<sup>8</sup> Vicente L. Rafael, *White Love and Other Events in Filipino History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 22–23.

or *outside agitators*.<sup>9</sup> These frames of references reworked older figures in the American imperial and racial imagination, from the *heathen* and *barbarian* to the grateful subject who was *fit for democracy* and *civilized*. Imagining Koreans on this continuum enabled and reproduced a liberal version of American power, and also allowed American politicians and military officials to believe in their own “superior virtue,” as Niebuhr put it. In exploring the American occupation of South Korea, I attend to the frames of reference by which South Korean politics became known to U.S. military officials and policy-makers. Military officials’ language, in particular, reiterated and repeated in journalistic accounts, helping to create a Korea that could be divorced from longer histories of colonialism and anticolonial struggle to present a land ready to be saved from communism. These frames, though contested by some American journalists and war photographers, would influence the ways the Korean War would later be understood.

### ***Imperialist internationalism: American empire by 1945***

The impulse to spread American democracy around the world, and the belief that it was necessary, had longer historical roots, but was put into high relief by the insurgent wave of global decolonization and wartime alliances. The year that Luce proposed the “American Century” was also the same year that President Franklin Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill met to develop the Atlantic Charter, issued in August 1941, defining the goals of the Allied powers for a postwar world. The charter, issued months before the formal U.S. entrance into World War II, proposed a vision of postwar global peace prefaced on international trade and markets, independence for occupied

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<sup>9</sup> I borrow Michael Rogin’s concept of “demonology” here: Michael Paul Rogin, *Ronald Reagan the Movie, and Other Episodes in Political Demonology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

countries, and a continued alliance between the Allied countries. It was an ambiguous document with no legal standing, and was read by the British as the promise of their continued eminence and by anticolonial independence movements as the promise of global recognition of their demands. On the American side, as historian Elizabeth Borgwardt has proposed, it was Roosevelt's New Deal on a global scale, and as such, required a series of new global institutions that could administer its vision. Buoyed by the zeal of New Deal liberalism—the unyielding faith in government's ability to alleviate social ills, the belief in its own modern vision as the most progressive for everyone, its racial exclusions, and the elevation of large-scale solutions at the expense of local knowledge—the United States set about forming such global institutions.<sup>10</sup>

The wartime Allies guided the new global institutions to maintain their alliance in the post-World War II era, and in this sense the internationalism they proposed was one that served their interests. From the U.S. perspective—ending the war as the richest, least destroyed, and most militarily powerful country—enforcing the Allies' global desires was a way of making Luce's American Century manifest. The dominance of the United States after the war allowed policy-makers to direct, dominate, and skew the new global institutions toward U.S. interests, now articulated as global interests. The 1944 Bretton Woods agreements institutionalized the global free market economy that the Atlantic Charter had proposed, in part by tying world exchange rates to the U.S. dollar, and through its attendant institutions—the International Monetary Fund, the forerunner of the

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<sup>10</sup> For an expression of the British vision, see Mark Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace: The End of Empire and the Ideological Origins of the United Nations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 55. Elizabeth Borgwardt, *A New Deal for the World: America's Vision of Human Rights* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005).

World Bank—allowed the United States to serve as the creditor to much of Asia, Latin America, and Africa.<sup>11</sup>

The United Nations (U.N.), formed in 1945 at the end of the war, was the most celebrated of these expressions of the Allies' desires for a postwar internationalism. Like the Atlantic Charter, the United Nations encompassed all the divergent battles over the post-World War II world order, and was simultaneously used as a tool to maintain Euro-American imperialism and a forum for decolonizing nations to organize for independence. One historian has called its founding ideology that of "imperial internationalism," proposed by a generation of British colonials and American allies—like South African statesman Jan Smuts, who penned the U.N. charter's preamble—who saw their international cooperation as essential to maintaining their colonial possessions and guiding "darker races" into the modern world.<sup>12</sup> On the American side, Roosevelt's plans of "trusteeship" for colonized, non-white nations—Korea amongst them—proposed a period of "tutelage" that would channel postcolonial independence through American guidance.<sup>13</sup> All Allied powers shared the idea that they would lead and direct colonized nations: the foundational planning conference for the U.N. at Dumbarton Oaks indeed

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<sup>11</sup> As Andrew Bacevich has noted, though Luce's claims sounded bombastic in 1941, by 1945 they seemed plausible. Andrew J. Bacevich, "Life at the Dawn of the American Century," in *The Short American Century: A Postmortem*, ed. Andrew J. Bacevich (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), 1–14. On the Bretton Woods agreements, see Jeffrey A. Frieden, "From the American Century to Globalization," in *The Short American Century*, 142–157.

<sup>12</sup> Mark Mazower also argues that the United Nations was a direct legacy of the League of Nations, and as such, owed many debts to the structuring ideas of British imperialism. The internationalism its founders proposed was based, he argues, on a kind of Commonwealth structure; that the U.N. became an "anticolonial forum" was due to the protests and actions of newly independent nations, most importantly, India. Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace*.

<sup>13</sup> Roosevelt liked to use the Philippines as a model for how he hoped postcolonial independence might proceed; the Philippines had been the site of a counterinsurgent race war by the Americans against Philippine independence fighters after the demise of the Spanish empire, and would be under American control until 1946. For more on Roosevelt's imperialist internationalism, see Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War: Liberation and Emergence from Separate Regimes, 1945–1947*, vol. I (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), ch. 4, quotes on the Philippines are on 486n32.

sought to keep the question of colonialism quiet, and instead concerned itself with developing the hierarchical Security Council structure.<sup>14</sup>

It was at the U.N.'s founding conference in San Francisco in 1945 that these aims were challenged, as newly independent, non-white nations—the emergent “third world”—sought to have commitments to anti-imperialism and self-determination written into the charter. The failed proposals and protests of the Philippines, Ecuadorian, and Egyptian delegations at the conference symbolized the shadow insurgency of world decolonization, an ongoing project for international recognition, anticolonial and racial solidarity, and a transformed global future.<sup>15</sup> With the destruction of the Japanese empire and the European Axis powers in the war, peoples in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East sought to determine the character of their own liberation, and the global transformation in the making cannot be overstated. Beginning in earnest after the end of World War I, the movement of third world liberation movements sought new kinds of global, racial solidarities and political ways of being, from communism and social democracy to capitalist or autocratic regimes. In 1945, this global transformation was threatening to upset the post-WWII balance of power, and the reigning fear of the United States was that decolonizing nations would find the ideology of Soviet-style communism more to their liking and form a bloc of nations opposed to American democracy, power, and capital.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace*, 59–60.

<sup>15</sup> The term “third world” was coined in 1952 by a French economist to signify those countries under imperial power, as opposed to the “first world” of modern industrialized, western nations of Europe and the United States and the “second world” of U.S.S.R.-led communist countries. Vijay Prashad has effectively argued that the solidarities inherent in imagining a “third world” was a radical, global, activist project, in *The Darker Nations: A People's History of the Third World* (New York: New Press, 2007).

<sup>16</sup> Westad, *The Global Cold War*, ch. 3.

Above all, the U.S goals in this period were to chart a capitalist, Western-style path for decolonizing nations to follow, and in this way, decolonizing nations were important in terms of policy only inasmuch as they represented a gain or a loss in the ideological global contest between Western capitalism and Soviet communism. American policy-makers hotly debated how best this might be done, but their aims produced similar results: Roosevelt’s desire for a “trusteeship” period of tutelage in liberated Korea only varied in degree from the faction in American politics who argued for a more aggressive carving out of American-dominated space. To Koreans, neither was self-determination.<sup>17</sup>

Another of these postwar institutions was military occupation and the parsing of liberated or captured territories between the Allied powers. On the same day as the formal Japanese surrender, August 14, 1945, President Truman—who had succeeded to the Presidency after Roosevelt’s death months earlier—turned Japan and her formal colonial possessions over to the Pacific theater’s wartime hero, General Douglas MacArthur, who assumed his role as the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP). Unlike the simultaneous Allied occupation of Germany, which was divided into four main zones and split between the U.S., the United Kingdom, France, and the U.S.S.R., the U.S., through SCAP, alone maintained full control over occupied Japan. Rehabilitating occupied Japan would become, in the next few years, a key component of U.S. policy in East Asia. A Western-style, democratic, and friendly Japan was envisioned

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<sup>17</sup> Bruce Cumings details at length these two political factions within the American political system, and their plans in regard to liberated Korea, in *Origins I*, ch 4; and *The Origins of the Korean War: The Roaring of the Cataract, 1947–1950*, vol. II (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), ch. 1. In her cultural study, *Cold War Orientalism*, Christina Klein has argued that these constituted cold war two structures of feeling, an imaginary of “containment” and bipolarity, and an imaginary of “integration” and sentimentalism, and proposed American universalism as a product of the tension and overlap between the two. I am here proposing that these two imaginaries were not just mutually negotiated but mutually constitutive.

as the central part of a “great crescent” of American influence that could guarantee American interests in Asia and the Pacific and contain communism.<sup>18</sup>

The decision to divide liberated Korea in half, with the south occupied by the U.S. and the north by the U.S.S.R., was another such instance of institutionalizing and defining a capitalist path for post-WWII development. As in 1919, a combination of racial conclusions finding Koreans “unfit” for self-government and a primary desire to preserve alliances with other imperial partners made Korean independence of only marginal concern to State Department policy advisors and the Roosevelt administration. On February 20, 1942, an eighteen-page memo on Korean independence written by Edward Langdon, just assigned to the State Department’s Far Eastern Division, argued that while Korean concerns were understandable, Koreans had been “emasculated” by Japanese rule, and he cautioned Americans to make no promises to any Korean organizations or “shadow governments.” Several weeks later, the Council on Foreign Relations similarly determined that Korea was unfit for self-government, corroborated later in the year by reports from American missionaries and diplomats collected by State Department officials.<sup>19</sup>

At the conference of allied wartime powers in Cairo during November 22–23, 1943 and in a series of communiqués later that month, the Great Powers agreed that Korean independence should be determined by the U.K., China, and the United States after the war, with the U.S.S.R. added to the plan in later diplomatic sessions. The plan

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<sup>18</sup> “Great crescent” was the descriptive term of President Truman’s Secretary of State, Dean Acheson, for his vision of American influence in East Asia. Cumings, *Origins* II, 49.

<sup>19</sup> Timothy L. Savage, “The American Response to the Korean Independence Movement, 1910–1945,” *Korean Studies* 20 (1996): 208–211, 214; William Stueck, “The Coming of the Cold War to Korea,” in *Korea Under the American Military Government, 1945–1948*, ed. Bonnie B. C. Oh (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002), 41–60. For an analysis of the Langdon memo, see James I. Matray, *The Reluctant Crusade: American Foreign Policy in Korea, 1941–1950* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1985), 8–9.

for a four-power trusteeship was hammered out in 1944 and 1945, replete with memorandums from the four powers emphasizing Korean exiles' "exaggerated" claims of repression and commenting dubiously on the nature of "Asiatic governments" (U.K.) and arguing explicitly "that the Koreans are not yet capable of exercising and maintaining independent government" and recommending a "40-year tutelage" period of trusteeship (U.S. and U.S.S.R.).<sup>20</sup>

Warned by fears of communism in both China and the U.S.S.R.—fears inflamed by the virulent anticommunism of the independence movement's most divisive, conservative, and visible (at least, in Washington, D.C.) figure, Syngman Rhee—President Truman initially hoped that the United States could occupy all of Japan and Korea, preventing the spread of Soviet influence. The swift surrender of the Japanese Army, however, resulted in an American scramble to preserve a sphere of influence, and the ultimate division of the peninsula at the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel.<sup>21</sup>

Despite the debates in Washington over how best Korea ought to be managed, American policy-makers were unwilling to accept the idea that Koreans might run their own country; and the long history of questioning Koreans' racial "fitness" for self-government served to link racial, imperial logic together with anticommunism and propose the United States not as a conquering force but as an experienced "guide." The joint partition of Korea at the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel was a wholly American decision, decided during an all-night meeting on August 10–11, 1945, by the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee, as a way to lock down Korea as a key part of "Pacific Security." That Joseph

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<sup>20</sup> Savage, "American Response," 216–19.

<sup>21</sup> Historians have found in hindsight that the Soviet Union had no plans for expansion in East Asia, and would have likely been amenable to the original four-power trusteeship plan. Savage, "American Response," 221.

Stalin and the Soviet Union readily agreed to the division came as a welcome surprise to American planners, who hastily dispatched an occupying military force to the American zone in the south.<sup>22</sup>

And so it was that the “problem” of Korea became, in American telling, a problem of communist containment and an issue of American security in the postwar Pacific. As communist containment emerged, it required the unseeing, or rather, the forgetting of Korean political claims to nationhood. As in 1871, Korean national claims were more easily forgotten when viewed through the prism of race, an exclusion that drove American-style democracy on the peninsula.<sup>23</sup>

### ***Korean mass politics***

The development of separate states on the peninsula is still remembered, in the United States, as erupting out of cold war powers and divisions rather than the longer genealogy of the contestation between Koreans and imperial powers. But this is, as Takashi Fujitani, Lisa Yoneyama, and Geoffrey White have argued in their study of memory and the Pacific Wars, a “perilous memory,” a form of forgetting and obscuring that produces danger and marginality for Koreans.<sup>24</sup> As chapter two will argue, this metanarrative makes it possible to understand American intervention in Korea as containment, anticommunism, and as a form of liberation and democracy for South

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<sup>22</sup> Cumings, *Origins* I, 122.

<sup>23</sup> In “American Response,” Savage outlines the continuance of the “unfit for self-government” motif in American thought; for more on the debates between American elites over multilateral trusteeship or outright occupation, see Bruce Cumings’ careful treatment in both volumes of *The Origins of the Korean War*; and Callum A. MacDonald, *Korea: The War Before Vietnam* (New York: The Free Press, 1986), ch. 1.

<sup>24</sup> Takashi Fujitani, Geoffrey M. White, and Lisa Yoneyama (eds.), *Perilous Memories: The Asia-Pacific War(s)* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 1–26.

Koreans, rather than as the production of imperial power and the deployment of state violence in the Pacific.

In fact, as historian Bruce Cumings has detailed in his two-volume *Origins of the Korean War*, the development of North and South Korea as independent states was not a product of cold war imperatives but of differing Korean strategies to combat Japanese colonialism. The mass political resistance to Japanese colonialism was forged by the Korean left, as anticolonialism was identified strongly with communism: many guerrilla resistance fighters received aid and comradeship from Chinese and Russian communists. American military occupiers, steeped in cold war logic, could not fully grasp the appeal of communism in Korea as anything other than an extension of Soviet power, and relayed these concerns to sometimes sympathetic ears in Washington. In fact, communism's historical identification with the anticolonial struggle in Korea, and its emphasis on the redistribution of land and wealth in a largely feudal economy, made it an appealing framework for the Korean left to draw from, and a compelling way to articulate what an independent, unified Korea might be like. Immediately after liberation in 1945, then, a decentralized mass movement of Koreans sought to bring this vision into being.<sup>25</sup>

Since it was so incomprehensible to the American military government in South Korea, and still does not enter American histories of this period, it is worth detailing the mass scale of Korean protest and organization after 1945. The liberation period in August 1945 inaugurated, in Cumings's words, a new period of "great flux, an era of mass participation virtually unprecedented in Korean history and unequaled since." Modern mass politics emerged across the peninsula at this moment in new forms, drawing on Korean protest traditions developed under Japanese colonial rule: spontaneous and

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<sup>25</sup> Cumings, *Origins* I and II.

autonomous workers' unions (*nodong chohap*) were formed in factories, peasant unions (*nongmin chohap*) formed in the countryside, and women's and young people's political organizations developed in major cities. Between liberation on August 15<sup>th</sup> and the American arrival on September 8<sup>th</sup>, more than 2,600 committees were formed across the peninsula. Committees developed in all provinces, from major cities to small rural villages. At their height, nearly half of all counties in southern Korea were governed by people's committees, whose basic platform revolved around Korean independence, the reversion of all Japanese property to Koreans, a redistribution of wealth and property, and women's and men's equal rights. The committees, unabashedly leftist, drew on the protest traditions and basic communist philosophy that had sustained large portions of the anti-Japanese resistance movement in the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>26</sup>

The spontaneous organization in August and September became more directed and institutionalized by November and December 1945, as representatives met in Seoul and formed large organizations to unify all the unions into one body. Strongest and most rooted in the peasant unions of the countryside, these people's committees moved between calls for moderate land reform to revolutionary nationalism and the radical redistribution of wealth. When Americans arrived to occupy the provinces in late fall of 1945, they encountered people's committees in nearly every place they went.<sup>27</sup>

In the North, the Soviet Union integrated the people's committees and nascent structure into the government, and allowed an indigenous Korean-style state communism to develop under the auspices of Moscow. The enfolding of people's committees into the governmental structure allowed for both the (limited) practice of independent government

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<sup>26</sup> Cumings, *Origins* I, 69, ch. 3; and Bryan R. Gibby, *The Will to Win: American Military Advisors in Korea, 1946–1953* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2012), 21.

<sup>27</sup> Cumings, *Origins* I, 76–78.

and true governmental legitimacy as a Korean-organized government, as well as ensuring the adherence of Korean politics to a single political vision that could be shaped and influenced by Moscow. This vision was, in the early years after liberation, an immensely popular one that seemed to promise, in the words of one historian, a revolution on multiple scales, from governmental institutions to the practices of the “everyday.”<sup>28</sup> In the immediate aftermath of liberation, the people’s committees in the North removed Japanese and Korean collaborators from power, and helped to push forward an immensely popular land reform program by February 1946. Land reform broke up former Japanese colonial holdings—which had been Korean feudal landlords’ holdings before that—and seemed to signify a revolution in Korean social life, particularly for the peasant classes. Alongside other social reforms, the land reform program won broad support among the population for the North Korean government and its Communist politics.<sup>29</sup>

The North Korean regime soon developed its own sophisticated forms of state violence and political repression but was nonetheless—unlike the South—always seen as indigenously Korean.<sup>30</sup> The Soviets put Korean political protégés in full control of the government, and throughout 1946 and 1947, the committees united in a hierarchical structure on the Soviet model, while the three identifiable political parties unified into a single party, the Korean National Democratic Front. In February 1947, the Convention of People’s Committees in Pyongyang approved all legislation previously enacted, created a permanent governmental body, and elected the communist anticolonial guerrilla fighter

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<sup>28</sup> Suzy Kim, *Everyday Life in the North Korean Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013).

<sup>29</sup> Robinson, *Korea’s Twentieth-Century Odyssey*, 106–107.

<sup>30</sup> Numerous observers, reporters, and historians noted the ways in which the Soviet zone was very carefully handled by Moscow so that it should seem to immediately redress hated legacies of Japanese colonialism and appear as Korean-run as possible. For one of the most thorough contemporaneous studies, see State Department advisor and historian George McCune’s chapter on North Korea in George McCune, *Korea Today* (with the collaboration of Arthur L. Grey, and, unlisted, McCune’s wife after his death, Evelyn McCune) (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950), ch. 9.

Kim Il Sung as its leader.<sup>31</sup> The Party conducted periodic purge elections to keep political dissidents in line.<sup>32</sup>

The initial actions taken to address the legacies of Japanese colonialism and Korean desires for self-rule by the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. were vastly important in their differences. Whereas in the North, the people's committees were fostered and funneled into a Korean-led, Soviet-style structure, in the South, the Americans and conservative Korean elites sought to crush the committees and uproot them from South Korean political life. To do this, American military officers, followed by a sometimes recalcitrant State Department, relied on the most conservative elements in Korean politics, and refused to recognize self-organized Korean governmental structures as legitimate.

As they learned of the United States' impending arrival, people's committee activists in the south hastily prepared a nascent government, the Korean People's Republic (*Chosŏn inmin kong-hwa 'guk*, or KPR) in order to preserve the committees' hold on government and present Americans with a government structure as a *fait accompli*. At the same time, however, Korean landlords, manufacturers, Japanese collaborators, and wealthy, conservative elites formed their own organization, the Korean Democratic Party (*Han 'guk minjudang*, or KDP) to act as a bulwark against the aims of the people's committees and the left. This conservative party focused its efforts in Seoul, and had no mass support. The blessing of the incoming American occupation forces signified their only hope of survival.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> McCune, *Korea Today*, ch. 9; and Cumings, *Origins I*, ch. 11.

<sup>32</sup> McCune, *Korea Today*, 180–209.

<sup>33</sup> Cumings, *Origins I*, ch. 3.

***“Poorly equipped orientals”***

The War Department inaugurated the American occupation on August 15, 1945, putting South Korea under the military control of General MacArthur and SCAP. SCAP oversaw the American occupation of Japan, and all communications between Seoul and Washington, D.C. went through MacArthur’s office in Tokyo. President Truman appointed Lieutenant General John Reed Hodge, a decorated commander of combat forces in the Pacific theater, as commander of the occupation forces.<sup>34</sup>

The American 24<sup>th</sup> Corps, already commanded by Hodge, was quickly moved from Okinawa to southern Korea in order to take over from the defeated Japanese colonial government as quickly as possible in the hopes of preventing a Soviet takeover of more than half the peninsula. This overwhelming concern with containment developed into the official policy of the American occupation, known in long-winded military acronym as USAMGIK, the United States Army Military Government in Korea. In an official Army history from 1947, the “basic principle” of U.S. forces in Korea was expounded: “an orderly, efficient, and politically friendly Korea was more important than pleasing and winning the enthusiastic cooperation of all the Korean people.”<sup>35</sup>

General Hodge and his forces landed at Incheon harbor on September 8, 1945, and immediately set the tenor of the occupation by calling Koreans “the same breed of cats” as the Japanese.<sup>36</sup> The themes Hodge and his officers initially struck made a lasting, negative impression on Koreans: the Americans insisted that theirs was the only

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<sup>34</sup> Cumings, *Origins* I, 137–140.

<sup>35</sup> “History of the United States Armed Forces in Korea,” quoted in Cumings, *Origins* I, 136.

<sup>36</sup> Quoted in both Cumings, *Origins* I, 138; and James I. Matray, “Hodge Podge: American Occupation Policy in Korea, 1945–1948,” *Korean Studies* 19 (1995), 22. Hodge apparently insisted he was misquoted, or that he referred only to the Korean collaborators; either way, it incensed Koreans. See Cumings, *Origins* I, 138, 494n11, 494n12.

legitimate government in the southern zone; that any protest was “chaos” and evidence of political immaturity; and that Americans’ counterinsurgency war and knee-jerk anticommunism was, instead, democracy.

In his initial statement to the Korean people, two weeks after liberation day on August 15<sup>th</sup> and a week before his arrival in Korea on September 8<sup>th</sup>, Hodge told Koreans that Americans’ “long heritage of democracy” would guide the Korean transition to a “more democratic rule,” and threatened Koreans with violence if they were not docile. “Hasty and ill-advised acts on the part of its residents will only result in unnecessary loss of life [and] desolation,” Hodge warned.<sup>37</sup> To re-emphasize that Korean ideas of liberation were not what the Americans would permit, Hodge immediately implemented an 8pm curfew for Koreans trying to celebrate their liberation from Japan.<sup>38</sup>

Hodge was by all accounts woefully unprepared for his assignment: a “soldier’s soldier” and military combat officer, he was concerned above all with keeping law and order, understood as American military control and Korean acquiescence. His previous assignments had not prepared him for administrative, diplomatic, or political work, and like all of his officers, he lacked even basic knowledge of Korean history and politics. Hodge’s incompetence was compounded by his personal racism and virulent anticommunism. Several months after arriving in Korea, Hodge described his difficulties to politicians in Washington:

. . . here we are not dealing with wealthy US educated Koreans, but with . . . poorly trained and poorly equipped Orientals strongly affected by 40 years of Jap control, who stubbornly and fanatically hold to what they like and dislike, and

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<sup>37</sup> Statement is from 1 September 1945, reprinted in Gibby, *Will to Win*, appendix B.

<sup>38</sup> Gibby, *Will to Win*, 20.

who are definitely influenced by direct propaganda and with whom it is almost impossible to reason.<sup>39</sup>

Despite different orders from the State Department, Hodge brought old Japanese colonial officials in as advisors to the Americans as they sought to navigate Korean politics—helpful, since Japanese officials had prepared memos in English and Americans did not speak Korean. To Hodge and his staff, English-speaking, welcoming, and sympathetic Koreans were “orderly,” in that they respected the American occupation. When Yŏ Un-hyŏng, the leader of the KPR, offered the services of the nascent popular government to the American command, he was told to stop calling the KPR a “government” and disband the network of people’s committees. The conservative KDP also developed a relationship with Hodge, with one member acting as his Korean translator, and others assuring USAMGIK that the KDP represented mass political will in Korea. Literally, then, a small section of Korean elites and Japanese colonial officials translated South Korea for Americans into the Korea that Americans were hoping to see: tractable, stable, and anticommunist.<sup>40</sup>

Acting on a tentative State Department plan for Korea’s postwar occupation from 1944, Hodge announced at his first news conference that Japanese administrative personnel would be retained, including the Japanese heads of the Korean National and Seoul Municipal Police, sparking immediate and massive protests by Koreans, who “demonstrated in the streets and plastered walls with posters of protest,” as well as scathing front-page condemnation from American journalists. General MacArthur

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<sup>39</sup> Matray, “Hodge Podge,” 17–20. Hodge is nearly unanimously condemned by historians, though Matray goes further and claims Hodge’s attitudes as the origin point for the violent polarization of South Korea and the eruption of the Korean War.

<sup>40</sup> McCune, *Korea Today*, 46; Gibby, *Will to Win*, 21–22; Cumings, *Origins* I, 139–40; Matray, “Hodge Podge,” 22.

warned that any “hostility against the occupation forces” would receive stern censure. Angered, Hodge defended his choice as preventing “chaos” and declared, “In effect, I am the Korean government during the transition period . . . . I am making use of the Japanese governmental machinery because it is the most efficient way of operating.”<sup>41</sup> To one Associated Press reporter, the Koreans were “enthusiastically celebrating an independence that may be a disappointingly long time in arriving.”<sup>42</sup> Feigning ignorance of the plan, the State Department declared itself publicly surprised; Truman defended Hodge in a press conference, but ordered the immediate end of the appointments.<sup>43</sup>

The overlaps with Japanese colonialism, however, were deeper than Hodge’s blunder: USAMGIK was, in fact, based on the Japanese colonial model, with a centralized administrative structure overseeing eight departmental sections and nine bureaus of management. As Hodge had indeed claimed, “I am the government.” Many of the newly installed Korean directors of departments were former collaborators or employees of the old Japanese Governor-General, and while the courts and the police system were turned over to Koreans in the KDP, their basic structure was left unchanged. Often, Japanese colonial laws and institutions were maintained and used against the Korean left: the highly systematized surveillance system of the colonial police was now employed to target and imprison dissidents, and Japanese colonial rules prohibiting political meetings and legalizing mass “preemptive arrests” of suspects were leveraged against the people’s committees and unions. The old Japanese colonial law requiring

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<sup>41</sup> Matray, “Hodge Podge,” 22–23. For news reports, see: “Nips Shoot Men Hailing Americans,” *Los Angeles Times*, 10 Sept. 1945, 1; “U.S. Keeps Japanese Rulers in Korea to Enforced Orders,” *New York Times*, 10 Sept. 1945, 1–2; “Koreans March in Protest Against Keeping Japanese,” *New York Times*, 11 Sept. 1945, 1; “Angry Koreans Told Jap Rule Only Temporary,” *Los Angeles Times*, 11 Sept. 1945, 1; “Koreans Get No Hope of Ousting Japs Soon,” *Los Angeles Times*, 12 Sept. 1945, 5.

<sup>42</sup> “Korea Gets Pledge by U.S. to Oust Japanese Rapidly,” *New York Times*, 12 Sept. 1945, 1.

<sup>43</sup> Matray, “Hodge Podge,” 22; “Koreans March in Protest Against Keeping Japanese,” *New York Times*, 11 Sept. 1945, 1–2.

family registration of all Koreans was reworked under the American Military Government to require Koreans with families in the communist North to register. Former members of the Japanese colonial police made up 80% of the new national police force.<sup>44</sup>

A concentrated year-long campaign led by USAMGIK from 1945 to 1946 succeeded in uprooting all but the most tenacious of the provincial peoples' committee governments, and drew on food rationing, mass arrests, and rightist vigilante attacks to coerce the committees to disband. As an American officer told journalist Mark Gayn in October, 1946, "The machine is the same we found when we got here. For our purposes it's an ideal setup. . . . All you have to do is push the button, and somewhere some cop begins skull cracking. They've been learning the business under the Japs for thirty-five years."<sup>45</sup>

Along with the bureaucracy and police, USAMGIK also acquired the geographically distinct "pleasure districts" demarcated under Japanese colonialism and continued to operate them as spaces of prostitution.<sup>46</sup> The continuation of militarized prostitution was facilitated by the incoming U.S. forces as well as the outgoing Japanese officials: several days after their surrender, the Japanese Home Ministry instructed regional police officials in Korea to ready "comfort facilities" for the incoming occupation army. The facilities proved to be too popular among American troops, and

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<sup>44</sup> Cumings, *Origins* I, ch. 5; Robinson, *Korea's Twentieth-Century*, 108; Matray, "Hodge Podge," 22–23; Gibby, *Will to Win*, 23–24; "AMG Revives Colonial Law," *Korean Independence* (Los Angeles), 6, no. 15, whole no. 223, 9 June 1948, 1.

<sup>45</sup> Mark Gayn, *Japan Diary* (1948; Vermont: Charles E. Tuttle, 1981), 398.

<sup>46</sup> Some of these areas are still known as "red-light districts" to this day: Lee Na Young, "The Construction of U.S. Camptowns in South Korea: Trans/Formation and Resistance" (PhD diss., University of Maryland, 2006), 65–69, 101–102.

were closed by General MacArthur's command in early 1946 because of the high incidence of venereal disease among U.S. troops.<sup>47</sup>

The American acceptance of the Japanese colonial viewpoint on Korea and continual alignment with the most conservative and collaborationist Korean political forces led to a massive polarization of South Korean politics. Hodge's obsession with political "order" led him to champion conservative nationalist Syngman Rhee upon Rhee's return from exile on October 16, 1945. Rhee had spent the years of the Japanese occupation in exile in the United States and as a one-time head of the Korean Provisional Government in Shanghai. He was well known in Washington, D.C. for his continual appeals on behalf of Korean independence, and was considered to be untrustworthy for his eccentric personality and unsubstantiated claims to speak on behalf of all Koreans. Most important to Hodge and American military officials, though, Rhee was English-speaking, virulently anticommunist, and able to ingratiate himself with the correct military officials; after meeting with General MacArthur, he was flown by private plane to Korea, where Hodge welcomed him as "a great man."<sup>48</sup> Rhee's own vision of a unified, anticommunist Korea (ruled by himself) was now given a platform and—when he wasn't privately feuding with them—the benefit of an American military cooperation.

By November 1945, Hodge had been able to convince MacArthur to allow him to legally suppress the Korean political left, and issued "a declaration of war" against the KPR. In December, the KPR was declared an illegal organization, and the National

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<sup>47</sup> Whitney Taejin Hwang, "Borderland Intimacies: GIs, Koreans, and American Military Landscapes in Cold War Korea" (PhD diss., University of California-Berkeley, 2010), 29. See also this dissertation's chapter three, for an extended discussion of the links between the Japanese colonial apparatus and American occupying government in regards to sexuality and prostitution.

<sup>48</sup> Cumings, *Origins II*, ch. 6; Matray, "Hodge Podge," 23.

Police began a campaign of brutal repression against leftist politicians through arbitrary arrest, torture, extortion, and surveillance.<sup>49</sup>

In December 1945, Washington accepted the decision of the three-power Moscow conference, in which the U.S., U.K., and U.S.S.R. proposed a five-year trusteeship under the auspices of the United Nations. Incensed at the idea of another trusteeship instead of immediate control, Rhee and the KPG appealed to the U.N. in early November to end the division of the country and give Koreans the immediate independence they desired.<sup>50</sup>

After the December announcement, Rhee and the Korean right led a series of street protests and a general strike in Seoul, where Korean employees of USAMGIK walked off their jobs and Koreans stoned American soldiers. Rightist-led protests continued throughout December and into January, producing violent clashes between rightists and leftists and a pattern of political sabotage and violent vengeance that would inform the civil war to come. The protests and strikes crippled the U.S. Army's staffing capacity—Hodge had to cancel his 1946 New Year's festivities because of Korean employees' walkouts.<sup>51</sup>

Alarmed at the uproar, the War Department ordered Hodge to build a broader political base and follow a policy of "Koreanization" to foster Korean training as administrative advisors and quicken an American withdrawal. Hodge unwillingly complied and promoted the formation of a moderate "Coalition Committee" of Korean moderate leftists and rightists, led by Kim Kyu-sik and the KPR's Yŏ Un-hyŏng. The

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<sup>49</sup> Matray, "Hodge Podge," 24.

<sup>50</sup> Richard J. H. Johnston, "Koreans Demand to Be Free Now," *New York Times*, 2 Nov. 1945, 5.

<sup>51</sup> "U.S. Soldiers Stoned by Korean Mobs," *Los Angeles Times*, 31 Dec. 1945, 1; Richard J. H. Johnston, "Koreans Angered by 'Trusteeship'," *New York Times*, 31 Dec. 1945; "Strikes Called off by Koreans," *Los Angeles Times*, 2 Jan. 1946, 4; Richard J. H. Johnston, "Koreans Warned after Fierce Riots," *New York Times*, 20 Jan. 1946, 19.

Coalition Committee pushed for elections for a South Korean Interim Legislative Assembly, and developed a program for land reform, free speech, and short-term U.N. trusteeship followed by Korean self-government. Nonetheless, Hodge continued to personally condemn any Korean protesters and leftists as “agitators and anarchists,” “professional troublemakers,” and “a self-interested, venal segment of people” trying to impose “shoddy power.”<sup>52</sup>

In the autumn of 1946, after most of the people’s committees had been violently forced from power, a series of peasant uprisings in the provinces cascaded into a mass leftist general strike of railroad and factory workers, students, and journalists in the large port city of Pusan. Anti-police and anti-occupation protests and violence emerged all over South Korea, with insurrectionary groups murdering hated police officials and burning the homes of collaborators. Within a matter of months, miners in South Chölla province joined the insurrection and refused to work, while communications and switchboard operators in South Chölla’s main port city of Mok’po went on strike. In Pusan, strikers demanded a transfer of power back to the people’s committees, while Hodge and USAMGIK refused to see the insurrection as anything but a “belief that the Korean people are not ready to handle their own affairs.”<sup>53</sup> In other moments, Hodge blamed North Koreans for somehow instigating the protests and ordered all leftist publications closed for inciting revolt. American tactical troops were called in to suppress the insurrection and to aid the Korean National Police, setting up concentration camps to

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<sup>52</sup> McCune, *Korea Today*, 76–77; Richard J. H. Johnston, “Hodge Denounces Korean Opponents,” *New York Times*, 1 Sept. 1946, 4; “Hodge Will Resist ‘Venal’ Korea Reds,” *New York Times*, 9 Sept. 1946, 10; “Violence in Korea Laid to Professional Agitators,” *Los Angeles Times*, 5 Oct. 1946, 1.

<sup>53</sup> Hodge, statement, printed in the *Seoul Times*, 28 Sept. 28, 1946, quoted in Cumings, *Origins I*, 354.

hold strikers when the jails became too full. By the time the insurrection was contained, around 1,000 rioters and 200 police were dead, with 30,000 rioters arrested.<sup>54</sup>

The autumn uprisings convinced Hodge that Korean politics were intractable, and that Washington's "Koreanization" policy of moderate base-building could open the situation to leftist control. He thus pushed for immediate elections for the legislative assembly, despite the Coalition Committee's protests that the climate of leftist repression would make them fraudulent. That was precisely what happened, as most leftists were in hiding and rightists dominated the election lists. To placate the centrists, Hodge appointed moderate politicians, inflaming Rhee and the far right, who sought to intimidate Hodge by lobbying MacArthur for the removal of "communists" from the assembly. Calling Rhee a "nuisance" with "malicious intent," Hodge counter-lobbied Washington, D.C. in 1947, and succeeded in convincing President Truman that building a moderate coalition in Korean politics was a failure. Talks with the Soviets about trusteeship collapsed in July as Hodge became increasingly fearful of a Soviet takeover of the peninsula and encouraged the rightist anti-trusteeship protests.<sup>55</sup>

As cold war politics hardened in the United States, the violent suppression of the insurgent people's committees, the KPR, and the left became the overwhelming goal of USAMGIK, as Hodge himself became increasingly paranoid that any protests were the work of "a well-trained group of outside experts," "agitators," "a foreign-inspired revolt," or "a few hundred stooges."<sup>56</sup> Demonstrating the emergence of forgetting as a component

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<sup>54</sup> Cumings, *Origins* I, 371, 380; McCune, *Korea Today*, 85–86.

<sup>55</sup> Matray, "Hodge Podge," 28–29.

<sup>56</sup> Matray, "Hodge Podge," 24; "Hodge Reassures Korea," *New York Times*, 12 Nov. 1946, 18; "Hodge Expects Uprising by Reds in Korea Soon," *New York Times*, 25 Sept. 1947, 6; "Korea Reds Start Sabotage, Strikes," *New York Times*, 8 Feb. 1948, 1, 53; Richard J. H. Johnston, "Hodge Denounces 'Stooges' in Korea," *New York Times*, 11 Feb. 1948, 10.

of anticommunist politics, Hodge could not but understand the committees as anything other than Moscow-directed communist agents (a position accepted by General MacArthur's SCAP command). Hodge's mindset pushed many of the more moderate committees, angry with American rule, toward a more leftist position. Responding to Hodge's requests, the U.S. government officially asked Moscow to suspend its diplomatic work in the south, a request that was eventually complied with after Hodge permitted Korean rightist vigilantes to stage violent attacks against Soviet diplomats in October 1947.<sup>57</sup>

Though Hodge and Rhee hated each other—both appealed at numerous points for the other's recall—they shared a symbiotic relationship based around mutual and violent hatred of the Korean left. Hodge's policies effectively produced the space into which Rhee could exercise power. Hodge's virulent anticommunism legalized the violent tactics of rightist vigilantes and exacerbated the brewing civil war. In one case, in Taejon, Korean rightist vigilantes tortured six leftists in August 1947 by pumping water into them, the "water cure" they might have learned from either the Americans (used nearly fifty years prior in the counterinsurgency war in the Philippines) or by the Japanese (used by Japanese imperial soldiers during World War II).<sup>58</sup>

Instead of forming a cooperative "Coalition Committee" with Korean moderates to work toward a self-governing South Korea, the full weight of the U.S. military

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<sup>57</sup> Matray, "Hodge Podge," 24.

<sup>58</sup> Waterboarding, as we know it today, is a historically widespread practice, used during the Spanish Inquisition and variously by the French in Algeria, the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, the British in occupied Palestine, and military dictatorships in Chile and Argentina. The Americans learned it in the Philippines, where it had been practiced by the Spanish, and adapted it for later use in Vietnam and, recently, for use by the CIA on suspected Al Qaeda members. Eric Weiner, "Waterboarding: A Tortured History," National Public Radio, 3 Nov 2007, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=15886834>; Cumings, *Origins* II, 242; Paul Kramer, "The Water Cure: Debating Torture and Counterinsurgency – A Century Ago," *The New Yorker* 84, no. 2, 25 Feb. 2008, 38–44.

occupation bent toward suppressing the people's committees and all threats to "legitimate" government. The outcome of American military policy was an intensely polarized, violent Korean politics that rendered the hopes of the moderate coalition impossible and forced the left nearly underground.<sup>59</sup> Though these violent policies encouraged and aided new cycles of inter-Korean violence, they were inaugurated by the belief of the U.S. as well as other global powers that Koreans were incapable of governing themselves, despite continual and sustained Korean protests, appeals, strikes, and self-organizing to the contrary. As journalist Richard J. H. Johnston (the correspondent whose reporting constituted a kind of imperial cheerleading *par excellence*) wrote for the *New York Times*, "Military Government workers and United States civilians are trying, with the aid of American supplies and liberal doses of democracy, to restore the broken machine which is a legacy of the years of Japanese exploitation."<sup>60</sup> Dr. D. S. Kim, a Korean independence activist in the United States argued angrily in response to one such statement by General Hodge that "even under Japanese rule for almost forty years recently, until we were liberated by the American forces which moved in after Japan's defeat, we had our own government in fact, our own democracy."<sup>61</sup> The *Korean Independence* newspaper, run by the Korean National

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<sup>59</sup> Matray, "Hodge Podge," 24; McCune, *Korea Today*, 85. Bruce Cumings argues this in his concluding chapter to a collection of scholarly essays on U.S. policy during the occupation: Cumings, "Conclusion: Liberation and Reconciliation in Korea," in *Korea Under the American Military Government*, ed. Oh, 151–164.

<sup>60</sup> Richard J. H. Johnston, "New U.S.-Soviet Talks Raise Hope of Koreans," *New York Times*, 18 May 1947, E4.

<sup>61</sup> "Lauds Korean Democracy," *New York Times*, 13 Jan. 1947, 9. For more examples of the near-continuous news reports on the idea that Koreans must wait for democracy, or were too immature for it, see: "Nips Shoot Men Hailing Americans," *Los Angeles Times*, 10 Sept. 1945, 1; "U.S. Keeps Japanese Rulers in Korea to Enforce Orders," *New York Times*, 10 Sept. 1945, 1; Editorial, "'Liberation' in Korea," *New York Times*, 11 Sept. 1945, 18; "Angry Koreans Told Jap Rule only Temporary," *Los Angeles Times*, 11 Sept. 1945, 1; Johnston, "Korea Awakening," *New York Times*, 12 Sept. 1945, 9; "Japan's Governor is Ousted in Korea," *New York Times*, 14 Sept. 1945, 1; Johnston, "Governor in Korea Condemns Frauds," *New York Times*, 14 Oct. 1945, 10; Johnston, "Koreans Warned after Fierce Riots," *New York Times*, 20

Revolutionary Party in Los Angeles, continuously pointed out the Korean desire for a unified country and called for an immediate withdrawal of U.S. forces from the South.<sup>62</sup>

South Korean politics after 1945 resembled nothing so much as a multifaceted, all-out war, a deployment of massive state violence against indigenous Korean efforts toward self-determination combined with a violent civil struggle between the Korean right, left, and moderate forces and an almost continual tide of mass protests, labor strikes, and violent sabotage by factions across the political spectrum. Indeed, as one American military official remarked after the autumn uprising, “We went into that situation just like we would go into battle . . . . We recognized it as war. And that is the way we fought it.”<sup>63</sup> By 1947, there were 22,000 political prisoners in South Korea, twice as many as held been held under the Japanese colonial state.<sup>64</sup> And indeed, the U.S. military considered it both an occupation and a war zone, and awarded Navy, Army, and Air Force combat medals from 1945 onward.<sup>65</sup>

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Jan. 1946, 19; “U.S. Assures Korea We Back Freedom,” *New York Times*, 31 Aug. 1946, 2; “Hodge Appeals to Korea,” *New York Times*, 18 Feb. 1947, 11; “Hodge Warns U.S. not to Quit Korea,” *New York Times*, 1 April 1947, 17.

<sup>62</sup> *Korean Independence* was published by The Korean Independence News Co., founded on 5 September 1943, a product of the radical wing of the Korean independence movement in the United States. See Kim, *Quest for Statehood*, 116, 124, 136.

<sup>63</sup> Quoted in Cumings, *Origins* I, 371.

<sup>64</sup> MacDonald, *Korea*, 11.

<sup>65</sup> The U.S. Navy awarded the Navy Occupation Service Medal from September 2, 1945–April 27, 1952, and the U.S. Army and Air Force issued the Army of Occupation Medal from September 3, 1945–June 29, 1949. The wartime medal, the Korean Service Medal, was awarded to all forces between June 27, 1950 and July 27, 1954. Note that the wartime service medal extended past the 1953 armistice, signifying recognition of the vast military investment in Korea and its implicit designation as a war zone between 1945 and 1954. Mary Dudziak describes the linkage between American ideas of “wartime” and the experience of fighting, and has compiled a comprehensive list of military service medals: see Mary Dudziak, *Wartime: An Idea, Its History, Its Consequences* (New York: Oxford, 2012), appendix.

### *The “work of love”*

Despite Hodge’s own reactionary conservatism and racism, his understanding of the American mission in Korea was one he shared with liberal news outlets, U.S. senators, and many of the internationalist and multilateralist State Department advisors in Washington. The American occupation was an imperial internationalist project of identifying, allowing, and guiding Koreans toward an American-style democracy. Hodge himself described the project of USAMGIK best, in March 29, 1946, writing in the journal of the 24<sup>th</sup> Corps occupation force:

I’m enough of an imperialist to want to preserve the standards of living we’ve achieved in the U.S. and I firmly believe that we have benefited the nations into which we have extended our influence. All nations with a high standard of living have been imperialist. Our imperialism hasn’t been a bad imperialism.<sup>66</sup>

Koreans were immature political subjects here, on the cusp of democracy, held back perhaps both by “Oriental doggedness” and their “chaotic” approach to politics. Though the *New York Times* editorial staff criticized Hodge sharply for retaining Japanese officials, they held the power of judgment over Koreans’ fitness for self-rule. “If the Koreans hadn’t protested they would not have deserved liberation,” the editors opined, arguing that Korean protests against Japanese colonial officials proved Koreans’ acceptance of democracy and self-rule. In this editorial, though, the *Times* editors reserved the right to decide when and where Koreans “deserved liberation,” and didn’t consider that protests might have been against the entire U.S. military government. In other words, whether Koreans “deserved” liberation or not was an American judgment, to

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<sup>66</sup> Quoted in Cumings, *Origins* I, 248.

be granted or withheld. As the *Los Angeles Times* titled its editorial two days later, “It’s hard for Koreans to be patient, but—.”<sup>67</sup>

The character of this “but—” was an index of the imperial common sense about Koreans that had emerged from a longer history of invasion, colonialism, and failed protests for independence. “But—” was a signal to Koreans to be patient and simultaneously marked American beneficence in undertaking such a project of guidance and goodwill: *a not so bad imperialism*. It was common for American news analysts to repeat military officials by saying that Koreans had lost their political abilities during the repressive years of the Japanese occupation, and would easily fall into communism if not carefully guided. Koreans, Americans occupation policy proposed, ought to be immensely grateful to their new occupiers.

Koreans, Hodge believed, *were* thankful to him, and *National Geographic* magazine devoted twelve pages of their June 1947 issue to Hodge’s musings, chummily titled “With the U.S. Army in Korea.” Hodge’s article was largely devoted to describing the benefits of this not so bad imperialism, with large glossy photo spreads by *National Geographic* photographers of crowds in Seoul “welcoming its Allied liberators,” smiling Korean children, and Hodge himself in handsome profile sitting in important meetings. Hodge spent much of the article detailing all the benefits of the occupation, from low-cost housing projects, unemployment relief programs, and satisfying Koreans’ “unquenchable thirst for education” to Christmas boxes of mittens and toys sent to Korean orphans. Given their “first modern chance to exercise the democratic freedoms,” Hodge related that Koreans were embracing all things American, including baseball. The

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<sup>67</sup> Editorial, “‘Liberation’ in Korea,” *New York Times*, 11 Sept. 1945, 18; Editorial, “It’s Hard for Koreans to be Patient, But—,” *Los Angeles Times*, 14 Sept. 1945; “Japan’s Governor is Ousted in Korea,” *New York Times*, 14 Sept. 1945, 1; Editorial, “Future of Korea,” *New York Times*, 16 Sept. 1945, E2.

children, it seemed, loved him best and perhaps signified Korea's best hope for an American-style democracy: "I can't roam the countryside long without picking up a following of children," he gushed. "I thoroughly enjoy their company. They are nearer to American children in their games and spirit of fun than are children of any other Oriental area with which I am acquainted . . . 'Hodgey!' they yelled excitedly."<sup>68</sup> In the children's adoration, Hodge was reassured of the beneficent work American power was doing: baseball and boxes of Christmas mittens did more democratic work than allowing Koreans self-government.

This logic of not so bad imperialism—harping on themes from the four-power trusteeship plan during the war—saw, in the words of the *New York Times* Korean correspondent Richard Johnston, "the awakening political consciousness" of Koreans as a "problem." "Koreans," he went on, "seem unaware of the tremendous task ahead to build a political structure that will preserve the freedom for which they are now so thankful." That Koreans' political awakening was precisely directed toward determining their own definition of freedom was an irony lost on Johnston, but not on the more radical American press. In the pages of the African American *Pittsburgh Courier*, the radical decolonization writer and activist Kumar Goshal used his weekly column to call Johnston a "peanut-brained reporter" and decry American policy toward Korea. A fellow traveler drawn to radical nationalism and socialist projects in the decolonizing world, Goshal argued that "the enormity of the precaution taken by the collaborators itself indicates the

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<sup>68</sup> Lieutenant General John R. Hodge, "With the U.S. Army in Korea," *National Geographic* 41, no. 6, June 1947, 829–840.

potential power of the people's forces, which in turn prophecies their eventual triumph."<sup>69</sup>

Goshal was not the only voice in the American press to protest the American occupation, and these critics ranged from the radical Goshal to disillusioned members of USAMGIK and incredulous State Department advisors. George McCune, the State Department's leading expert on Korean affairs and co-developer of the McCune-Reischauer romanization system of the Korean language, strongly criticized the American policy during his tenure at the State Department, terming certain trusteeship schemes in 1944 as "white man's burden" ideas and (posthumously) publishing a book in 1950 describing the "paradox of liberation" and the "prolonged and deepening antagonism" American policies had created in Korea.<sup>70</sup>

The same year as Hodge's account of American success in *National Geographic*, a USAMGIK officer writing pseudonymously in *The Nation* called the occupation a "gruesome débâcle" and "an American tragedy," and described a Korea "seething with unrest" and a people who "plainly preferred some form of democratic socialism."<sup>71</sup>

Richard E. Lauterbach, *Time*'s Moscow bureau chief during WWII and one of the first American journalists to write about the liberation of the Nazi concentration camps, also leveled damning critiques of the occupation. Writing several months later in the *Virginia*

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<sup>69</sup> Richard J. H. Johnston, "Korea Awakening," *New York Times*, 12 Sept. 1945, 9; Kumar Goshal, "As an Indian Sees It: The Allies' Timid Peace in Asia is High Irony," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 22 Sept. 1945, 7; Leonard A. Gordon, "Bridging India and America: The Art and Politics of Kumar Goshal," *Amerasia* 15, no. 2 (1989): 68–88. See this dissertation's chapter six for more on the global anticolonial politics of which Goshal was a part.

<sup>70</sup> McCune was the son of American missionaries in Pyongyang, and in between service as an advisor for the Office of Strategic Services and the State Department's Far East bureau, was a well-respected professor of Far Eastern Studies at the University of California, Berkeley: State Department University of California Academic Senate, "George McAfee McCune," *University of California: In Memoriam, 1948*; McCune, *Korea Today*, 272. After reading the British report on Koreans' need for trusteeship, in 1944, McCune scribbled in the margins "White Man's Burden": see Savage, "American Response," 217.

<sup>71</sup> Will Hamlin, "Korea: An American Tragedy," *The Nation* 164, no. 9, 1 March 1947, 245–247.

*Quarterly Review*, Lauterbach detailed the scale of “Korean political expression” as a “torrential flood,” with the Americans as the “obstruction” to its realization: “If the Koreans had specific ideas on what to do with Korea’s future,” Lauterbach wrote, “the American liberators whom they awaited had none.” Detailing the American military government’s failures at land redistribution, the arrests of labor leaders and strike-breaking by U.S. troops, and the repression of newspapers, Lauterbach argued that it was Korean mass political desire, not communist “agitators,” that drove continual protest. There was, Lauterbach argued, “no excuse for the American occupation.”<sup>72</sup>

Worried about the failures in stabilizing Korea, and fearful that the rightist boycott of the Moscow trusteeship agreement would allow leftists’ control of Korea, Washington sought to turn the occupation over to the United Nations, which voted in November 1947 to host a series of elections in Korea the following spring. Refused by the North, the “free elections” on May 10, 1948 were anything but, as the climate of repression against the left continued and directed the ability of candidates to run and people to vote; in some areas, the elections looked similar to the Japanese colonial elections, where only the taxpayers and landlords voted.<sup>73</sup> The elections inaugurated the nominally independent Republic of Korea (ROK) with Syngman Rhee at its head, and with a smaller force of American military officials retained as “advisors” for the ROK Army (ROKA). Rhee colluded with these advisors—known as the Korean Military Advisory Group, or KMAG—to continue the counterinsurgency warfare against the

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<sup>72</sup> Richard E. Lauterbach, “Hodge’s Korea,” *The Virginia Quarterly Review* 23, no. 3 (Summer 1947): 349–368. The same year, Lauterbach published a book, including his correspondence on China and occupied Japan, warning Americans of their disastrous policy in the Far East: Richard E. Lauterbach, *Danger from the East* (New York: Harper, 1947).

<sup>73</sup> McCune, *Korea Today*, 80, 226–230

left.<sup>74</sup> Rhee developed an authoritarian state, combining a proto-fascist political philosophy centered around a racially pure Korea with a reliance on rightist vigilante youth groups who functioned as strikebreakers, police auxiliaries, and thugs. Indeed, historian Callum MacDonald argues that the independent South Korean state was formed against “a background of violence.”<sup>75</sup>

Due to the enmity between Rhee and Hodge, Hodge was replaced as head of the American command immediately following the elections. Hodge’s experience in Korea had served only to harden his racist presuppositions: in early 1948, he had cabled the Secretary of State George C. Marshall that “the Korean” was “one of the world’s greatest exponents of terrorism, beatings, extortion and assassination, and there can be no guarantee of eliminating such activity regardless of measures taken.”<sup>76</sup> Koreans were racially obdurate and inclined toward violence. And yet, in the formulation of American power as funneled through Hodge, his presence there was also a gesture of kindness and responsibility toward these intractable Koreans, for their perceived racial obstinacy allowed for the beneficence of American power. After the Korean National Assembly honored him for his work “in behalf of Korean independence,” Hodge replied: “Whatever I have done has been a work of love to help better the conditions of the people of Korea. I speak of the common people because they are my kindred spirit. I am of the common people of my country.” Reportedly, he was in tears as his plane departed Seoul for the United States.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> KMAG was initially a force focused on training the Korean constabulary after 1945, then inaugurated as the “Provisional Military Advisory Group” in 1947, and established as KMAG in 1949: Gibby, *Will to Win*.

<sup>75</sup> MacDonald, *Korea*, 14–15.

<sup>76</sup> Cable is from January 1948, quoted in Matray, “Hodge Podge,” 31.

<sup>77</sup> Richard J. H. Johnston, “Hodge is in Tears on Leaving Korea,” *New York Times*, 27 Aug. 1948, 6. President Truman sent him a congratulatory letter with a similar sentiment, telling him “it must be very

### ***Counterinsurgent war in the new ROK***

Rather than handing over power to Rhee, the transition to an independent Republic of Korea only served to entrench the United States in South Korean politics in new ways. With the 1947 Truman Doctrine of anti-communist containment, the United States' formal military occupation of South Korea ended but the entanglements of American commitment remained. At the same time that the United Nations oversaw "independent" elections for the new South Korean state, several hundred American officers were recruited to remain in the elite ranks of the new ROK military force as KMAG. The United States maintained fifteen intelligence bureaus in the ROK, recommended a continual program of covert warfare against North Korea, and maintained the largest American embassy and economic aid mission anywhere in the world.<sup>78</sup> American cinemas, baseball games, missionaries, and Voice of America radio programs poured into South Korea, as American aid money supported the military, the economy, the railroads, the airports, the mines, and the factories. By 1950, a wing of the Central Intelligence Agency even ran the Korean National Airline.<sup>79</sup> The continual penetration of the South Korean economy and state by American capital, experts, and forces formed a militarized relationship of dependency and political commitment, tying American power directly to the Rhee regime.

Though the United States always sought to portray the Republic of Korea as a democratic force, it was anything but. The United States did not direct the policies of the

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satisfying to you, as it is to our Government, to know that you have been largely instrumental in restoring freedom to a persecuted nation." "U.S. Shifts Hodge from Korean Post," *New York Times*, 24 Aug. 1948, 7.

<sup>78</sup> Cumings, *Origins* II, 383–385, 466.

<sup>79</sup> Cumings, *Origins* II, 466–467.

Rhee regime absolutely, but it certainly forged a relationship prefaced on the idea of anticommunist containment. Though sometimes squeamish about the ruthlessness of his policies, American officials consistently backed and aided Rhee's regime over the greater threat of communism and an "unstable" Korea; even more, the training and work of KMAG officials enabled the ROKA to crush a persistent leftist guerrilla threat. Collusion between the new South Korean state and American military officials and policy aims was evident in the continuing counterinsurgency campaigns of Rhee's government, aided and in many ways directed by KMAG. State Department officials saw Rhee's success at counterinsurgency as a proving ground for Korean fitness for American aid, and of American containment policy altogether, and were thus deeply committed to the violent excesses of Rhee's government policies.<sup>80</sup>

This collaboration led to an open state of counterinsurgent warfare against the mass organizations of the left in South Korea, several years before the official outbreak of war in 1950. As the American occupation had already done, the new South Korean state continued to draw on the repressive practices of Japanese colonialism, with training, finesse, and encouragement from American officials. As historian Bruce Cumings explains,

The Americans and the Koreans were in constant conflict over proper counterinsurgent methods, but out of this tension came a meld of American methods and the techniques of suppression the Japanese had developed in Manchuria, for combating guerillas in cold-weather, mountainous terrain,

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<sup>80</sup> Syngman Rhee was not initially very popular in the halls of government in Washington, D.C., despite his decades-long attempts to gain the credibility of Washington. Even after his government was installed in Seoul, the CIA and American officials did not trust him; and though his government was nearly all an American creation, Rhee never acted as a fawning American puppet. The ultimate relationship was one of wary mutual dependency, as Rhee needed American aid and military power, and the Americans needed a leader with at least some credibility who would not go communist. In the suppression of the counterinsurgent left, at least, both forces agreed. On Rhee, see, for example, Cumings, *Origins* II, ch. 6; and MacDonald, *Korea*, 13, 40–42. On KMAG, see Gibby, *Will to Win*, 4 and chs. 2–3.

implemented by Korean officers who had served the Japanese (often in Manchuria).<sup>81</sup>

The self-proclaimed “father of the Korean Army,” Capt. James H. Hausman, was the KMAG officer charged with overseeing the establishment of the ROKA. A celebratory military history from 2002 portrays Hausman as a “talented American advisor,” one who “personified the positive attributes of American military advising to Korea.” What these positive attributes were, however, were revealed in off-camera remarks Hausman made after a 1987 television interview, when he lauded the South Koreans as “brutal bastards” and described how he sought to streamline their violence by teaching ROK soldiers to douse executed corpses in gasoline to hide the evidence.<sup>82</sup>

Familiar tactics from colonial rule were deployed by Rhee’s counterinsurgency campaign in the provinces: destroying villages accused of sheltering insurgents, creating “strategic villages” in their place, torturing resisters to betray their fellows, and instituting forced grain requisitioning, a police-enforced unpaid labor corvée for villages sympathetic to guerrillas, and retaliatory crop destruction. It is estimated that 20,000 orphans were created from these counterinsurgency campaigns alone.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Cumings, *Origins* II, 286.

<sup>82</sup> The laudatory article is by P. Clemens, “Captain James Hausman, US Army Military Advisor to Korea, 1946–1948: The Intelligent Man on the Spot,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 25, no. 1 (March 2002): 163–198. Clemens’s quote is from p. 163. Hausman’s interview remarks are cited by Bruce Cumings, who attended the interview: Cumings, *Origins* II, 285, 826n51. Clemens actually selectively quotes Cumings at length in order to prove Hausman’s role in training the ROKA, but leaves out Cumings’s withering critique of Hausman.

Though I can’t verify its date or provenance, there is a video purportedly by a South Korean military photographer, from April 1950, which shows the mass execution of suspected Communist spies several months before the Korean War began. The video shows Americans in uniform—presumably KMAG officers—observing as ROK forces bind prisoners to stakes, blindfold them, pin targets to their chest, and shoot them in a mass execution. The video ends when bodies are cut from the stakes and placed in coffins covered in blood. The video is from “Susiak Productions” and is collected as a special feature in: *Korean War in Color*, DVD, Goldhill DVD, 2002. Kralyevich Productions, Inc.

<sup>83</sup> Cumings, *Origins* II, 401–403.

To understand the dynamic of state violence and constant insurrection in South Korea, as well as the ways Japanese colonialism, South Korean thuggery, and American aid melded into a repressive state apparatus, we can also look at the case of Cheju Island, off the southwestern coast of the peninsula. On Cheju, people's committees emerged as early as August 1945, ruling the isolated island through consumer's unions, factory committees, and peacekeeping units. The committees ran the island's primary education system, published its only newspaper, and offered everything from public lectures to entertainment programs. Left mostly alone by USAMGIK, who considered them moderate leftists, the Cheju committees came under the attack of Syngman Rhee's new government in 1948, which was determined to complete the repression of the left. The rightist governor of the island filled the police units with conservatives and right-wing vigilante terrorists, who unleashed mass arrests, food rationing, and mob violence on the islanders.<sup>84</sup>

South Korean soldiers and noncommissioned officers refusing to join in the repression of Cheju Island fomented their own rebellion, reinstating people's committee's and taking control of the city of Yōsu, in South Chōlla province. The rebels—numbering about one thousand Korean constabulary soldiers, according to American military estimates—held the city for a week, and the rebellion spread to the neighboring towns of Sunch'ōn, Posong, and Kwangyang. The rebels targeted their violence at National Police leaders and officers and identifiable anti-communists, and used public torture as well as mass execution of police as a tactic of holding the towns. The retaking of Sunch'ōn and Yōsu, in particular, was no less bloody: commanded by Capt. Hausman and other American KMAG officials, ROK forces using American weapons, materiel, spotter

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<sup>84</sup> Cumings, *Origins* II, 250–259.

planes, and transports, were deployed to crush the rebellion. When National Police acted out their retribution against the subdued rebels in South Chŏlla's town squares, an eyewitness reported that many police wore their old Japanese uniforms and helmets from colonial collaborationist days.<sup>85</sup> Surviving rebels fled the ROK forces to the Chiri mountains, which hosted a raging counterinsurgency war against communist guerrillas throughout the Korean War period.<sup>86</sup>

Back on Cheju, a year-long war was fought between growing numbers of National Police and the right-wing terrorist party, the Northwest Youth, and a decentralized and highly mobile leftist guerilla insurgency, who held the support of most villages on the island. To suppress the rebellion, the South Korean police, aided by the Americans, starved the guerillas, held whole villages responsible for their actions, and inaugurated a series of massacres on the island, ultimately destroying more than half of the villages. Official South Korea figures reported 27,719 islanders killed; the Governor of Cheju reported that 60,000 had died and 40,000 fled to Japan.<sup>87</sup>

### ***Seeing and refusing to see***

In November 1948, *Life* magazine ran a photo essay story on the recent rebellions in Yŏsu and Sunch'ŏn, with photographs and text by staff photographer Carl Mydans. Mydans's photographs of the retaliation against Korean leftists allowed readers to see the civil war dynamic that had been created. Even more, Mydans's sensitive aesthetic allowed for Koreans to be seen not as heathens, barbarians, "agitators," or grateful and

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<sup>85</sup> Cumings, *Origins* II, 259–267; Gibby, *Will to Win*, 54–55; Carl Mydans, "Revolt in Korea," *Life* 25, no. 20, 15 Nov. 1948, 56.

<sup>86</sup> Gibby, *Will to Win*, 57.

<sup>87</sup> Cumings, *Origins* II, 252–258.

docile subjects, but as mournable, grievable lives and complex individuals with their own political will. In his text, Mydans described the savage beatings of leftists by the National Police as well as the “charred masses” of corpses from the leftists’ takeover on the street. Mydans himself mourned with the families as he witnessed the aftermath of the civil war that was unfolding:

During the first horrible days of Suncheon’s blood bath, no relative dared claim a body for fear that doing so would identify the living with the dead and thus bring quick retaliation from either the Communists or the government. Later, when it was safe, women streamed away from the big playground to poke along heaps of bloated dead—a scene not easy to watch. When they found theirs, they were stoical at first. Then tears came and they were hysterical.

Mydans’s photo essay showed two women mourning, and it is the women who are the compositional subjects and emotional center of the photograph—behind them, not quite in focus, stood a stern and unmoved American soldier. The compositional centering of the women in this photograph highlights not the politics of either side as much as their experience living and mourning within such a landscape of violence.

In other photographs from the essay, captured leftists stared directly at the camera, and thus directly at the viewer, claiming attention and demanding a kind of recompense. In one particularly arresting photograph, printed full-page by *Life*, a beaten leftist rebel used his shirt to tend to his wounds while gazing coolly at the camera. In Mydans’s exceptional work, the aesthetics allowed an interpretation of Koreans as other-than-docile subjects, and as mournable, grievable individuals who signify the judgment of their choices with their gaze; the text described the scale of violence that has been wrought.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Mydans, “Revolt in Korea,” *Life* 25, no. 20, 15 Nov. 1948, 55–58.

Numerous journalists' reports—from the mainstream press to small leftist magazines—described the scale of violence in Korea before the war, such that what Americans had helped create in Korea could not but be known.<sup>89</sup> Writing for the *New York Times* on March 6, 1950, several months before the Korean War began, Walter Sullivan reported that the civil war dynamic constituted a “cloud of terror that is probably unparalleled in the world . . . shadowing the lives of police, peasants, and guerillas alike.”<sup>90</sup> Yet these critiques could become easily divorced from the American occupation policies, and become seen as a confusing, communist-inspired cycle of violence. In an article run a week later, on March 15<sup>th</sup>, Sullivan wrote, “The persistence of the guerillas puzzles many Americans here.” Sullivan argued that the guerilla conflict was due to “class hatred” and the extremely high taxes in the rural provinces, a wealth disparity that is “swelling the ranks of the Communists” and could “lay the foundation for later revolution.”<sup>91</sup> Anticommunism and counterinsurgency, in this story, also become democracy, a forgetting which made the persistence of guerrillas remain an anomaly.

The protests and debates over American military policy, from Koreans and Korean Americans, from State Department advisors, from leftist and mainstream American journalists, and from anticolonial activists produced a contestation over

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<sup>89</sup> See, for example: Johnston, “New U.S.- Soviet Talks Raise Hope of Koreans,” *New York Times*, 18 May 1947, E4; Johnston, “Korean Fighting is Expected Soon,” *New York Times*, 26 July 1947, 3; Hap Beyers, “South Korea Riots of 1947 Recalled,” *Los Angeles Times*, 3 July 1950, 2. The new anti-Stalinist Marxist journal *Monthly Review* called the war a “civil war” and published I. F. Stone’s brilliant 1952 study in the evasive, partial tellings of military communiqués, *The Hidden History of the Korean War*. Of course, *Monthly Review* had a miniscule circulation of several thousand, and its editors quickly came under threat for “subversive activities” during the height of McCarthyism. Leo Huberman and Paul Sweezy, “Publisher’s Foreword,” I. F. Stone, *The Hidden History of the Korean War* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1952), vi–xii; Cumings, *Origins II*, 638.

<sup>90</sup> Walter Sullivan, “South Koreans in Grip of Terror; Even Police Fear Guerilla Raids,” *New York Times*, 6 March 1950, 3.

<sup>91</sup> Walter Sullivan, “South Korea Fails in Guerrilla Drive,” *New York Times*, 15 March 1950, 18.

American power that clarified the American imperial goal of spreading democracy in Korea. This contestation led to the hardening, not softening, of the military government's insistence that Korean protest was communist chaos. In the same ways that Koreans in 1871 could be thought "barbaric" when it was American Marines doing the killing, it was now possible for American repression and occupation to be conceived of as a democracy for Koreans, who were still "unfit" for self-government. The racial designation of being "unfit" was central to the linkage of anticommunist containment policy with the long process of forgetting. The American military occupation and aid to the ROK forgot the longer history of colonialism and anticolonial struggles in Korea, and enabled the reproduction of Japanese colonial institutions and racial violence under the guise of American democracy. American democracy in Korea was not antithetical to imperial or racial violence; rather, it was contingent upon it. Through the anticommunist articulation of forgetting, state violence was a gift of benevolence, a "work of love."

## Chapter Two

### *(Race) War for Peace*

Korea is often termed a “limited war” for containment by military strategists, and was considered a “war for peace” by President Harry S. Truman and policy officials. There was, in fact, not much “limited” or “peaceful” about it. This was a war where Americans fought with a “scorched earth policy” and had a “meat-grinder strategy,” and named their military operations STRANGLE, SATURATE, SCATTER, SMACK, SHOWDOWN, RATKILLER, WOLFHOUND, KILLER, PILEDRIVER, and THUNDERBOLT. Between 1950 and 1953, U.S. bombers dropped tens of thousands of tons of napalm on Korea, a weapon Army trade journals termed a “wonder” and a “blazing success.” American General Matthew B. Ridgway ordered thousand-pound versions of napalm bombs that could “wipe out all life in tactical locality,” an approach used in designated free-fire zones that often included rural villages. As dissident American journalist I. F. Stone commented, for Koreans this must be a “frightful process of their liberation.”<sup>1</sup>

The lowest estimate puts the number of civilian deaths at two million, a higher percentage than during World War II or the Vietnam War. By 1951, five million Koreans had become displaced refugees. The United States suffered 33,651 battle deaths, and over 100,000 more wounded or missing in action, while the forces of their U.N. allies sustained 16,532 casualties, including 3,094 dead. The Republic of Korea’s Army lost 415,004 soldiers and had three times that many wounded. Twelve percent of the North

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<sup>1</sup> I. F. Stone, *The Hidden History of the Korean War* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1952), 256.

Korean population was killed, including 520,000 soldiers, and around 900,000 Chinese communist soldiers were slain in combat. The aerial bombardment campaigns against North Korea destroyed eighteen out of twenty-two major cities north of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, as well as dams integral to North Korean agriculture, producing waves of food scarcity for years after the war.<sup>2</sup>

The battle movements of the war followed four general stages: the initial drive of the North Korean Army over the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel to the southern tip of the peninsula in the summer of 1950; the U.S., ROK, and U.N. forces' "rollback" policy in the fall, reclaiming the entire peninsula up to the Chinese border on the Yalu River; the entrance of People's Republic of China (PRC) forces at the beginning of fall 1950, pushing the line of battle south again; and a stabilization of the battle movements into a standoff around the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel in the late spring and early summer of 1951, where battle lines would stay for two more years of bloody warfare before an armistice was declared.

Race-making was central to the production and deployment of American power in Korea, working to justify, fuel, and erase the mass violence of war. The Korean War proposed a particular kind of racial formation, populated by "gooks," "little buddies," Chinese "hordes," and the twinned figures of the Korean guerrilla and the Korean refugee. These racial figures appeared in American representations of the war as threats

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<sup>2</sup> Sahr Conway-Lanz, "Beyond No Gun Ri: Refugees and the United States Military in the Korean War" *Diplomatic History* 29, no. 1 (Jan. 2005): 79–80; Bruce Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun: A Modern History* (New York: Norton, 1997), 294–296; Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War: The Roaring of the Cataract, 1947–1950*, vol. II (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 705, 755; Bruce Cumings, *The Korean War* (New York: Modern Library, 2010), 35, 152–153; Sun-A Kim, "Life and War in Korea: Photographic Portrayals of the Korean War in *Life Magazine*, July 1950–August 1953" (PhD diss., University of Missouri-Columbia, 2008), 3; Dong-Choon Kim, "The war against the 'enemy within': Hidden massacres in the early stages of the Korean War," in *Rethinking Historical Injustice and Reconciliation in Northeast Asia: The Korean Experience*, eds. Gi-Wook Shin, Soon-Won Park, and Daqing Yang (New York: Routledge, 2007), 75. The Pentagon has consistently revised their figures of the U.S. battle deaths: see CBS News, "How Many Americans Died in Korea," (5 June 2000), <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/how-many-americans-died-in-korea/>.

and victims enfolded into the war stories by which Americans came to know Korea. Koreans on both sides of the war constantly moved along a continuum of beneficence and violence, subjects to be saved through their destruction, the application of communist containment through militarized racial violence.

Much American writing on the Korean War centers on grieving for the deaths, pain, and losses of American soldiers, but it rarely (if ever) gives equal space to the losses of Koreans. This “war for peace” rested on particular ways of seeing and not seeing Korean life, and became legible to American servicemen through a language of racial hatred and cold war-tinged racial paternalism, a lexicon drawn from longer histories of America’s race wars in the Pacific.<sup>3</sup> Most histories figure the Korean War within the frame of the cold war, and its ideologies of containment and rollback understood primarily through anticommunist fears and anxieties. The policy of containment and the imperial designs of the cold war, however, relied upon the racial designation of Korean lives as always-suspect and always potentially communist: they needed to be saved or annihilated, but could never be left alone.

Judith Butler’s writings on war and violence have theorized the production of ungrievable lives. These are lives made precarious through the linkage of material and discursive practices that never fully conceived of them as “life” in the first place, and denied the conditions that allowed them to be fully livable. Lives considered to be “ungrievable” cannot be mourned because they were never conceived of as existing in

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<sup>3</sup> Both Paul Kramer and John Dower make the argument that the American war and colonization of the Philippines at the turn of the century, and the American-Japanese warfare in the Pacific during World War II were “race wars” that rationalized their goals in racial terms, understood enemy soldiers and civilians first through the lens of race, and where racial logics shaped the production and enactment of colonial and state violence: Paul A. Kramer, *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States, and the Philippines* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), esp. ch. 2; John Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986).

connection to those inflicting violence upon it. To mourn and to grieve implies both a connection between the mourner and the lost object and a recognition of that object's presence and absence. American policy in Korea put Korean lives at a liminal relationship to grievability. South Korea had been designated as "salvageable" by the American empire, in the interests of communist containment, and salvageable lives were managed and regulated but not truly mourned: they were not grievable lives.

Because of the counterinsurgent nature of the war, Korean lives—both North and South Korean, civilian and soldier—were always suspect. To be always-suspect was to be ambiguous, neither salvageable, grievable, or ungrievable; and thus a suspect was always better off dead, neutralizing the possible threat of communism and, hence, "saving" South Korea. Soldiers learned to make Koreans into ungrievable "gooks," a racial formation that they could be easily kill and easily save. For the smaller numbers of servicemen who insisted on seeing Korean lives as grievable, there was despair, nightmares, and a tortured legacy of complicity. Communist containment was a project of properly designating the racially and politically suspect, and after the first few months of the war, containment could be measured by the number of "potential guerrillas" killed and the number of "gooks" run down by jeeps.<sup>4</sup>

American power was articulated through the Korean War as the capacity for the violent suppression that containment required, and for marking that violence as a form of liberation and peace. If during the American occupation period, bringing liberal democracy to Korea was the work of brutal repression, during wartime it was the visitation of overpowering military fire that could save South Koreans from communism.

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<sup>4</sup> Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* (New York: Verso, 2010); Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (New York: Verso, 2004).

Communist containment policy—and the history of American occupation in South Korea—effectively rendered Koreans as subjects of U.S. empire, most significantly through the U.S. military’s ability to wage violence upon them with impunity.

These politics, intrinsically bound to racial ideas, made Koreans simultaneously in need of help and in need of violence, always justifying in retrospect the scale of destruction visited on their country and their bodies. Communist containment policy marked a new form of forgetting, for it legitimated the deployment of mass violence during the war and then elided that violence by claiming its necessity in preventing communism. Koreans were already suspect of being or becoming communist, and race allowed Korean lives to be seen as ungrievable. In this way, killing a Korean civilian was equal to killing a potential communist and to saving Korea, an equation reliant on both violence, race, and forgetting. In this way were villages were evacuated, then destroyed, in order to save them.

### ***War for peace***

The American account of the beginning of the Korean War was of a “surprise attack” of North Korean troops across the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel on June 25, 1950.<sup>5</sup> The story resonated with the longstanding cultural myth of the United States fighting only when

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<sup>5</sup> After June 27<sup>th</sup>, the “surprise attack” story led the national news, from the *New York Post* and *New York Herald Tribune* to St. Paul’s *Pioneer* and the *Denver Post*: “Comments by Press of Nation on Korean Situation,” *New York Times*, 27 June 1950, 10. Within several weeks of the event, this had become the accepted, endlessly reproducible narrative of the war’s origins, symbolized by a *March of Time* newsreel from August 18, 1950, which restages the opening of the war as the moment a group of journalists in a newsroom receive a telegraph from Seoul. “As Russia Sees It,” *March of Time* vol. 16, no. 5 (18 Aug. 1950), produced by Time Inc., Life Inc., and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox.

provoked by an outside aggressor.<sup>6</sup> Yet the trope of a “surprise attack” erupting across the Korean landscape and American consciousness was prefaced on a presumed tranquility of relations between North and South that had never existed, a fact that both Washington and U.S Army intelligence knew quite well.<sup>7</sup> Historian Bruce Cumings, in what he admits was a tedious review of the claims of the U.S., South Korea, and North Korea, argued that it was most probable that both sides were preparing for the conflict’s escalation and proposed that “who caused the war” is precisely the wrong question to understand the civil war dynamic at work in Korea.<sup>8</sup>

Regardless, shock at the “surprise attack” allowed a rush to designate wartime. Secretary of State Dean Acheson moved quickly to gain the U.N.’s ostensible leadership for this American war, convince President Truman of its necessity, and gain Congressional and Pentagon approval. Acheson’s work was, as he admitted, predicated solely on his belief in containment policy—as Acheson argued later, “it isn’t a Korean war on either side.” And as a group of military officials, led by Secretary of Defense

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<sup>6</sup> Indeed, this has been a historical pattern, in which events were embellished by propaganda, government speeches, and public sentiment to justifications for war; or were, as with the Gulf of Tonkin resolution in 1964 or the claim in 2003 that Iraq possessed Weapons of Mass Destruction, outright fabrications. In all cases, these events obscure longer histories of military entanglement between the United States and the world and the broader contexts of war: for the Spanish-American War, the bombing of the *U.S.S. Maine* on February 15, 1898; for World War II, the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941; in the Korean War, the “unprovoked aggression” of North Korea across the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, June 25, 1950. After the Korean War, it continued: for the Vietnam War, the Gulf of Tonkin incident, 4 August, 1964; the Gulf War, Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait on August 2, 1990; and inaugurating the War on Terror and the two wars in Afghanistan were the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001. The war in Iraq was partially due to these attacks, as well as the assumption by the Bush administration that Iraq possessed Weapons of Mass Destruction, a fallacy presented by General Colin Powell to the United Nations Security Council on February 5, 2003.

<sup>7</sup> KMAC’s Army Intelligence kept careful track of all the border incidents, and reported sixty-six border incidents in the five weeks prior to the attack. KMAC G-2 documents cited in Cumings, *Origins II*, 575.

<sup>8</sup> Cumings, *Origins II*, ch. 18.

Louis Johnson, argued, this was a “war of peace,” an aggression “instituting war to compel cooperation for peace.”<sup>9</sup>

The idea of a “war for peace” led by the U.N. was akin to what President Truman had proposed three years prior, in his March 12, 1947 speech to Congress. Known as the Truman Doctrine, the president had proposed the U.N. as the instrument by which “freedom and independence” could be made possible on a global scale, and linked this vision of “international peace” to “the security of the United States.” Truman’s articulation made American aid and military intervention equivalent to the U.N. charter, and committed American assistance, through the U.N., to “help free peoples to maintain their free institutions and their national integrity against aggressive movements.”<sup>10</sup>

After the outbreak of the war, in President Truman’s first public television address on July 19, 1950, he braced Americans for a new phase of war mobilization and preparedness, moving from “the peaceful duties of occupation” in the “Far East” to “the grim duties of war.” Speaking from the White House in a second television address on September 1<sup>st</sup>, Truman went on to propose that American foreign policy and military intervention be understood as a kind of peacemaking. “Our men are fighting for peace today in Korea,” he argued in closing. “We are working for peace constantly in the

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<sup>9</sup> Johnson was the foremost proponent of “preventive war,” the willed unknowing that helped set the tenor of the war. It proved a public relations disaster, however, and he was asked to resign by President Truman in September 1950. “Asks Matthews to Quit: Harrington Urges Resignation of Navy Secretary,” *New York Times*, 28 Aug. 1950, 15; Hanson W. Baldwin, “War of Prevention: Perils in Proposed Attack on Soviet Now are Weighed Against Alleged Advantage,” *New York Times*, 1 Sept. 1950, 4.

<sup>10</sup> Pres. Harry S. Truman, “Truman Doctrine” address before Joint Session Congress, 12 March 1947, available from Yale University Law School’s Avalon Project, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th\\_century/trudoc.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/trudoc.asp). The equivalence of American security with communist containment, global security, and the U.N. charter was later underlined with respect to Asia: the 1949 National Security Council paper on U.S.-Asian relations proposes just this set of equivalent analogies: “The Position of the United States with Respect to Asia,” National Security Council Report to the President, 48/2 (30 Dec. 1949), collected in United States Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1949: The Far East and Australasia, Volume VII, Part 2* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Govt. Printing Office, 1949), 1215–1220.

United Nations, and all the capitals of the world.”<sup>11</sup> The story of a war for peace quickly snowballed: on September 20<sup>th</sup>, the U.S. Ambassador to the U.N., Warren Austin, gave a rousing speech to the General Assembly in which he called on the bodies of the U.N. to “unite for peace” against the Soviet threat, and this language appeared throughout the three years of war in newsreels and television news specials.<sup>12</sup>

Central to the international imperialist vision of American containment policy, the imprimatur of the United Nations allowed the idea of a “war for peace” to cohere. From Acheson’s first move, State Department and Truman Administration officials made sure to code the Korean War as a U.N. war. On July 4, 1950, the *Washington Post* reported that the U.N.’s daily fifteen-minute news broadcasts had begun to emphasize that “the Korean War” was “not just an American operation” but “an international action under the authority of the Security Council.”<sup>13</sup> In mid-July, the State Department stepped up its campaign to directly involve all members of the U.N. in the fighting in Korea through either military or political support.<sup>14</sup> This was a continual concern for American strategists, for this was primarily a U.S.-fought war, and the involvement of the U.N. could at times seem like an overstatement at best. (For example: at the Wake Island conference between General Douglas MacArthur and President Truman in October 1950, MacArthur pointed out that U.N. troops were “useless from a military point of view,” and

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<sup>11</sup> Pres. Harry S. Truman, live television addresses from the White House, CBS network, 19 July 1950 and 1 Sept. 1950, accessed from the Paley Center for Media database.

<sup>12</sup> Warren Austin, “Uniting for Peace,” quoted in Steven Casey, *Selling the Korean War: Propaganda, Politics, and Public Opinion in the United States, 1950–1953* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 93–94. For news and film examples, see: “Red Chinese Drive Back UN forces . . .,” *The News Magazine of the Screen* 1, issue 5 (Jan. 1951), Warner/Pathé Newsreels; “UN Condemns Red China....,” *The News Magazine of the Screen* 1, issue 6 (Feb. 1951), Warner/Pathé Newsreels; “Korea: The Long Road to Peace,” *The March of Time on Television*, (1953), Time/Life Inc.

<sup>13</sup> Ferdinand Kuhn, “Korean Action Stressed as U.N. Fight,” *Washington Post*, 4 July 1950, 12.

<sup>14</sup> Casey, *Selling the Korean War*, 90.

argued that giving the war “a United Nations flavor” was a political project for Washington, not one for him and his command.<sup>15</sup>)

A “war for peace” was one narrative and conceptual strategy by which American imperial power became intelligible as cultural concept, military mission, and foreign policy through the forgetting of Korean political desires and now, the bombing of their homes and bodies. The tension inherent in the idea of a “war for peace” embodied the productive tension inherent in the liberal version of empire. This was noted by a *New York Times* editorial in the first weeks of the war, that warned “If Asians could be persuaded that the United States was acting for purely imperialistic reasons it would be serious for us and for the United Nations. Our own knowledge that the charge is untrue is not enough; we have to prove it to the satisfaction of all of Asia.”

The Korean War sought to secure South Korea through massive military force and occupation, and promise that security as development, democracy, and freedom. The “war for peace” was reliant on violence to make South Korea secure but necessarily disavowed the scale of the violence in the final claim that this was in the interests of democracy. This was military expansion following an outright occupation, but because it was proposed as way of bringing democracy and freedom, the war was not framed as an imperial project. As Truman argued in his wartime September 1950 television speech—

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<sup>15</sup> “Notes on the Wake Island Conference,” 13 Oct. 1950, Box 206, folder 1 “general data”, Harry S. Truman Papers (HSTP): President’s Secretary Files (PSF), Korean War, Truman Library; General Omar N. Bradley “Substance of Statements Made at Wake Island Conference on 15 October 1950, Compiled by General of the Army Omar N. Bradley, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, From Notes Kept by the Conferees in Washington,” Box 206, folder 18 “Wake Island – conference statements,” HSTP: PSF, Korean War, Truman Library. Discussions of the reconstruction of North Korea under U.N. auspices were also part of the provisional planning outlined in NSC-81.

the same day that the National Security Council recommended to him provisional plans for occupying and reconstructing North Korea—“Our purpose is peace, not conquest.”<sup>16</sup>

***“Shoot ‘em”—designating the always-suspect: July–September 1950***

Truman’s peace imagined a population of Koreans ready to receive United States democracy; yet because it was also a project of communist containment and counterinsurgent warfare, these subjects quickly came under suspicion as potential communists. Race war was essential to the war for peace.

The first early months of the war set the tenor of the conflict as a counterinsurgent war because of the prevalence of communist guerrillas in the South. Fighting an insurgent war in a sympathetic and largely rural landscape, communist guerrillas enlisted their friends and neighbors to carry ammunition or cover military movements, used the lines of displaced refugees as convenient cover, or quickly changed between military uniforms and nondescript village clothing. Women and children might pull rifles and hand grenades out of innocuous baggage and take aim at lines of American troops marching down the road. As the South Korean and American troops were pushed south to the port city of Pusan, both ROK and U.S. forces began to forcibly evacuate towns thought to be “leftist,” including Sunch’ŏn, Masan, and Taegu. Thousands of Koreans were interned on islands near Pusan and forbidden to leave in order to keep them “safe” from guerrilla influence (or, rather, keep Americans safe from the fear that they might be guerrillas). As the retreat south was complicated by civilian and guerrilla ambushes, American troops

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<sup>16</sup> Truman, “Truman Doctrine”; Editorial, “The Russian Case,” *New York Times*, 5 July 1950, 30; Truman, television address, 1 Sept 1950; Security Council Report 81 (NSC-81), “United States Courses of Action with Respect to Korea,” 1 Sept. 1950, PSF, Truman Library, made available by the Library at [http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/koreanwar/index.php?action=docs](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/koreanwar/index.php?action=docs).

began to burn whole villages that were suspected of harboring guerrillas or that might possibly be used to harbor them in the future.<sup>17</sup>

North Korean troops practiced guerrilla warfare tactics learned from training in Maoist China, part of a longer tradition of cooperation between anticolonial Korean fighters and the Chinese communists stretching back to the 1930s. More, though, many of the Korean people's committees had reformed or taken new shape during the war, and several areas in the south that had been particular strongholds of the Korean left—South Chōlla province, for example—became insurgent centers of pro-communist fighting.<sup>18</sup> The menace of the Korean guerilla fighter, though, took on a life—or rather, a specter—of its own, and haunted the orientalist and anticommunist imagination of American military officials. The stealthy, silent Korean guerilla, clad in the “white pajamas” of traditional Korean costume, was seen to aid the “yellow hordes” and “red swarms” of Chinese communists and North Koreans. For American soldiers, largely untrained, exhausted, and frightened, a policy of shooting at any movement or perceived threat became the norm. American soldiers were said to “bug out” and run from battle, and to get the “combat spooks.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Cumings, *Origins* II, 687–690.

<sup>18</sup> Cumings, *Origins* II, 686–690.

<sup>19</sup> “Bug out” was a term for anyone scrambling out of the lines of fire, and appears in nearly all colloquial accounts of the war; it was also used by soldiers to describe Koreans running for cover, as in “gooks bugging out across a field.” E. J. Kahn, *The Peculiar War: Impressions of a Reporter in Korea* (New York: Random House, 1951), 22. As BBC journalist René Cutforth described, the whole atmosphere of the war—the cold, the endless refugees, the hopelessness, and the defeat—made “the spirit of the ‘bug-out’ . . . part of the Korean fabric.” René Cutforth, *Korean Reporter* (London: Allan Wingate, 1952), 40. Max Hastings uses the term to describe the southward withdrawal of U.S. and U.N. forces in winter 1951 as “the big bugout.” Max Hastings, *The Korean War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), 170. For discussion of the racial overtones of this term, and its use as a term of derision and a term of political critique amongst African American soldiers, see this dissertation’s chapter four as well as: Lieutenant Colonel Charles M. Bussey, *Firefight at Yechon: Courage and Racism in the Korean War* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991), 90 and passim; Selika Marianne Ducksworth, “What Hour of Night: Black Enlisted Men’s Experiences and the Desegregation of the Army During the Korean War, 1950–1” (PhD diss., Ohio State

Out of this counterinsurgent war came the linked figures of the Korean guerrilla fighter and the Korean refugee. Both figures drew on the continuum of racial and orientalist logic that undergirded the war, and the easy collapsibility of one into the other signified the tensions and slippages of racialization in the war, as well as Koreans' always-suspect status. Where the guerilla fighter marked the lurking communist threat, the abject refugee was the object to be pitied, ignored, regulated, or saved. Both figures were specters of the civil war dynamic and the state of counterinsurgent warfare, made alien by orientalist racial logics that rendered them dangerous, inscrutable, and undifferentiable.<sup>20</sup>

The “combat spooks” were reinforced by official designations of the frontlines as free-fire zones in which civilians could be shot at will, and through U.S. military orders to specifically target civilians and groups of refugees. Fears of the “people in white pajamas” ran rampant throughout military diaries of the first summer of the war, and produced a climate of militarized fear for American troops as displaced refugees moved through the Korean countryside. Fearing how easy it would be for guerrilla soldiers to “infiltrate” these refugees, the U.S. Air Force followed the Army’s request in July 1950 and ordered the strafing of all civilian refugees approaching American positions.<sup>21</sup> During the same month, the entire Eighth Army in Korea—the overarching military unit under

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University, 1994), ch. 6; Daniel Widener, “Seoul City Sue and the Bugout Blues: Black American Narratives of the Forgotten War,” in *Afro Asia: Revolutionary Political and Cultural Connections between African Americans and Asian Americans*, eds. Fred Ho and Bill V. Mullen (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 55–87.

<sup>20</sup> Gary Okihiro, *Margins and Mainstreams: Asians in American History and Culture* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1994).

<sup>21</sup> Charles J. Hanley, Sang-Hun Choe, Martha Mendoza, *The Bridge at No Gun Ri: A Hidden Nightmare from the Korean War* (New York: Henry Holt, 2001), 74–75, 121. Scanned documents documenting the military orders are also now available at the South Korean website of the Victims’ Families Association, “No Gun Ri Incident,” [http://eng.nogunri.net/english/data/date\\_01.html](http://eng.nogunri.net/english/data/date_01.html).

which Korean field operations took place—was commanded to let no Korean refugee through American lines. These policies recommended that young American soldiers (with an average age between 18 and 21) treat all Koreans as potential enemies, merging with the racial characterization of Koreans in a particularly deadly combination.<sup>22</sup>

That guerrillas were seen as “infiltrators” or as a newly emergent force to American strategists was a continuance of the disavowal by which American policy had claimed the ROK as a legitimate and democratic government. KMAG officials knew quite well that they had fought a counterinsurgent war in South Korea since 1945. Nonetheless, the exact tenor of the occupation period was unknown to most American combat troops. The counterinsurgent war, combined with anti-Asian racism and anticommunism in the United States, helped channel American fear and military violence toward making Korean lives ungrievable to facilitate the project of saving the peninsula.

This was a process in which soldiers often needed to be trained. A *Collier's* article from September 1950 described the ways in which a pilot learned this new “unorthodox” form of warfare, as “people” turn to “troops”:

The young pilot drained his cup of coffee and said, “Hell’s fire, you can’t shoot people when they stand there waving at you.”

“Shoot ‘em,” he was told firmly. “They’re troops.”

“But, hell, they’ve got on these white pajama things and they’re straggling down the road in little bunches of five and six pushing little handcarts full of bedding and stuff.”

“Heading which way?”

“South, mainly.”

“See any women or children?”

“Women? I wouldn’t know. The women wear pants, too, don’t they? But no kids, no, sir.”

“They’re troops. Shoot ‘em.”

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<sup>22</sup> Melinda L. Pash, *In the Shadow of the Greatest Generation: The Americans who Fought the Korean War* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 45–46.

“But when you come over they stand there and wave...”  
“Shoot ‘em.”<sup>23</sup>

Through the repetition of “shoot ‘em” and the suppression of any individual distinction—*it doesn’t matter if they wave*—were Korean lives made always-suspect, given license by the structures of fear and command that defined the war.

The stress of the early months of the war on U.S. combat soldiers was palpable: between inexperience and fear, the ways all refugees and Koreans melded into one threat, and the continual violence of the war, soldiers panicked, shot in fear, or shot civilians in a frenzy. In the first month of the war, more soldiers were evacuated for psychiatric casualties than for bodily wounds.<sup>24</sup>

The decision to shoot was, of course, individual, and some soldiers chose not to shoot civilians (or shoot at all). The same *Collier’s* article from September 1950 also reported on an unnamed American pilot “in despair” who had refused to napalm a village. He had been sent to bomb the village, as it was close to the war’s frontlines and suspected of harboring North Korean troops. As the pilot explained, “When I got to the target, all the women were doing their washing and hanging it up, and the streets were full of kids playing . . . How in hell could I drop napalm on a target like that?”<sup>25</sup> This pilot’s courageous despair suggests that Korean lives could move from the suspect to the grievable, from the “target” to “women doing their washing” and “kids playing.” That this pilot was indeed extraordinary, though, was testament to how often the always-suspect moved toward ungrievability instead. Most often, fear, sympathy, disgust, and

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<sup>23</sup> This is the opening vignette of the article: Captain Walter Karig, U.S.N.R., “Korea: Tougher to Crack than Okinawa,” *Collier’s*, 126, no. 13, 23 Sept. 1950, 24–25, 69–70.

<sup>24</sup> Hanley et al, *Bridge to No Gun Ri*, 134.

<sup>25</sup> Karig, “Korea: Tougher to Crack than Okinawa,” 70.

racism mingled together in deadly combination, and this was most clear with the treatment of Korean refugees.<sup>26</sup>

Intrinsic to the fear of the guerrilla was the idea of Korean refugees as an undifferentiated mass, an unknowable and mute stream of refugees. Because they were not conceived of as individuals, guerrillas could not be identified, and thus all Koreans were suspect. Refugees were depicted in “streams,” “masses,” or “moving rivers,” and their anonymity gave cover to potential guerrillas in their midst.<sup>27</sup> Existing alongside their potential threat was their abject status: from the earliest days of the war, refugees were depicted as “aimless,” “bewildered” figures, carrying “pitifully small bundles,” their faces “blank with suffering and hunger.”<sup>28</sup> This affective position allowed for the easy blending of orientalist ideas of Asian inscrutability with the colonial development narrative that posed Koreans as victims to be saved by American democracy.

The U.N. Civil Assistance Corps in Korea (UNCACK) was appointed, alongside the Civil Affairs unit in the U.S. Army, to give basic aid to refugees, to ensure some modicum of public health by preventing disease, and to “further operational objectives of the United Nations command” by aiding the people they had so far saved through fighting, bombing, and burning villages. Civil assistance units continually estimated the number of refugees in a given area and determined the ounces of rice and cooking fuel each person would need (less than prisoners of war received), the capacity of nearby hospitals, the likelihood of getting blankets, vaccines, and DDT (used to prevent malaria

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<sup>26</sup> Melinda Pash’s oral history–based account of soldiers also found that refusing to shoot or distinctly empathizing with Korean civilians or Korean and Chinese soldiers was rare: Pash, *Shadow of the Greatest Generation*, 111–112.

<sup>27</sup> Cutforth, *Korean Reporter*, 116–117; Kahn, *Peculiar War*, 32 and ch. 12.

<sup>28</sup> O. H. P. King, “Wounded and dead line roads in nightmare of desolation,” *Washington Post*, 5 July 1950, 1, 11; Walter Simmons, “*Tribune* writer tells how war looks at front,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 26 June 1950, 1.

and other infectious diseases) to the region, and coordinating with other Army units and Korean services to try and accommodate the refugees the war produced. By the Army's own accounts, the war was a devastation, with aid stations and hospitals bombed, massive rates of pneumonia and infant mortality in winter, and tens of thousands of homeless, evacuated to islands, or moving through Seoul in the early months of the war.<sup>29</sup> The civil assistance programs were earnest but emblematic of the tensions communist containment produced: containment required burning villages to prevent potential guerrillas from using them, which then required the Army to find a way to get blankets and rice to the newly homeless.

Refugees' devastation was often tinged with fear at their suspect status. American war correspondent John Osborne described Korean refugees in his article printed in *Time* and *Life* in August 1950 in this way:

They plod by, eyes down, backs bent, legs pumping up and down in the stiff and universal fashion of the burden bearers of Asia . . . . Sitting in the jeep, watching them march by without escort of any kind, I knew the constricting doubt and fear that every American in Korea comes to know as he watches those silent strangers, to whom he cannot speak, filing down the roads, across the paddies, and through the cities of the south. And this particular column is remembered a few days later

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<sup>29</sup> The archives of the Army's Civil Affairs section provide a window into the massive logistics required of this unit, as well as the massive devastation it contended with. In true military style, the papers are also replete with calculations of the precise number of aid commodities each reasonable refugee would require, and the numbers of estimated refugees in each locality. See for example: "Plan for Civil Aid," 24 Oct 1950, and "Blanket Request," 19 Nov 1950, General Headquarters United Nations Command (HQ UNC) to Eighth Army and Japan Logistical Command (JLC), Folder KCA-W Unclassified 51-75 Dec. 1950, Box 1437 Civil Assistance Files (CAF) 1950, Civil Affairs Section (CAS), Eighth U.S. Army, Records of U.S. Army Operational, Tactical, and Support Organizations (World War II and Thereafter) Record Group (RG) 338, National Archives at College Park, Maryland (NACP); "Justification for refugee supply requisition," 27 Nov 1950, Folder Civil Assistance Section, Nov-Dec 1950, Box 1437, CAS, Eighth Army, RG 338, NACP; Reports from 27 Nov 1950, 18 Nov 1950, ROK field report from Seoul from 22 Nov 1950, report on tentage for refugees from 26 Nov 1950, and breakdown of needed relief items from 1 Dec 1950, Folder KCA Reports #3 1-25 Nov-Dec 1950, Box 1437, CAS, Eighth Army, RG 338, NACP; 24 Dec 1950 Semi-monthly report from Republic of Korea (ROK) to UNCACK, Folder Weekly Reports CAC 1, Box 1437, CAS, Eighth Army, RG 338, NACP; "Estimate of Refugee Situation in Korea," 20 Dec. 1950, Folder General Admin Files Nov-Dec 1950, Box 1437, CAS, Eighth Army, RG 338, NACP.

when I hear that North Korean guerrillas have unaccountably turned up far behind our lines and are fighting within a few miles of the city.

Osborne wrote of GIs facing a group young Korean children walking “in the piston motion of the Asian coolie,” and the “palpable fear, almost a hatred, of the unknown and unknowable” that formed amongst the GIs. In these passages, Osborne saw not Koreans but an undifferentiated mass of “silent strangers” and “coolies” who must, because of their unknowability and silence, be suspect. Osborne’s narrative also suggests that this suspicion was the proper response, as guerrillas had “unaccountably turned up” behind the lines.<sup>30</sup>

One structuring condition of counterinsurgency warfare was that all suspicions and fears were proved true and that gossip became deadly fact. Gossip and suspicion instantly became military strategy, and that strategy was based upon the always-suspect nature of Korean life. Osborne also recounted this story, of a column of refugees trying to pass through American lines in the middle of the night. The commanding colonel gave orders not to let them through, leading his staff to ask “Yeah, but what if they don’t go back?” “Well then,” the colonel replied, “fire over their heads.” His staff continued to query, “Then what?” The colonel “brace[d] himself” and answered “Well, then, fire into them if you have to. *If you have to*, I said.” And of course, the refugee column was shot at. Osborne reported a command post telephone screaming “My God, John, it’s gone too far when we are shooting children.”<sup>31</sup> But the logic of counterinsurgency, of the fear of the guerrilla fighter, and the designation of Koreans as ungrievable “gooks” was already

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<sup>30</sup> John Osborne, “Report from the Orient: Guns are Not Enough” *Life* (21 Aug 1950), 81–82. A shorter version of Osborne’s article was simultaneously printed in *Time* as “Men at War: The Ugly War,” *Time* 56:8 (21 Aug 1950), 22–25.

<sup>31</sup> Osborne, “Report from the Orient,” 84.

in place. The idea that these acts “went too far” is a powerful form of forgetting and disavowal, for they went precisely where militarized culture and imperial violence led them.

Only rarely did refugees become individuals in wartime accounts: most often, when orphaned or abandoned, Korean children became temporarily adopted by soldiers and war correspondents as “houseboys,” running errands, cooking, and sometimes translating for their benefactors. BBC correspondent René Cutforth visited a refugee camp and interviewed one Korean refugee, the 34-year old An Kay Moon. For four days, Moon spoke to Cutforth via an interpreter, and this account—quoted at length in Cutforth’s 1952 war memoir *Korean Reporter*—is one of the few accounts in English where a Korean refugee is allowed both individual subjectivity and a speaking position in the text, and allowed to tell his own, complicated story.<sup>32</sup>

Despite the very real possibility of individual experiences of empathy, connection, or interaction between soldiers and Korean refugees, the representation of displaced Koreans during the war remained, in American television, print, and film that of a massed group of faceless victims, pitied, hated, in need of saving, always-suspect. Just as pictures of refugees came to symbolize “Korea” on the front pages of American newspapers, so

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<sup>32</sup> Cutforth, *Korean Reporter*, 150–156. Cutforth devotes much of this work describing the hardships and violence wrought on Korean refugees. The American journalist E. J. Kahn also visited a refugee camp in Pusan, but he offers only description, not interviews: Kahn, *The Peculiar War*, ch. 12. Cutforth also had a houseboy named Kim, and he devotes part of his memoir to Kim’s account of his life and the organization of Seoul orphans into “gangs” of houseboys. For more on houseboys, see: Whitney Taejin Hwang, “Borderland Intimacies: GIs, Koreans, and American Military Landscapes in Cold War Korea,” (PhD diss., University of California-Berkeley, 2010), esp. 37–38, 71.

this racial articulation of American benevolence and violence came to symbolize the war.<sup>33</sup>

### ***“Little buddies”***

Truman’s story of a war for peace, democracy, and development also depended on rehabilitating the subjects it sought to give freedom to. The ROK Army (ROKA) served, in this sense, as one institution of postcolonial state-building for American empire, an arena for the teaching of American practices of modernity, democracy, and defense.<sup>34</sup> The ROKA had been trained and developed by KMAG’s American military advisers, who saw their work as transforming “young inexperienced farm boys” into a “large and modern fighting machine.”<sup>35</sup> This gendered, evolutionary language of turning primitive boys into modern men moved between paternalist praise and racial condemnation, enmeshing Asian subjects under the constant supervision of the U.S. empire.

When ROK soldiers were attached to American regiments early in the war, in what was laboriously called the Korean Augmentation Training to the United States

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<sup>33</sup> Pictures of refugees were often front page news, used to reference “Korea” for newspaper readers, and had been so from the first days of the war. For film and television examples, see the Army television series *The Big Picture*, played from 1953–1959, in particular the episodes “United Nations Forces Escape Chinese Trap,” “United Nations Offensive Continues,” “United Nations Line is Stabilized While Truce Talks Continue,” and “The Rebirth of Seoul.” Only very few of the near fifty Hollywood films about the Korean War made between Sam Fuller’s 1951 *The Steel Helmet* and 1962’s *The Manchurian Candidate* seek to show the effects of the war on Koreans, and most that did make the attempt also made it poorly: for example, *The Nun and the Sergeant* (1962) made the protection of Korean girls the fodder for a sexploitation storyline, while *Operation Dames* (1959) and *All the Young Men* (1960) portrayed Korean families not as real characters but only victims to be saved or pitied, and involved white actors in yellowface. See Robert J. Lenz, *Korean War Filmography: 91 English-Language Features through 2000* (Jefferson, NC: MacFarland and Co., 2003), 439.

<sup>34</sup> For further elaboration of this process across different time periods and zones of war in Asia, see Simeon Man, “Conscripts of Empire: Race and Soldiering in the Decolonizing Pacific,” (PhD diss., Yale University, 2012).

<sup>35</sup> “The Republic of Korea Soldier,” *The Big Picture*.

Army program (KATUSA), they were at best seen by their American allies as “little buddies” and at worst as incompetent and idiotic imbeciles. The KATUSA program, which began on August 15, 1950 supplied one hundred ROK recruits to each American company or battery in Korea, continues to this day and is still seen as symbolic of the U.S.-ROK alliance.<sup>36</sup> The character of that alliance, though, has not been one of equal friendship, but has instead been wrought through the logics of development, modernity, and colonial dependency, a discourse that produced and relied upon the subtext of race.

ROK forces were supervised because American commanders had concluded that they could not fight well at all—according to most military accounts, instead of fighting, ROK soldiers turned and ran. American GIs also rightfully noted that ROK officers were cruel to their own men, and often preserved most of their violence for North Koreans and suspected communists, both soldiers and civilians.<sup>37</sup> As the war originated in a civil war, and as the elites of the South Korean state had been trained in counterinsurgent techniques years prior, the actual brutality of ROKA forces ought to have been foreseen. Indeed, the records of the Eighth U.S. Army in Korea, the largest fighting unit, included reports of ROKA massacres and recommended that some be treated as war crimes by the U.N. military commission.<sup>38</sup> My point here is neither to occlude ROKA violence nor detail the ROK’s military strength, but to underscore the racialized ways in which ROK soldiers came into focus for Americans.

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<sup>36</sup> See, for example, 8<sup>th</sup> Army Public Affairs, “KATUSAs Stand as Symbol of U.S.-ROK Alliance,” U.S. Army website, 1 Nov. 2011, <http://www.army.mil/article/68409/>.

<sup>37</sup> An exploration into the depths of vengeful violence wrought by Koreans on other Koreans during the war, and in particular by ROK military and police forces on civilians suspected of “collaborating” with communists, is a new focus of research for Korean scholars. I thank Hwasook Nam for bringing this to my attention.

<sup>38</sup> See reports on the Kochang Massacre in “Kochang Massacre,” 12 Sept. 1951 and “Trial of War Criminals,” 5 July 1951, Folder 000.5, Security-Classified General Correspondence (SCGC), Box 730, Adjutant General Section (AG), Eighth US Army, RG 338, NACP.

Official KMAG histories of the ROK-U.S. Army relationship, written just a few years after the war, described it as a “big-little brother relationship,” one in which the ROK always needed American oversight and was “steadily progressing” toward independence.<sup>39</sup> American photojournalists’ accounts of the ROK often depicted tall American soldiers next to their shorter “little buddies” in the KATUSA program, or American officers overseeing and directing Korean soldiers.<sup>40</sup> This affective relationship neatly brought together longer-standing tropes of Asians as diminutive and Koreans in particular as primitive and in need of modern development, through the auspices of American military aid. In the John Ford-directed 1951 U.S. Navy film *This is Korea!*, a group of young, ragged, shirtless Korean men march despondently down a street, identified by the narrator as “South Korean recruits, raw.” As the film cuts into an image of outfitted Korean soldiers marching in military discipline, they are now “under a few weeks training, not so raw.”<sup>41</sup> This narrative of military development was mapped onto a gendered project of colonial nation-building, in which Korean boys were made into soldierly men as the Korean colony was forged into a modern nation of militarized citizens.<sup>42</sup>

The racialized figure of the KATUSA, and that of the ROK soldier in general, was in constant movement between the twin poles of barbarism and civilization,

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<sup>39</sup> KMAG Public Information Office, *The United States Military Advisory Group to the Republic of Korea, 1945–1955* (Tokyo: Daito Art Printing Co., 1956), viii, 60.

<sup>40</sup> *Time* magazine termed the relationship between U.S. soldiers and KATUSA trainees and soldiers as that of “buddies” in a news brief on the war in Asia: “Men at War,” *Time*, 4 Sept. 1950, 22–23. The *New York Times* termed KATUSAs “close buddies” and “hardy little Korean soldiers”: Robert Alden, “Koreans in Forces of U.S. Win Praise,” *New York Times*, 18 Jan. 1953, 3. For examples of such “little buddy” photographs, browse the photographs in KMAG PIO, *United States Military Advisory Group*.

<sup>41</sup> *This is Korea!*, directed by John Ford (presented by the U.S. Navy, released by Republic Pictures Corporation, 1951).

<sup>42</sup> For further discussion of the aid, assistance, and training programs of the U.S. in South Korea, and their imperial valences, see Man, “Conscripts of Empire,” 48–53.

primitivism and modernity, and fanaticism and discipline, and thus received simultaneous paternalist praise and racial condemnation by U.S. soldiers and the U.S. media. In a 1950 photo-essay on these “durable ROKs,” famous war photojournalist David Douglas Duncan praised the “guts” of the 17<sup>th</sup> Regiment, the “best outfit in the ROK Army,” but could not or would not depict ROK soldiers as individuals. While white American marines were shown in close-up facial portraits to emphasize Duncan’s belief in their dignity and suffering, ROKs were shown working in groups—a long line of marching boots and rucksacks, a group of hunched-over backs eating “special rations” of rice wrapped in seaweed, a crowd of artillerymen digging holes for antitank guns.<sup>43</sup>

American communications used the Morse code term “HA” to track ROK troop movements, an abbreviation for “hauling ass.”<sup>44</sup> In Roy Appleman’s official Army history of the war, ROK recruits were “stunned, confused and exhausted” and their commanders “hysterical.”<sup>45</sup> The ROKA were seen as not quite allies, always foreign, always problematic, and often less-than-fastidious. In writing of ROK rations, Appleman told us that “Whether his rice was warm or cold or whether flies and other insects had been on it, seemed to have little effect on the ROK soldier.”<sup>46</sup> According to *New Yorker* correspondent E. J. Kahn, Jr., writing in 1951, ROKs also had a racial propensity for violence, were “uncommonly indifferent to suffering—especially other people’s—and accept as normal what Americans would consider outright brutality.” In the end, even

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<sup>43</sup> David Douglas Duncan, “The Durable ROKs,” *Life*, 29, issue 11, 11 Sept 1950, 52–55.

<sup>44</sup> Cumings, *The Korean War*, 14.

<sup>45</sup> Roy E. Appleman, *South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu: June–November 1950* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1961), 400, 492.

<sup>46</sup> Appleman, *South to the Naktong*, 183.

KATUSA soldiers were always-suspect. As Kahn assured his readers, “This is, of course, in the Oriental tradition.”<sup>47</sup>

**“Get me a gook”: race war**

Race was a crucial component of the war’s violence, and it was race-making that formed the channels between the always-suspect, the salvageable, and the ungrievable Korean life. Emerging both out of the counterinsurgent character of the war as well as long-standing traditions of the American racialization of Asians, the designation of all Koreans as “gooks” helped to resolve the ambiguity of Koreans as always-suspicious, making them ungrievable and available for easy killing.

The word “gook” has a long etymology but is undeniably American, and the imaginary figure of the “gook” was conjured by the long process of American imperialism. “Gook” has always embodied the Other onto which American military goals have been mapped and against which American soldiers have defined their own positionality. As such, the figure of the “gook” has a shifting location in American history, what historian David Roediger calls a “pan-racist past” that “provides almost a short history of modern U.S. imperial aggression.”<sup>48</sup> During the counterinsurgency war of conquest in the Philippines at the turn of the twentieth century, American soldiers had spoken of “hunting” the “bestialized” “gugus,” almost assuredly an etymological

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<sup>47</sup> Kahn, *Peculiar War*, 117. Bryan Gibby’s recent monograph on KMAG and the ROKA makes the counter-argument that the ROKA forces were, by all American military standards, quite effective, though he does not delve into a discussion of why this misperception exists, and claims that it was American training that established the “moral foundation” as well as the structural framework for the South Korean Army: Bryan Gibby, *The Will to Win: American Military Advisors in Korea, 1946–1953* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2012), 2.

<sup>48</sup> David R. Roediger, “Gook: The Short History of an Americanism,” *Towards the Abolition of Whiteness: Essays on Race, Politics, and Working Class History* (New York: Verso, 1994), 117.

forerunner of the term “gook.” The word may have also referenced lower-class sexuality, and been used as misogynistic slang for camp-following prostitutes. In the 1920s, American Marines imagined French- and Creole-speaking black Haitians as “gooks” during the American occupation, and during later invasions, used the term to describe the people of Nicaragua and Costa Rica. The term even translated across imperiums, and was adopted by the French to describe Arabs in North Africa. During World War II, the “gook” figured as a convergence of class and racial identities: rioting servicemen in Honolulu employed the word to describe non-white Hawaiian street youth, and it was used by American servicemen to describe the peoples they interacted with in Latin America.<sup>49</sup>

The Korean War seems to have indelibly linked the “gook” to an Asian body. The Korean words for “American” involve a syllable akin to “gook,” sounding to American soldiers as the romanized “me-gook.” It is possible that soldiers entering villages interpreted Koreans shouting this word as a form of self-identification. What is telling in this scenario is that American soldiers assumed that Koreans would speak a kind of broken colloquial English, instead of Korean; and that “gook” was the syllable that registered for soldiers in such a context rather than a permutation of any other syllables. This “perverted logic of American racial grammar,” as literary critic Jodi Kim has termed it, symbolized a central dynamic of the Korean War. The “gook” became a new addition

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<sup>49</sup> Kramer, *Blood of Government*, 127; Roediger, “Gook,” 117–118; Andrew Friedman, “Meridians and Parallels: Racial Formations on the Global Grid,” talk at Empires of Capital Conferences, University of Washington, Seattle, 18 May 2013.

in the troupe of imaginaries produced out of American orientalist fantasy, not a stereotype but an abject and militarized figure, unseen, expendable, and ungrievable.<sup>50</sup>

It is important to note that this frame of thinking was not the sole province of infantrymen, of General MacArthur, or of certain conservative tendencies within the American military, but crossed the American political and social spectrum—from elite liberals to rabid “preventive war” proponents, from the military editor of the *New York Times* and the urbane correspondents of *The New Yorker* magazine to the young soldier in the field.<sup>51</sup> That racism was so pervasive is no surprise; the United States in 1950 functioned under a complex system of racial apartheid in the American South and a comprehensive series of immigration controls that prohibited Koreans from immigration and naturalization, prevented Korean Americans from owning land, and outlawed Korean-white marriages. The epistemological frame that made racial denigration of Asian Americans natural was reworked and strengthened by the adaptation of this racial frame to the Korean War context.<sup>52</sup>

A dismissal of Korean subjectivity was in evidence from the first days of the American occupation, when an anthropologist conducting fieldwork along the thirty-eighth parallel in 1946 reported that the number of Americans who did not refer to Koreans as “gooks” could be “counted on the fingers of both hands.” War journalists’

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<sup>50</sup> Jodi Kim, “From Mee-gook to Gook: The Cold War and Racialized Undocumented Capital in Chang Rae Lee’s *Native Speaker*,” *MELUS* 34, no.1 (Spring 2009): 121–122. This is also several journalists’ explanation for the term “gook”: See the American journalist from the *New Yorker* magazine, E. J. Kahn, *The Peculiar War*, 164–5; and the BBC’s special correspondent in Korea, René Cutforth, who insisted that it was not a racial term, but the Korean word for “people,” and that “No Korean could object to being called a Gook.” Cutforth, *Korean Reporter*, 21–2. I also want to note that the word was adopted by many United Nations forces in Korea, though it is American in origin: British war correspondents wrote of its use frequently among British and Australian troops: see Cutforth, *Korean Reporter*, esp. 124; and Reginald Thompson, *Cry Korea* (London: MacDonald and Co., 1951).

<sup>51</sup> For more, see Cumings, *Origins* II, 690–697.

<sup>52</sup> Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1989), 271; Bong-youn Choy, *Koreans in America* (Chicago: Nelson Hall, 1979), 107.

accounts are full of American soldiers napalming “gooks bugging out across a field,” calling any dead Asian body a “dead gook” or “good gook,” expressing a desire to “get me a gook,” or running down Korean children (“festering Gooks”) in jeeps for sport.<sup>53</sup>

The term was never specific to the official North Korean enemy, but often an indiscriminate term used against any Korean, civilian or soldier, North or South, child or adult. The imaginary figure of the “gook” was a nearly inchoate way to rage against the circumstances in which Americans found themselves, fighting a war they often did not quite believe in. Race tempered the rage of fighting and made certain bodies available for the release of that rage; and in Korea, the body of the “gook” conjured by the American racial imaginary became both a target and a route to self-preservation, a way rage could be channeled and war could be understood; a way to claim victory in the war by “saving” South Korea through killing. British war journalist Reginald Thompson described driving out of Seoul in a U.S. Army jeep in fall of 1950 in his 1951 book *Cry Korea*:

Our jeep driver was as mad as the maddest, but by a miracle failed to kill us or anyone else, though he smashed two small handcarts to flying fragments, scattering all the worldly goods of two families of ‘Gooks.’ I realised that they had to be ‘Gooks’, for otherwise these essentially kind and generous Americans would not have been able to kill them indiscriminately or smash up their homes and poor belongings. By calling them ‘Gooks’ they were robbed of humanity.<sup>54</sup>

Several weeks later, Thompson described coming across American soldiers in a village near Sariwon, North Korea, “firing houses for the fun of it.” Thompson and his colleague tried to argue with the soldiers to stop, to no avail, and Thompson reflected on the character of this violence:

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<sup>53</sup> Kahn, *Peculiar War*, 22; Cutforth, *Korean Reporter*, 22; Thompson, *Cry Korea*, 39, 135.

<sup>54</sup> Thompson, *Cry Korea*, 113–114.

The remarkable thing was that the boys weren't angry. They weren't nasty. They weren't 'dead-end kids.' They were simply bored, thoughtless, undisciplined children, stuck by the roadside in a 'Gook' village. And this most dangerous and 'obscene' word, 'Gook,' was a shroud with which they covered human beings and pretended that they were not human beings.<sup>55</sup>

The point, here, is that these soldiers were not *particularly* sadistic; they were normal and unremarkable. This is the very definition and success of the resolution of the always-suspect into the ungrievable life: not the denial of a pre-determined humanity, as Thompson has it, but the acceptable impossibility of seeing Koreans as ever having meaningful, grievable lives.

The "gook" functioned as a convergence point for cross-currents of anger, disavowal, shame, and paternal benevolence, and as such was simultaneously a worthless body to be abused for sport, a way to legitimate the violence wrought on their bodies, and the primitive yet grateful recipient of American largesse. "Gooks," in other words, were objects of hatred and objects to be saved.

Thompson goes on to quote the "good-natured" and "good-tempered" Marines explaining the reason they needed to see Koreans not as "men, women and children with homes, loves, hates, aspirations, and often very great courage," but instead as "gooks." Explained several Marines to Thompson, "We gotta fight like this . . . It saves lives 'n we got the stuff."<sup>56</sup> Presumably the lives saved were those saved from communism, or perhaps American lives saved from a "gook's" potential violence. As General Ridgway put it, Koreans were "a docile people," a "pitiful horde . . . of the meek and disinherited

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<sup>55</sup> Thompson, *Cry Korea*, 164.

<sup>56</sup> Thompson, *Cry Korea*, 44.

bound only to escape the terrors of Communism.”<sup>57</sup> Ridgway’s messianic self-positioning relied on the forgetting intrinsic in making lives ungrievable, an immediate disavowal of another’s likeness to yourself.<sup>58</sup> Anticommunism and containment became equivalent to racism and killing: it was race that enabled lives to become ungrievable and that allowed death to become democracy and killing become salvage.

That the “gook” made the war legible for American soldiers did not mean that it was an uncontested imaginary, or that it was not ruptured by soldiers, journalists, or photographers who saw Koreans as mournable lives, if only for a moment. Thompson reported that among the new soldiers, “there were many young men of obvious quality to offset the gun-bearers and the gook-getters.”<sup>59</sup> One reader wrote in to *Life* magazine in September 1950 to say that, “As long as American officers and men use the derisive term ‘gook’ to describe the Korean people, understanding and goodwill cannot be achieved.”<sup>60</sup> The slang usage of “Kim” to refer to South Korean soldiers in the same manner as an American “Joe” was proposed in the first year of the war to stop Americans from calling their allies “gooks,” though it never seemed to pass into common usage.<sup>61</sup> The *Baltimore Afro-American* wrote an editorial specifically against the term “gook,” arguing that “To us, it is as if, during the Civil War, Union forces had referred to slaves in the South as

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<sup>57</sup> Ridgway, *The Korean War*, 96.

<sup>58</sup> I find Edward Said’s formulation of othering, and his hope of a kind of critical humanist encounter not bound by this discourse, as quite useful here: Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (1978; 1994 ed.; repub. New York: Vintage, 2003).

<sup>59</sup> Thompson, *Cry Korea*, 40.

<sup>60</sup> This letter was written in response to John Osborne’s article, quoted earlier. Wayne L. Pearson, Letter to the Editor, *Life*, 11 Sept 1950, 12.

<sup>61</sup> Ralph Reppert, “Them’s Fighting Words,” *Baltimore Sun*, 24 June 24 1951. I have never seen this term used in journalists’ memoirs and war reportage or in veterans’ or historians’ accounts, and experts in military slang propose “gook” and “mother fucker” as two of the most frequently used terms of the Korean War: Paul Dickson, *War Slang: American Fighting Words and Phrases since the Civil War* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed: Washington, D.C.: Brassey’s, 2004), 243 and 250; Reppert, “Them’s Fighting Words.”

‘n-----s,’ heedless of the fact that there were some colored men on the Union Side.” As they put it, “racial epithets have no place in war.”<sup>62</sup>

Yet racial epithets helped to structure the violence of the war. As already discussed, there are examples of American soldiers who did not shoot at Koreans for sport or refused to napalm villages, and war journalists described conversations in which soldiers became ashamed of their suspicions and violence toward Koreans. In most places, though, shame was registered only after a suspect life had been termed a “gook” and subjected to violence; the overwhelming arc of combat and racialization pushed soldiers away from the empathic transformation of suspect to grievable life. It was rooted in the racial logics of the war more than individual soldiers’ racial presuppositions, and indeed, it makes those soldiers who did seek postwar public recompense or refuse to shoot that much more extraordinary.<sup>63</sup>

War photojournalist Carl Mydans, who covered the Korean War for *Life* magazine and the *New York Herald Tribune*, wrote a chapter of his reflective and poetic autobiography that perfectly described the ways in which the figure of the “gook” was borne out of the always-suspect Korean. More remarkable, though, Mydans’ story gave one account of how American soldiers’ shame could ultimately render Korean lives

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<sup>62</sup> “Koreans won’t like this,” *Baltimore Afro-American* 26 Aug. 1950, 4.

<sup>63</sup> For one example of a soldier refusing to shoot, see Hanley et al, *Bridge at No Gun Ri*, 85. Captain Karig tells of an American flier who refused to napalm a village full of women and children in Karig, “Korea: Tougher to Crack than Okinawa,” *Collier’s*, 70. Reginald Thompson tells the story of military police who run down two young Korean children, “festering Gooks,” as they say, and badly injure both. “Quieted,” the military policemen rush the unconscious and bleeding children to the Army hospital: Thompson, *Cry Korea*, 135. For examples of American veterans haunted by the part they took in massacres of Korean civilians, see the remarkable stories of the Army veterans who, in concert with Korean survivors, lent their remembrances and painful descriptions of their post-traumatic stress disorder to journalists uncovering the No Gun Ri massacre: Hanley et al, *Bridge at No Gun Ri*. Similar stories and work were uncovered during the Vietnam War during the Vietnam Veterans Against the War’s “Winter Soldier Investigation” hearings in 1971; and again by the Iraq Veterans Against the War’s own “Winter Soldier” hearings about the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, in 2008.

grievable. In this chapter, “The Gook,” Mydans recounted a story told to him during the war by a captain, who became separated from his outfit by a night attack. The captain and two others were given food and aid, first by an old Korean man, and then by a young Korean boy, who fed them and led them back toward American lines. The old man, a “God-damn gook,” betrayed their hiding spot to North Korean forces, and the soldiers debate whether or not they can trust the young boy to lead them to safety as “he’s a gook.” But when he takes them near enough to the position, they shake his hand and declare him a “good Joe,” a salvageable ally.

The quartet needed to cross a field of enemy fire to reach American lines, and the young boy, in the lead, was shot first. The captain and his compatriots shielded the boy’s body and carried him to the American medical unit. In desperation, they shook the old Korean man who served as an interpreter, trying to get him to question the boy about his name and family. When the old Korean refused to speak, the captain muttered, “Hard. Like all Koreans.” Despite the quartet’s efforts, the boy died, at which point the captain grabbed the old Korean in frustration—“Don’t you understand? Don’t you know what I’m saying? He’s dead. And now his family will never know what happened to him—how he died.” The old man gently freed his arms, and told the captain in English, “I understand. I know who he is. I have known him for seventeen years. He was my son.”<sup>64</sup>

In Mydans’ account, the young Korean’s move from “gook” to “Joe” illustrated the entire continuum on which Korean lives were considered for Americans, from suspicious (“Korean”) to ungrievable (“gook”) to salvageable (“Joe”), and ultimately, to a life that was literally grieved by the captain. The old Korean translator stood first for an

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<sup>64</sup> Carl Mydans, *More Than Meets the Eye* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1959), 301–309.

inscrutable, “hard” “gook”-figure and then immediately, and suddenly, transformed into “father” and co-mourner. The chapter’s narrative arc followed the captain’s shame, tracked onto the shifting location of the “gook” and the “gook’s” final disintegration into the grievable and mournable figures of the dead boy and his father. This was a story that used physical violence to tell a story of subjective violence and its sudden recognition: a moment that disrupted and questioned racial, subjective violence but also relied on that violence as a condition of its own possibility.

### ***Yellow peril, redux: September 1950–June 1951***

During the initial month of the counterinsurgency war in July 1950, the U.S. and U.N. forces were pushed south, until they held only a tight little circle around the southern port city of Pusan. Nearly pushed off the peninsula entirely, U.S. combat troops, Marines, and ROK forces spent August and early September engaged in a defensive holding operation, with hills rapidly changing sides in daily, bloody battles. Instead of sending replacements to the troops at Pusan, General MacArthur pulled Marines out of the area to prepare for his plan to break the siege: a massive amphibious landing in North Korean-held territory at Incheon, the major western port city of South Korea just below the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel and close to Seoul, from whence the Marines could fight their way to the capital. Incheon, by this time, had long been the port of entry for all imperial powers in Korea—the United States “diplomatic” mission landed at Incheon in 1871, the Japanese colonial powers in 1875, and General Hodge and USAFIK in 1945.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> David Halberstam, *The Coldest Winter: America and the Korean War* (New York: Hyperion, 2007), 293–315.

Finally approved by President Truman and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, U.S. Marines and infantrymen—collectively known as the X Corps—successfully landed at Incheon on September 15<sup>th</sup>. Much ink has been spilled glorifying the Incheon landing as a complete surprise to the North Koreans and as emblematic of MacArthur’s brilliance. Surprise it was not, but as military tactics go, it was quite a feat, involving the landing of 80,000 Marines from 270 ships in a harbor with shifting bays and complex tide patterns. The landing has become the stuff of military legend: General Matthew Ridgway later described the Incheon landing as a maneuver that was executed with “courage, dash, and skill.”<sup>66</sup> British war correspondent Reginald Thompson wrote in 1951 that after the U.S. forces fought their way through Incheon, their courage, dash, and skill had produced “a strange peace at the heart of Inchon on this bright morning, for the war had done its worst with it, leaving it hollow and burned out and pungent with the odours of charred wood and humanity.”<sup>67</sup>

Seven days later, the U.S. forces in Pusan, commanded by General Walton Walker, broke out of their besieged perimeter and moved north to merge with the General Edward “Ned” Almond’s X Corps. The now-freed U.N. forces re-captured Seoul on September 28<sup>th</sup>, and in early October, U.S. troops followed the ROKA over the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel and into North Korea.<sup>68</sup>

The tenor of American national security strategy had hardened by this time and leaned rightward, from limited containment of South Korea to an offensive policy of “rollback,” of retaking North Korea from the Soviets, provided that newly communist

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<sup>66</sup> Ridgway, *The Korean War*, 33, 41.

<sup>67</sup> Thompson, *Cry Korea*, 41.

<sup>68</sup> Halberstam, *The Coldest Winter*, 323–333.

PRC did not enter the war.<sup>69</sup> In President Truman's public address on September 1, 1950, broadcast live on CBS's television network, Truman argued that the war was much more than a temporary, limited incursion: instead, he argued, "the battle in Korea is the front line in a battle between freedom and tyranny."<sup>70</sup> The congealing of Washington's policy and rhetoric to a bipolar, all-encompassing cold war was quickly adopted by the newsreel studios—known more for their sensationalism and propaganda than for their critical journalism. From 1950 onward, newsreel stories portrayed the war in bipolar terms between American freedom and Soviet tyranny and "totalitarian aggression," a position easy to adopt, for it differed little from the bipolarity of World War II newsreel coverage, in which the defense of democracy against fascism was presented, in the words of Frank Capra's *Why We Fight* newsreel series, as that between a "free world" and a "slave world."<sup>71</sup>

The hardening of rhetoric around the war and the military success of the Incheon landing allowed U.S. and U.N. forces to move jubilantly northward, enthused by the idea of trying to reclaim the whole peninsula from communists. Throughout the fall and to the end of November, MacArthur's forces faced little to no resistance and were allowed to roll to the China-North Korean border at the Yalu River. The U.S. Army dropped pamphlets for North Korean civilians promising a U.N. victory, humanitarian aid, and the

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<sup>69</sup> NSC-81.

<sup>70</sup> Pres. Harry S. Truman, live addresses from the White House, CBS network, 1 September 1950.

<sup>71</sup> Among the many examples, see "As Russia Sees It" and "The Gathering Storm," *March of Time* newsreel series, Time/Life and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox, 16:5-6, 1950; any of the *News Magazine of the Screen* series from 1950–1953, Warner/Pathé newsreels; and "War or Peace? 1950: That Fateful Year," Universal Newsreels. *Why We Fight*, directed by Frank Capra (U.S. Department of War, 1943–45), esp. *Prelude to War*, vol. 1. For more on the sensationalism of the newsreel genre, see: Raymond Fielding, *The American Newsreel: A Complete History, 1911–1967* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Co., 2006); and Jessica L. Szalay, "World War II Newsreels: The Legacy of Yellow Journalism," (MA thesis, California State University-Fresno, 2009).

presence of U.S. military law.<sup>72</sup> American troops, facing the severe winter cold of Korea, celebrated Thanksgiving and hoped to be home by Christmas.<sup>73</sup>

This was not to be, however, as China had already entered the war. The Chinese-North Korean strategy had been to lure MacArthur's forces far into North Korea and quietly surround them. On November 27, 1950, the first major communist offensive began, encircling ROK and American soldiers and recapturing Pyongyang. By the end of December, communist troops had managed to push the lines of battle back over the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel and threaten Seoul. The entrapment and isolation of individual U.S. units was deadly for these troops, and the news photographs of frozen, weary Marines, fighting their way through communist lines at Changjin reservoir and retreating to the port of Hungnam to sail south, have come to symbolize the toll the Korean War took on American troops.<sup>74</sup> When American histories and memoirs reference *The Coldest War* (Marine Lieutenant James Brady's memoir) or *The Coldest Winter* (journalist David Halberstam's oral-history based account), this is the moment and sensibility of wintertime retreat, confusion, and death that they refer to.<sup>75</sup>

The entry of the PRC into the war allowed for another racial formation to emerge, that of the Chinese "chink" or "horde." If the ROK allies had been in need of American developmental training and civilians and refugees had all been potential guerillas, the

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<sup>72</sup> "EUSAK to the People of North Korea," 8 Nov. 1950, Folder KCA-W Unclassified 51-75, Dec. 1950, CAF, Box 1437, CAS, Eighth Army, RG 338, NACP.

<sup>73</sup> Several wire and magazine reports from November and December 1950 quoted General MacArthur as promising to send all troops home by Christmas: see Blair, *The Forgotten War*, 433\*.

<sup>74</sup> I refer to the work of David Douglas Duncan in particular; David Douglas Duncan, *This is War! A Photo-Narrative in Three Parts* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1951), "Retreat, Hell!" (unpaginated). To Duncan's chagrin, his photograph of frozen Marines marching out of the Changjin reservoir that winter was airbrushed (to take the corpses out) and made into a postage stamp: see David Douglas Duncan, *Photo Nomad* (Verona: Mondadori, and New York: Norton, 2003), 192-193; "Korean War Veterans Memorial to be Honored on New Postage Stamp," *PR Newswire* (New York), 1 July 2003: 1.

<sup>75</sup> James Brady, *The Coldest War: A Memoir of Korea* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 1990); Halberstam, *The Coldest Winter*.

actual armed forces of the Chinese enemy were simply barbaric. The Chinese “horde” was a construct of cold war–style militarism, in which the enemy was ruthless, sneaky, and totalitarian, part of the continuum of barbarism/docility in the American representation of Asian people.

The North Korean and Chinese enemies were made legible, in the accounts of soldiers, American journalists, and government policy, largely through the imperial imaginary’s frames of “Oriental savagery” and Asians’ perceived ruthless disregard for life. Weeks after the war started, Hanson Baldwin, military editor for the *New York Times* and a critic of the most conservative “rollback” and “preventive war” doctrines, nonetheless argued, “We are facing an army of barbarians in Korea, but they are barbarians as trained, as relentless, as reckless of life, and as skilled in the tactics of the kind of war they fight as the hordes of Genghis Khan.” These “most primitive of peoples” have been supplied with modern tank weaponry, Baldwin cautioned, making them “not just the armed horde but the armored horde.”<sup>76</sup>

At the same time, however, the racialization of the Chinese also became a way to discount the capability of Asian armies and mark the superiority of the American forces: General MacArthur’s assurance that he could easily handle the Chinese and North Korean armies was described by his detractors as an over-arrogant kind of “gook syndrome” that caused disaster for the Americans in this third phase of the war.<sup>77</sup> General Edward “Ned” Almond remarked testily during the first phase of the Chinese attack,

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<sup>76</sup> Hanson W. Baldwin, “The Lesson of Korea: Reds’ Skill, Power Call for Reappraisal of Defense Needs Against Sudden Invasion,” *New York Times*, 14 July 1950, 4.

<sup>77</sup> See Callum MacDonald, *Korea: The War Before Vietnam* (New York: Free Press, 1986), 211.

“We’re still attacking and we’re going all the way to the Yalu. Don’t let a bunch of Chinese laundrymen stop you.”<sup>78</sup>

Following Baldwin’s invocation of Genghis Khan, the Chinese—more commonly known to Americans as “chinks” or “Joe Chink” or “Old Fu”—were figured as “hordes,” “swarms,” and “waves” of soldiers, connoting the “yellow peril” fears of the nineteenth-century United States of an undifferentiated mass of Asians invading the west coast.<sup>79</sup> Constant references to the “human sea” were a way to explain away the suddenness with which U.S. and U.N. forces had been overrun and out-strategized by the Chinese entry into the war. This sort of fantasy soon became farce. General MacArthur’s headquarters came under scorn by the press in early 1951 for winter communiqués referencing ever-greater numbers of Chinese troops raining down on Seoul.<sup>80</sup> The constant description of the Chinese forces as “hordes” in military dispatches and official briefings quickly became a joke for war correspondents: in one such press conference, journalists were told that “Chinese hordes” had multiplied into nearly a million after crossing the Yalu River. Correspondent Michael Davidson asked, without cracking a smile, “Will you tell us how many Chinese battalions go to a horde, or vice versa?” Amongst soldiers, a commonly circulated joke had one soldier tell another, “I was just attacked by two hordes and killed

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<sup>78</sup> Reported by Army historian Martin Blumenson, quoted in Clay Blair, *The Forgotten War: American in Korea 1950–1953* (New York: Times Books, 1987), 462. General Almond later expressed his rage at those “yellow bastards” in his private papers: see Cumings, *Korean War*, 29.

<sup>79</sup> “Joe Chink” is from Kahn, *Peculiar War*, 90; see also “old Joe Chink” in Dickson, *War Slang*, 250. You will find references to “chinks” in any war reporting from the 1950s, and indeed, more recent war memoirs: see Brady, *The Coldest War*. “Old Fu” is from the popular culture villain Fu Manchu; see Dickson, *War Slang*, 250. For a perceptive review of the long history of Orientalist racial construction in American history and during the Korean War in particular, see Matthew Frye Jacobson and Gaspar González, *What Have They Built You to Do? The Manchurian Candidate and Cold War America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), ch. 5.

<sup>80</sup> Stone, *Hidden History*, ch. 32.

both of them.”<sup>81</sup> Despite the joke it soon became, this description was repeated and passed into common American discourse: the Army’s television series *The Big Picture*, which ran from 1953 to 1959 on the popular ABC network, had the Chinese troops appearing “in waves, in swarms.”<sup>82</sup> American veterans also drew on this language of “human waves” in later interviews and oral histories.<sup>83</sup>

Though it had arisen from the very nature of American military force, such open racial denigration periodically proved problematic to the military and to the mission of winning Asian adherence to American-style democracy. On May 31, 1951, commanding General Matthew Ridgway sent a letter to the entire Far East Command, encompassing the forces in Korea, occupied Japan, Okinawa, and the U.S. Naval and U.S. Air Force support units, asking all commanders to guard against the “use of bemeaning [demeaning] terms” in reference to the “race or nationality” of “foreign nationals.” In particular, the general pointed out, “Statements attributed to U.S. Armed Forces officers have appeared recently in the public press referring to the Chinese as ‘Chinamen’ and ‘Chinks,’” problematic because these “vulgar” and “embarrassing” terms can “alienate millions of Chinese who profess trust in and deep friendship for the United States.” Ridgway asked for all commanders to “exercise prudence and care . . . to preserve mutual respect between the United States Forces and the Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and other nationalities in the Far East.” The U.S. Army’s intelligence staff worried that these kinds of statements would not only offend those whom the Americans wished to win over to an American-led global coalition, but would also provide “highly exploitable material” for

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<sup>81</sup> Thompson, *Cry Korea*, 265; Kahn, *Peculiar War*, 6.

<sup>82</sup> “United Nations Forces Escape the Chinese Trap,” *The Big Picture*.

<sup>83</sup> Blair, *Forgotten War*, 442; Halberstam, *The Coldest Winter*, 561; Brady, *The Coldest War*.

the communist enemy to use to slander American goals in East Asia, and recommended that troop information and education programs also include training on racial and national sensitivity.<sup>84</sup>

The embarrassment and potential political problems, however, were at odds with the practice of the war and American imperial power, for it was race-making that allowed subjects to be annihilated in order to be saved, to be seen as unfit for self-government, or as deserving of waves of firepower. There is no evidence that the Army's racial thinking was halted or hindered. Ridgway himself employed nearly every orientalist construction available to describe his enemies in his 1967 memoir of the war: North Koreans were a "fierce, a wily, a ruthless, and a determined enemy," and the Chinese, with their "Oriental doggedness," melted into the hills and inspired psychological terror amongst the GIs. "And again," Ridgway wrote, "the wild bugles and barbaric screams sounded up and down the lines, while the enemy infantry, padding silently up dark hillsides in rubber shoes, infiltrated our positions." This soon became an orientalist fantasia: "The night attacks were as weird and dreamlike as ever, preceded by the unworldly wailing of taps on the Chinese bugles, or English profanity screamed by half a hundred Chinese throats, or threats of death and other noises designed to chill a Westerner's blood."<sup>85</sup>

After the failure of the rollback policy, the U.S. and U.N.-allied forces followed a "scorched earth policy" as they retreated from the Chinese, in the hopes that burning all livestock, food stuffs, and bridges, mining ports, and destroying supplies would prevent

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<sup>84</sup> "Use of Bemeaning Terms in Referring to Foreign Nationals," 31 March 1951, Folder 250, SCGC 1951, Box 740, AG, Eighth Army, RG 338, NACP; Letter correspondence and drafts (particularly comments from G-2) in Folder 250 #1 (1 of 2 so marked), SCGC 1951, Box 740, AG, Eighth Army, RG 338, NACP.

<sup>85</sup> Ridgway, *Korean War*, 32, 171, 187, 196. Other soldiers would echo Ridgway's language, in their recollections of Chinese night attacks: as one recalled, they were like "a scene from a nightmare—a lunatic's delight": see Blair, *Forgotten War*, 447.

the Chinese from remaining in North Korea during the winter. This produced more civilian refugees heading southward, and destroyed the North Korean landscape and infrastructure. Between January and June of 1951 the line of battle oscillated around the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel and the capital cities on either side of the line. American General Ridgway developed what he called the “meat-grinder strategy” of troop advancement combined with “maximum punishment” through use of all available airpower and weaponry as a means of retaking Seoul.<sup>86</sup>

Though American reporters in summer of 1950 had commented on the scale of the war’s violence and its counterinsurgent character, this next phase of violence would be less visible to the American public eye. The precarious military situation prompted General MacArthur’s Tokyo office to institute press censorship in December 1950 in the form of guidelines for protecting the security of the U.N. forces, which soon hardened into what one American reporter called “political and psychological censorship.”<sup>87</sup> In this climate, there was little chance of any journalist getting a story through the censor of South Korean or U.S./U.N. atrocities, or any information that might substantially point toward a counterinsurgent dynamic. For example, BBC reporter René Cutforth, after watching hundreds of refugees forced by South Korean military police at gunpoint back across the Han River into Seoul in early 1951, lamented that it could not be printed as news, for the censor “would visualize it as enemy headlines about BRUTAL CAPITALIST POLICE, CIVILIANS FORCIBLY ENTOMBED IN BLAZING CITY.”<sup>88</sup>

Whereas in 1950 the war’s brutality was reported by major American news outlets, by

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<sup>86</sup> Military historians argue that this was “necessary.” It is the basis of their calculus that I question. Kelly C. Jordan, “Meat Grinder Strategy,” *Encyclopedia of the Korean War: A Political, Social, and Military History*, Spencer C. Tucker (ed.), Vol. I, (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2000), 425–427.

<sup>87</sup> Quoted in Casey, *Selling the Korean War*, 158–161.

<sup>88</sup> Cutforth, *Korean Reporter*, 121.

1951, it had become only alluded to, in the odd photograph or journalists' private memoirs.

***War without death: spectacles of destruction***

Throughout the war, the United States maintained control of the skies, and the air war against Korea was so systematic as to be nearly genocidal: by late August 1950, just before the Incheon landing, U.S. planes were dropping 800 tons of bombs per day on the North, much of it napalm.<sup>89</sup> Much of American wartime news coverage was taken up by a fascination with bombs, bombing, and new technologies of destruction, and the deadliness of the weaponry quickly became a focus on the fantasy of war technology itself. Particularly in postwar film and television accounts, the Korean War became a war of thrilling “modern” technology in which the results of that technology went unseen: it became a war without death, the transformation of the ungrievable life into a spectacle of destruction.

In the early months of the war, the American forces found themselves with unchallenged control of the skies, and used bombing to destroy infrastructure. By September 1950, just two months into the war, the Far East Air Forces Headquarters was reporting that there was a “paucity” of industrial targets to bomb, for they had all been hit—as journalist I. F. Stone remarked in his painstaking review of military communiqués, “there was nothing left to destroy.” By late January 1951, Staff Sergeant Clark V. Watson reported, “It’s hard to find good targets, for we have burned out almost

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<sup>89</sup> Cumings, *Origins* II, 705–707.

everything.” Bombing soon became a standard “saturation” technique to use in advance of ground troops.<sup>90</sup>

Many of the bombs were made of napalm, a forerunner of the more developed weapon used in Vietnam, and a product of American bombing technology against Germany and Japan during World War II. Napalm, a gasoline-based syrupy jelly, does not smother like ordinary fire. It works by sticking to everything it touches in globules—land, water, flesh, clothing—and spreading, refusing to be put out. Napalm can cause fourth- and fifth-degree burns when stuck to the human body, which char the skin to ashes and reach inward to damage the bones and internal organs. Many victims, however, die not from the burns but from carbon monoxide poisoning and suffocation caused by the intense flame. U.S. forces dropped nearly 45,000 tons of napalm on Korea, more than twice the amount of napalm dropped during World War II; in the summer of 1951, U.S. Air Force officials estimated that it was being dropped by Allied forces at the rate of 77,000 gallons per day. The Fifth Air Force operational summary from February 4, 1950 regarded the results of a napalm attack as “excellent.”<sup>91</sup>

When the Chinese entered the war in the fall of 1950, the defeat of the rollback strategy led to panic in Washington and the discussion of even more powerful weaponry. President Truman announced a state of national emergency, authorized the quadrupling of defense spending, and proposed the use of atomic weapons on Korea to staunch the communist offensive, inaugurating what would come to be known as the military-

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<sup>90</sup> Stone, *Hidden History*, 256–257.

<sup>91</sup> Robert J. Bunker, “Napalm,” *Encyclopedia of the Korean War, Vol. II*, 472–474; Bill Stapleton, “Napalm—Canned Hell,” *Collier’s*, 4 August 1951, 32; William L. Worden, “They Beat Tanks with Bouncing Fire,” *Saturday Evening Post*, 223, no. 26, 23 Dec. 1950, 61; United Nations Office of Public Information, *The Fires of War: Napalm and Other Incendiary Weapons* (New York: United Nations, 1973), 4-5. Fifth Air Force quote is from Stone, *Hidden History*, 258.

industrial complex. General MacArthur, showing his characteristic bombast, submitted a list to Truman detailing his plans for twenty-six atomic bombs to be used on Korea; in interviews from 1954, MacArthur claimed to have wanted to drop between 30 and 50 bombs on the North Korean-Chinese border.<sup>92</sup>

Fortunately, MacArthur did not get his atomic bombs, but he did order the complete destruction of “every installation, factory, city, and village” in North Korea as U.S. and U.N.–allied troops retreated south in the fall and winter of 1950. Pyongyang was hit by two major air offenses and burned to the ground. By early 1951, napalm attacks were being used against villages as a way to root out guerrilla insurgents, which amounted to a policy of napalming nearly every village close to the front lines. By spring of 1953, military strategists were looking for a way to force concessions from the endless armistice negotiations, and began a series of targeted attacks on North Korea’s irrigation system, used in 75% of the country’s food production. The bombing produced a massive 27-mile flood that reached all the way to Pyongyang and destroyed all villages in its path.<sup>93</sup>

The war’s reliance on saturation bombing and airborne weaponry became, in American television screens and movie theaters, a seductive fantasy of war and technology de-linked from the lives already unmournable and already unseen. In the 1951 U.S. Navy propaganda film *This is Korea!*, directed by John Ford (famous for his western genre films), color film footage from the U.S. Navy and the U.S. Marine Corps was edited in such a way that Korea was presented as only a series of non-linear, non-contextual explosions. In the film’s opening scene, a narrator declared “This is Korea!”

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<sup>92</sup> Quoted in Cumings, *Korea’s Place in the Sun*, 290–291.

<sup>93</sup> Cumings, *Origins II*, 753–756.

followed immediately by a bomb's explosion. "Korea," viewers learned, was nothing more than a landscape of bombing and fire. Partially narrated by John Wayne, the film was mostly a montage of constant explosions, artillery fire, and airborne bombing raids, with near-poetic narration that only underscored the constancy of the explosions and the lack of context to understand the war. In one four-minute sequence of constant artillery fire and explosion, the narrator explained:

That's one of theirs burning. / And the hills. / You could light your cigarette on that gun barrel. / Hill after hill. / Some theirs, some we made ours, the hard way. / The bazooka, the 81 millimeter mortar, fire power and maneuver. / An enemy shell, duck! / Where that guy is with the rifle is the front of the war. / The 75 recoilless rifle. / The direct hit. / Ammo up. / The autorifle. / The Navy Air come strafing. / The Marine Air with rockets and napalm to burn 'em out.<sup>94</sup>

The Korean War came just at the moment that the television was moving from a luxury item to staple in American homes: in 1949, one in ten homes owned a television, compared to nine in ten homes by 1959, and thus the Korean War entered into American public circulation partially as a televisual war.<sup>95</sup> Yet with bulky cameras and the necessity of shipping film through Tokyo to the United States, there was little to no up-to-the-minute television coverage of this war, and the fifteen-minute segments of war coverage on network news often relied on military film footage from the Army's Signal Corps.<sup>96</sup>

The framing of the war as a story of technological military feats and one without death was an on-screen phenomenon, in films and Army television programs that ran in the years after the war. The idea of a war without death was, of course, ridiculous to

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<sup>94</sup> *This is Korea!*, directed by John Ford (presented by the U.S. Navy, released by Republic Pictures Corporation, 1951).

<sup>95</sup> Thomas Doherty, *Cold War, Cool Medium: Television, McCarthyism, and American Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 4.

<sup>96</sup> Casey, *Selling the Korean War*, 312–313; Susan D. Moeller, *Shooting War: Photography and the American Experience of Combat* (Basic Books: New York, 1989), 303.

American soldiers on the frontlines, to the surgeons and nurses at the new Mobile Army Surgical Hospital units near combat zones, to Koreans soldiers and civilians, to Chinese soldiers, and to American war correspondents and photojournalists. During the war, General Ridgway recoiled from the Pentagon's suggestion that he name his operations more "sellable" names than "Operation Killer." He explained his refusal later in his 1967 memoir, and argued that it was unconscionable "that the country should not be told that war means killing."<sup>97</sup>

Yet the idea of a war without killing fit well with the growing militarization of the United States and the building of a national security state, as well as the simultaneous cultural fascination and revulsion of science, technology, and fantasy produced in the post-Hiroshima moment.<sup>98</sup> The hypnotic explosions of *This is Korea!* were mirrored in the production of the Army's television series, which helped to tell about the war in the years after the armistice was signed, helping to frame the war as a technological project rather than a war that was primarily about killing. The Army's television series, *The Big Picture*, ran from 1953 to 1959 on the ABC network, and served as rerun material for years afterward. The series relied heavily on U.S. Signal Corps film and photography, and was intended for the American public—including schoolchildren—eventually reaching 320 television stations across the United States.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Ridgway, *The Korean War*, 110–111; Casey, *Selling the Korean War*, 166–167.

<sup>98</sup> For work on the simultaneous danger and fantasy with science and military power in the early cold war, see: Paul Boyer, *By the Bomb's Early Light: American Thought and Culture at the Dawn of the Atomic Age* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985; 1994). See also the proliferation of science fiction–based horror films in the early cold war years, in which scientists and scientific technology, particularly nuclear technology, is seen as both necessary and dangerous: for example, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956), *Them!* (1954). The science of destruction was also linked to cold war fears of communist infiltration and a creeping sense of uneasy subversion that needed to be contained: for example *Panic in the Streets* (1950); *My Son John* (1952); *The Manchurian Candidate* (1960).

<sup>99</sup> The Army's own television series, produced by the U.S. Army Signal Corps Photographic Center, *The Big Picture*, which ran from October 5, 1953 to September 30, 1959 on ABC's network, and its primary

In one episode, Private First Class Jim Vines was interviewed by host Capt. Carl Zimmerman about his use of napalm in spring of 1951. The cheerful, somewhat hokey, interview was chilling for its content, and more so because it was partially intended for schoolchildren:

- “Let’s go back and talk about those hills in Korea again. It’s pretty hard to get those Chinese out of their holes, wasn’t it?”
- “Yes sir it is, they dig in so deep that most of them didn’t even get out, just kill ‘em in their holes.”
- “What’s the best weapon to get to them, Jim?”
- “About the only thing that can get down to ‘em is napalm, burn ‘em out.”
- “Well how close to our lines do they drop that stuff?”
- “Well I’ve seen ‘em drop it closest to a hundred yards, sometimes closer.”
- “Well, it’s good for the morale to see it come down.”
- “Sure is!”
- “Well, Jim, you saw plenty of napalm drops in Korea. Let’s watch now as napalm helps the 24<sup>th</sup> division in their advance!”<sup>100</sup>

This banal exchange exemplified how the frame of war did not allow Chinese life to matter, and how an air war produced a vast separation between the act of bombing and its physical effect: the story here was how “good for the morale” napalm was. The episodes of the *Big Picture* were loosely based on the war’s chronology, and almost no episodes captured civilian deaths or bodies: the destruction of Seoul and gutted villages were absent of corpses, the constant scenes of bombing and artillery were devoid of bodies in pain, and the “visual testimony of the toll of war” entailed not people but

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broadcast reached more than 320 television stations in the U.S. and 40 more overseas, followed by the program’s usage in secondary viewings for civic and educational groups. The Pentagon’s cable channel still airs some of the episodes: see “The Big Picture” and “Catalog of the Big Picture” on the Army Pictorial Center, Signal Corps Photographic Center website, [http://www.armypictorialcenter.com/the\\_big\\_picture.htm](http://www.armypictorialcenter.com/the_big_picture.htm). Network information for *The Big Picture* can be found in Tim Brooks and Earle Marsh, *The Complete Directory of Prime Time Network and Cable TV Shows, 1946–Present* (orig. 1979; 7<sup>th</sup> ed., New York: Random House, 1999), 100–101.

<sup>100</sup> “United Nations Forces Cross the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel,” *The Big Picture: The Korean War* (U.S. Signal Corps). A similar exchange takes place in the *Big Picture* episode covering the December 1950 period of the war, “United Nations Consolidate Below the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel,” in which we’re told that “Napalm can cover a ridge and a wood area very wonderfully.”

advancing tanks.<sup>101</sup> In this form of telling the centrality and horror of violence was effectively erased, and the military technology that produced death was de-linked from actual deaths.

The two most high-profile, big-budget Hollywood films about the Korean War, *The Bridges at Toko-Ri* (1954) and *The Hunters* (1958) drew from this particular framing of the war to depict war stories about the glories and hardships of war's new technology. The films, both made in cooperation with the Department of Defense, and the U.S. Navy and the U.S. Air Force respectively, lingered over shots of naval aircraft carriers and fighter jets with an almost prurient eye. The heroes of these films were handsome, white, American pilots, and it was pilots who, according to oral history-based accounts of fighter jet pilots, "saw Korea up close" but "got little sense of it."<sup>102</sup> Though belied by journalists and soldiers' memoirs during and after the war, as well as combat films focusing on infantry soldiers, like director Sam Fuller's sleeper hit *The Steel Helmet* (1951), the narrative of war without death provided one more way in which the violence of the war could be both memorialized and forgotten.

By 1952, nearly all of northern and central Korea was destroyed, and the surviving North Korean population had to form an underground society in caves, creating complexes of schools, factories, hospitals, and living spaces.<sup>103</sup> The battle lines eventually stabilized around the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel in January 1952, and remained there for

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<sup>101</sup> See in particular the episodes "United Nations Offensive," "United Nations Offensive Continues," and "The United Nations' Line is Stabilized while Truce Talks Continue," but this is common in nearly all episodes on the Korean War. Many episodes are available on the Internet Archive website; for a full list of episodes, see the U.S. Pictorial Center Signal Corps Photographic Center website, [http://www.armypictorialcenter.com/the\\_big\\_picture.htm](http://www.armypictorialcenter.com/the_big_picture.htm).

<sup>102</sup> See David Sears, *Such Men As These: The Story of the Navy Pilots Who Flew the Deadly Skies Over Korea* (Cambridge: Da Capo, 2010), quote from p. 12; Pash, *Shadow of the Greatest Generation*, 112.

<sup>103</sup> Cumings, *Origins* II, 755; Spencer C. Tucker, "Scorched Earth Policy," *Encyclopedia of the Korean War*, Vol. II, 582–583.

another year and a half, making it clear that neither side could completely force the other from the peninsula. Armistice talks opened but quickly became tedious, circling largely on the question of repatriation for prisoners of war. The war continued until July 1953, while armistice talks dragged on in a kind of cold war theater in Panmunjom. Massive air campaigns continued, while ground troops jockeyed for position around the parallel, producing high casualty rates in order to claim landmarks of dubious strategic value: battles from this period were for the aptly named “Heartbreak Ridge,” “Bloody Ridge,” and “Pork Chop Hill.” An agreement was finally reached on July 27, 1953, ending the war and continuing the demarcation of the peninsula along the still-standing Demilitarized Zone line at the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel.<sup>104</sup>

By the end of the war, the peninsula was destroyed, an estimated two million civilians had been killed, and millions more had been displaced. As BBC journalist Thompson wrote, Korea resembled the “the still warm body of a dead countryside,” the outcome of this “limited” “war for peace.”<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> MacDonald, *Korea*, ch. 7, 9, and p. 128; Halberstam, *The Coldest Winter*, 624–645.

<sup>105</sup> Thompson, *Cry Korea*, 162.

## Chapter Three

### *Rest & Relaxation*

In a snapshot photograph from the Korean War, there is an American soldier on Rest & Relaxation leave, likely in Japan, embracing an Asian woman attractively but demurely dressed in western fashions in front of a white picket fence. On the back of the snapshot, the soldier has scrawled, “Whimp and my shack How about that.” Belying its domestic image, this is a photograph of a soldier displaying his Asian girlfriend, hired sex worker, or sexual conquest for friends back home. Along with his friend Whimp, this soldier was among many thousands of American soldiers who produced the occupation of Korea and Japan, and the war in Korea, through the sexualized embrace of Asian women. In other words, this snapshot is only one of a much larger album of similar images (see illustrations, pp. 175–177).<sup>1</sup>

In Korean War stories told by Americans, Asian women were only visible through a sexual or familial embrace, normalizing the idea of American-South Korean partnership and condoning the alternately benevolent or brutal embrace of Korean women by American soldiers. The narrative strategy of “embrace” eclipsed a landscape of gendered imperial violence, as Korean lives were made always-suspect and the sexual accessibility of Korean women became naturalized as a part of the war’s violence. This chapter excavates the histories of gendered and military violence referenced by this snapshot. The American soldier’s pleasure shack would not have been possible without the institutionalization of prostitution and expected sexual access to Asian women underwritten by the American military and the Japanese and South Korean governments.

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<sup>1</sup> Center for the Study of the Korean War (CSKW), photograph files, PP. 904.

The seemingly happy couple in this photograph obscured a history of violence and at the same time always referenced it. The cheerful embrace pictured here rendered the past history of gendered violence in Korea to both linger and remain, in American war stories, untold.

Women, and particularly Korean women, have appeared as figures, problems, and traces at the convergence points of other wartime discourses—in anxiety over American soldiers’ interracial sexuality, as the most abject of wartime refugee figures, or as grateful beneficiaries of United Nations aid. Most American war stories were concerned with masculinity and the making of men, a representation so naturalized in wartime that it hid the amount of work that went in to accessing, regulating, and representing women’s sexuality in order to make the gendered ideals of soldiering possible. Paying attention to the cultural meanings and institutional structures reliant on sexuality helps to make the formations of gender in this moment visible. Gendered ideas were inextricably woven into the racial vision and imperial ambitions of American power in East Asia, a convergence I call a kind of gendered imperialism.<sup>2</sup>

This chapter outlines the landscape of structural gender violence during the American occupation and Korean War periods, and the ways in which procuring access to Korean and Japanese women’s sexuality defined and institutionalized American power

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<sup>2</sup> The idea of an American gendered imperialism in East Asia is formulated in different ways by different scholars: Ji-Yeon Yuh writes of the “gendered context of neoimperialism” that produced camptowns and military brides: Ji-Yeon Yuh, *Beyond the Shadow of Camptown: Korean Military Brides in America* (New York: New York University, 2002), 10. Reviewing American military prostitution in South Korea and all of Asia, Sandra Sturdevant and Brenda Stoltzfus refer to “sexual imperialism”: Sandra Pollock Sturdevant and Brenda Stoltzfus, eds., *Let the Good Times Roll: Prostitution and the U.S. Military in Asia* (New York: New Press, 1993), 326. Cynthia Enloe’s work has consistently argued for the centrality of sexuality to American military culture: see for example Enloe, *Does Khaki Become You? Militarization and Women’s Lives* (Boston: South End Press, 1983); and Enloe, *Maneuvers: The International Politics of Militarizing Women’s Lives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000). For a collection of work theorizing a feminist critique of American empire, particularly as it relates to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, see Robin L. Riley, Chandra Talpade Mohanty, and Minnie Bruce Pratt, eds., *Feminism and War: Confronting U.S. Imperialism* (London: Zed Books, 2008).

in Korea and East Asia after 1945. The process of forgetting gendered imperial violence was produced through the expectation of sexual access and the act of physical, institutional, and ideological embrace. Japanese colonial practices of sex work and forced prostitution were embraced by Americans “liberating” occupied Korea and “democratizing” occupied Japan. During their tours of duty in occupied Japan and wartime Korea, American soldiers learned to expect Asian women’s sexual embrace as part of their mission: this was, after all, what “rest & relaxation” was all about.

After 1945, the American military embraced East Asia, directing the formation of post-World War II Japan and Korea through simultaneous occupations and the staging of the Korean War from Far East Command Headquarters in Tokyo. This embrace was sometimes fraught, and nowhere were the tensions more clear than in Army policies regulating venereal disease and “fraternization” between American GIs and Asian women. Though the Army saw this as a bureaucratic problem of Asian women’s diseased and oversexualized bodies and American soldiers’ health and morals, regulating women’s bodies was a central feature of the American occupations of Japan and Korea, and structured the gendered violence of the Korean War. Although violence lay at the heart of these embraces, in their own telling, Americans were seeking to liberate, decolonize, and democratize South Korea and supervise a friendly postwar Japan. In this way was the embrace of gendered imperialism a part of the process of forgetting violence.

How the violent and sexualized embrace of East Asia became a story of rest, relaxation, and happy couples is also a question of which kinds of embrace were lauded and which were hidden in American war stories. The gendered embrace between the United States, South Korea, and occupied Japan was a central feature of American

empire in the 1950s, yet it was almost always absent, repressed, and silent—that is, forgotten—in American war stories. This is a project of excavation and connection: finding the traces that allude to sexual violence and embrace, and arranging them into a coherent history; and rearranging histories of Korea, Japan, and the United States to make visible the institutional overlap between imperial Japan and imperial America. The gendered dynamics of the dialectic of silence and telling in Korean War stories, in short, made some stories not remembered enough to become “forgotten.”

### ***The sexual embrace: multiple imperialisms in Korea***

Since their first introduction to the peninsula, Americans had relied on the gendered metaphor of sexual embrace to figure their relationship with Korea. In 1868, U.S. Navy Commodore Robert W. Shufeldt described a new American imperialism that could replace older, European imperialisms, in this way:

The Pacific is the ocean bride of America—China & Japan & Corea—with their innumerable islands, hanging like necklaces about them, are the bridesmaids, California is the nuptial couch, the bridal chamber, where all the wealth of the Orient will be brought to celebrate the wedding. Let us as Americans—see to it that the “bridegroom cometh” . . . let us determine while yet in our power, that no commercial rival or hostile flag can float with impunity over the long swell of the Pacific sea . . . . It is on this ocean that the East & the West have thus come together, reaching the point where search for Empire ceases & human power attains its climax.<sup>3</sup>

In 1882, Shufeldt would be the chief American architect of the treaty “opening” Korea to American and Western trade, a relationship he once described as “amicable intercourse.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Shufeldt’s lecture was called “Western Civilization in the East” and was given in New Canaan and Stamford, Connecticut, to popular reception: Frederick C. Drake, *The Empire of the Seas: A Biography of Rear Admiral Robert Wilson Shufeldt, USN* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1984), 115–116; also quoted in Cumings, *Korea’s Place in the Sun*, 106–7.

<sup>4</sup> Gordon H. Chang, “Whose ‘Barbarism’? Whose ‘Treachery’? Race and Civilization in the Unknown United States-Korea War of 1871,” *Journal of American History* 89, no. 4 (March 2003): 1362.

The state control and regulation of Korean women's sexuality wedded together the Japanese colonial system, the American occupations of Korea (1945–1948) and Japan (1945–1952), and the postcolonial nationalism of South Korea. For the United States, accessing and regulating Korean and Japanese women's sexuality demonstrated control as an occupying force and helped to legitimate the American military presence in both Korea and occupied Japan. Telling about Asian women's sexuality lent American power social coherence and meaning and helped to re-articulate and naturalize the categories of difference that allowed Americans to project themselves as benevolent, guiding, superior partners to the new Republic of Korea.

It was American soldiers' slang during and after the war to refer to all Korean women as "moose," a word derived from the Japanese colonial period's "musame," meaning an unwed maiden.<sup>5</sup> Just as this borrowed Japanese term came to reference all Korean women regardless of marital status or age, Americans reworked conceptions of Korean and other Asian women's sexual availability through the transfer from Japanese colonialism to American occupation and then war. The different but overlapping institutions of Japanese military sexual slavery and systems of state-endorsed military prostitution in occupied Japan and South Korea grew from and facilitated a general climate of sexual violence and sexual labor, alternately coded as "necessary," "natural," "shocking," or sometimes (if it led to marriage between Korean women and American GIs) as a happy ending.

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<sup>5</sup> Sturdevant and Stoltzfus, *Let the Good Times Roll*, 334n98; Paul Dickson, *War Slang: American Fighting Words and Phrases since the Civil War* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed: Washington, D.C.: Brassey's, 2004), 250; Lieutenant Colonel Charles M. Bussey, *Firefight at Yechon: Courage and Racism in the Korean War* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991), 42, 73.

Japanese colonial structures, Korean patriarchal expectations, and the American and Japanese militaries' presumed "need" for sexual servicing regulated, institutionalized, and encouraged prostitution in Korea throughout the twentieth century. The Japanese colonial state commercialized and institutionalized prostitution as one part of the larger economic and demographic changes that shaped Korea's experience of colonial modernity. Mostly poor rural women were either kidnapped, lured by the promise of work, or "placed" by Japanese agencies into commercial sex work in urban centers, part of the larger movement of rural Koreans from the countryside into the expanding metropolises.<sup>6</sup> Though imperial Japan sought to prevent Japanese sex workers from operating in foreign territories, Japan was happy to extend a legal system of prostitution to its formal colonies. After Korea became a formal protectorate of Japan, the prostitution of Korean women was licensed by the Japanese state, and permitted in public establishments as early as 1916.<sup>7</sup>

The Japanese imperial system of forcibly conscripting 50,000 to 200,000 women—the great majority of whom were Korean—into service as military sexual slaves was part of a larger wartime mobilization of forced labor during Japan's expansionist wars in the Pacific from 1932 to 1945. Euphemistically and problematically known as the "comfort women" system, or *wianbu* in Korean, the system of sexual slavery institutionalized the relationship between the military and prostitution in the imperial Japanese state. This was not a system of sex "work" as much as the legitimation of

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<sup>6</sup> Yuh, *Beyond the Shadow*, 18. For more on the moment of colonial modernity in relation to sexual labor, see Chunghee Sarah Soh, "The Korean 'comfort women' tragedy as structural violence," in *Rethinking Historical Injustice and Reconciliation in Northeast Asia: The Korean Experience*, eds. Gi-Wook Shin, Soon-Won Park, and Daqing Yang (New York: Routledge, 2007), 17–35.

<sup>7</sup> Sarah Kovner, *Occupying Power: Sex Workers and Servicemen in Postwar Japan* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 13.

continuous rape and involuntary servitude, for the Korean, Chinese, and interned Dutch women were forced into service. However, the Japanese state drew partially on this model to legitimate and debate attitudes toward sex work and its legality. By the end of World War II, the “comfort stations” established by the military set the precedent for systems of sex work in postwar Japan, and continued as state-sponsored brothels under the American occupiers.<sup>8</sup>

As Korea moved from a Japanese colonial possession to a divided peninsula after 1945, occupied by the United States in the south until 1948, structures of sexual exploitation simply changed hands. The Japanese colonial state had encouraged a traffic in Korean women’s bodies for sexual labor, and in this way, Korean colonial modernity normalized structural gender violence. As anthropologist Chunghee Sarah Soh has argued, this allowed for the lucrative business trade in Korean women’s bodies between Japanese military authorities, Korean brothel owners, and Korean petty officials. As American soldiers entered this landscape, Japanese colonial systems of forced sexual labor were rearticulated in the recruitment of Korean women for American soldiers, facilitated by the Korean police and Korean civilian recruiters.<sup>9</sup> Soh offers this as an explanation for the South Korean Army’s operation of its own “comfort women” system during the Korean War from 1951 to 1954, which encompassed professional Korean sex

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<sup>8</sup> The term “military sexual slaves” came about after Korean women came forward to publicly seek redress in the 1990s. For more on military sexual slavery, see: Soh, “Korean ‘comfort women’ tragedy”; Chunghee Sarah Soh, *The Comfort Women: Sexual Violence and Postcolonial Memory in Korea and Japan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008); Hyunah Yang, “Re-membering the Korean Military Comfort Women: Nationalism, Sexuality, and Silencing,” in *Dangerous Women: Gender and Korean Nationalism*, eds. Chungmoo Choi and Elaine Kim (New York: Routledge, 1998), 123–140; Kovner, *Occupying Power*, 14–15.

<sup>9</sup> Soh draws this from statistical analysis of surviving “comfort women” as well as well-known collaborations between the Japanese military and the Korean Government-General: Soh, “Korean ‘comfort women,’” 27–28.

workers as well as abducted women from North Korea and war-impooverished South Korean women.<sup>10</sup>

This was the landscape that American soldiers entered as they came to their military service, already steeped in an American orientalist imaginary populated by sexually submissive “geisha girls,” seductive and dangerous “dragon ladies,” or demure and romantic “lotus blossoms.”<sup>11</sup> The post-1945 occupation of Japan, from August 1945 to April 1952, often served as a first port of entry for American soldiers headed to Korea as well as an ideological touchstone by which most white Americans came to know East Asia.<sup>12</sup> The occupation of Japan, as opposed to the concurrent American occupation in Germany, was unilaterally directed by Americans and the military in particular, embodied by the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP) General Douglas MacArthur. The occupation, directing a program of social democratization and economic development on an American model, drove Americans to see Japan and the Japanese as feminine, immature, and in need of American guidance—as one scholar has termed it, as “America’s geisha ally.”<sup>13</sup> Or as another historian writes, Japan became “locked in an almost sensual embrace with its American conquerors.”<sup>14</sup>

The experience of occupying Japan cannot be disconnected from soldiers’ Korean War service, due to the constant movement of American and U.N. soldiers through

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<sup>10</sup> Soh, “Korean ‘comfort women’ tragedy,” 29.

<sup>11</sup> Scholars have argued that gendered discourse has been central to representing and producing a kind of American orientalism: see Karen J. Leong, *The China Mystique: Pearl S. Buck, Anna May Wong, Mayling Soong, and the Transformation of American Orientalism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); Naoko Shibusawa, *America’s Geisha Ally: Reimagining the Japanese Enemy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006); and Helen Zia, *Asian American Dreams: The Emergence of an American People* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 2000), ch. 5.

<sup>12</sup> Christina Klein has thought about American post-1945 representations of Asia as reliant on a “sentimental” structure of feeling that relies on a sort of familial embrace: Klein, *Cold War Orientalism*.

<sup>13</sup> Shibusawa, *America’s Geisha Ally*.

<sup>14</sup> John Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (New York: Norton, 1999), 23.

American-occupied Japan during their Korean tours of duty. The conceptions of Asian women that informed the Korean War were largely developed in Japan and were imbued with long-standing orientalist ideas, logics of imperial benevolence, and racial presuppositions. The influx of foreign troops to Japan in 1945—involving mostly American but some British Commonwealth forces—created whole new economies based around soldiers’ desires: as one historian of sex work during the Japanese occupation writes, “local economies and whole neighborhoods were transformed to satisfy [soldiers’] desires” and to cater to their orientalist fantasies.<sup>15</sup>

Soldiers’ fantasies of Japanese women were, of course, only fantasies. For women in occupied Japan, there were few ways to support themselves or their families. As Otoki, a leader of sex workers from Tokyo’s Yūrakuchō district, explained in a 1947 Japanese radio broadcast, “Of course it’s hard to be a hooker. But without relatives or jobs due to the war disaster, how are we supposed to live? . . . There aren’t many of us who do this because we like it.”<sup>16</sup>

Afraid of an epidemic of rape against Japanese women by the Allied troops, Japanese officials made preparations to set up a series of state-sponsored brothels in the days after Japan’s surrender, beginning in Tokyo and branching out to other parts of the country.<sup>17</sup> The Japanese Home Ministry initially asked regional police officials to arrange “comfort facilities” with local entrepreneurs. These brothels, known as the Recreation and Amusement Association (RAA), were intended to create an appropriate outlet for

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<sup>15</sup> The British Commonwealth sent troops from Australia, New Zealand, and India in 1946, and left in 1950, leaving 115,000 Americans stationed in Japan, in addition to the thousands streaming through Japan on the way to Korea. Numbers of allied troops in occupied Japan peaked in late 1945/early 1946, around 430,000. For both quote and figures, see Kovner, *Occupying Power*, 19.

<sup>16</sup> Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 123–124.

<sup>17</sup> Kovner, *Occupying Power*, 22, 49.

American soldiers' sexual "needs." Soon, though, the facilities became privatized, endorsed by police, Japanese government, and American occupation oversight—in Tokyo, for example, the brothels were run collectively by the seven major red-light district professional organizations.<sup>18</sup>

Staffing the RAA was something of a problem, for professional prostitutes did not want to participate. The Japanese police and home ministry then turned to recruiting unemployed Japanese (and some Korean) women by appealing to Japanese women's nationalism and the need of Japan to "welcome" the United States. Nationalism aside, though, the promise of paid work seemed to draw most of the 1,360 women who signed up, for most were poor and some reportedly answered the ad barefoot.<sup>19</sup> RAA workers found that their task was more daunting, exhausting, and exploitative than government ads had promised. As with the Korean "comfort women" before them, these women were expected to service between fifteen and sixty men per day. On the first day of the RAA's opening, a Japanese police chief reportedly wept when he saw how the women were treated. A 19-year-old former typist committed suicide shortly after she began work in the RAA. Despite this, the Japanese government championed the "right" of women to engage in sexual labor under the U.S. occupation government, and the establishment of state-run and private systems of prostitution to service the American military became widely accepted.<sup>20</sup>

Though it was immensely popular among U.S. servicemen and spread to twenty other cities outside of Tokyo, the RAA was officially closed by U.S. occupation forces after only one year. Publicly, this was because of its "undemocratic" nature and its

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<sup>18</sup> Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 123–128.

<sup>19</sup> Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 127.

<sup>20</sup> Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 127–132.

impingement on women's human rights, but privately, the closure was due to SCAP's growing alarm at U.S. servicemen's climbing rates of sexually transmitted infections.<sup>21</sup> Though the RAAs were placed off-limits and previous Japanese laws legalizing sex work were declared null, SCAP made no move against the flourishing privately run systems of brothels, bars, cabarets, and street prostitution. Indeed, these remained with the tacit approval of the American occupying government as a necessary service: it is estimated that when the state-run system ended, it was employing 70,000 women alongside the 59,000 women working outside of the state-run brothels.<sup>22</sup> It is estimated that of the \$185 million spent by American troops in occupied Japan, half went toward the sexual procurement of Japanese women.<sup>23</sup>

Within the U.S. military, the sexual appetites of American troops were posed as a question of individual morals: commanders and unit chaplains in Japan and Korea often recommended "character guidance councils" as a solution, and Army regulations on the repression of prostitution, drafted in 1949, argued that sex work was "socially objectionable, potentially destructive of public decency, and productive of immorality and disease."<sup>24</sup> Sexual appetite was also framed in racial terms: black soldiers were arrested more frequently for sex offenses, and the U.S. military records of sexual

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<sup>21</sup> Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 130–132; Kovner, *Occupying Power*, 30–33.

<sup>22</sup> Shibusawa, *America's Geisha Ally*, 38; Kovner, *Occupying Power*, 30. Historians estimate that by 1955, 1 out of every 25 Japanese women between the ages of 15 and 29 years of age worked as a sex worker: Kovner, *Occupying Power*, 19.

<sup>23</sup> Shibusawa, *America's Geisha Ally*, 38.

<sup>24</sup> For quote: Department of Army regulations, "Personnel: Repression of Prostitution," Army Reg. No, 600–900, 22 Nov. 1949, Folder 726/1, Box 280, General Correspondence (GC) 1950, Adjutant General Section (AG), Far East Command (FEC), General Headquarters Far East Command, SCAP, and United Nations Command, Record Group (RG) 554, National Archives at College Park, MD (NACP). On Character Guidance Councils: Request for Info Regarding VD, 17 Jan 1952, folder 726.1, Box 506, GC 1950, AG, Eighth Army, Records of U.S. Army Operational, Tactical, and Support Organizations (World War II and Thereafter) RG 338, NACP; Conference on Repression of Prostitution and control VD in Japan, FEC-wide, 28 July 1952, Folder 726.1 #1, Box 494, GC 1952, AG, FEC, RG 554, NACP; VD Control and Repression command memo, 1952, Folder 726.1 #1, Box 494 GC 1952, AG, FEC, RG 554, NACP.

infection rates were broken down by “white” and “black” races.<sup>25</sup> In all cases, American servicemen’s sexual “need” was deemed natural and perhaps even laudable given military emphasis on masculinity; what was problematic was securing proper access to “healthy” women, and the loss of manpower that resulted from servicemen’s contraction of syphilis and gonorrhea.<sup>26</sup> American military policy closely followed American domestic policy on sexually transmitted infections by locating the source of disease in women’s bodies, rather than in soldiers’.<sup>27</sup> Thus the military vacillated between prohibiting soldiers from coming into contact with Japanese (and later, Korean) women and, more often, seeking to regulate any diseases they presumed to have originated from such liaisons.

The American occupation in Japan instituted a system of enforced racial/national apartheid, based in part on fears of soldiers contracting sexually transmitted infections from presumably infected Japanese women.<sup>28</sup> The enforced segregation, begun in 1946, included regional “non-fraternization” policies, separate bathrooms, train cars, and

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<sup>25</sup> Occupation authorities, as they would in Korea, asked the Japanese to delineate which brothels and bars were for whites and which for blacks, and Japanese and later, Korean women would become known as those who dated white or those who dated black soldiers. Kovner also reports that British Commonwealth Forces targeted Indian and Maori troops for sex offenses more frequently than white New Zealanders or white Australians. See: Kovner, *Occupying Power*, 40–41, 55; Seungsook Moon, “Regulating Desire, Managing the Empire: US Military Prostitution in South Korea, 1945–1970,” in *Over There: Living with the U.S. Military Empire from World War Two to the Present*, eds. Maria Höhn and Seungsook Moon (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 64. For more on the continued legacy of segregating Korean women serving black versus white GIs, see Heinz Insu Fenkl, *Memories of My Ghost Brother* (New York: Dutton, 1996); Sturdevant and Stoltzfus, *Let the Good Times Roll*, 166–167, 178, 199.

<sup>26</sup> See Sturdevant and Stoltzfus, *Let the Good Times Roll*; and Cynthia Enloe’s commentary in *The Women Outside*, directed by J. T. Takagi and Hye Jung Park (Third World Newsreel, 1995) for fuller discussions of this perceived “military need” around the Pacific.

<sup>27</sup> Kovner argues through statistical analysis that many soldiers arrived in Japan already infected, from other parts of the Far East Command—the Philippines, Hawai‘i, the Marianas—and that Japanese women could not be held responsible for the massive rise in sexually transmitted disease rates in the early months of the occupation, despite the claims of the military to the contrary. Kovner, *Occupying Power*, 30–33.

<sup>28</sup> The term “venereal disease” was the scientific phrase at the time, and used in all military correspondence and manuals; it has now been seen as stigmatizing and not scientifically accurate, in favor of the general appellation “sexually transmitted infections.”

service establishments for Japanese and Americans.<sup>29</sup> Despite these policies, many GIs pursued some manner of relationship, from prostitution to a sort of dating relationship and sometimes, marriage. This led the military to try a second tactic, that of regulation and mitigation: there were mass distributions of prophylactics; specially prepared troop lectures on “venereal disease” and its prevention; a top-down order to provide “wholesome” entertainment for soldiers on base; nighttime bed checks; and a disciplinary structure that made it a punishable offense not to report one’s infection, but didn’t punish soldiers for contracting the infection in the first place.<sup>30</sup>

The military’s regulation of sexually transmitted infections was a massive bureaucratic undertaking that focused on soldiers’ cure, treatment, infection, and prophylaxis from Asian women’s presumably diseased bodies.<sup>31</sup> In a 1950 troop information lecture, one slide warned troops that “Most of the girls you pick up are likely to be infected with one or more of the venereal diseases since nine out of ten promiscuous

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<sup>29</sup> Kovner, *Occupying Power*, 30.

<sup>30</sup> Venereal Disease Control and Repression, FEC-wide memo, 7 July 1952, Folder 726.1 #1, Box 494, GC 1952, FEC, RG 554, NACP; Prostitution and VD, series of correspondence on problem and regulation, Oct 1952, Folder 726.1, Box 844, Security-Classified General Correspondence (SCGC) 1952, AG, Eighth Army, RG 338, NACP; Letter 24 Aug. 1952, Venereal Disease/Bed Check Prevention, Folder 726.1 #1, Box 494, GC 1952, AG, FEC, RG 554, NACP; Proceedings of 28 July 1942 conference on control of VD and prostitution, Folder 726.1 #1, Box 494, GC 1952, AG, FEC, RG 554, NACP; VD lecture with slides, 1950, Folder 726/1, Box 280, GC 1950, AG, FEC, RG 554, NACP; Circular 23, Section IX, drafts and reports, Folder 726.1 “Jan.-Aug. 1950”, Box 485, GC 1950, AG, Eighth Army, RG 338, NACP; 22 Nov 1949, Dept. of Army regulations, “Personnel: Repression of Prostitution, Folder 726/1, Box 280, GC 1950, AG, FEC, RG 554, NACP.

<sup>31</sup> Statistical reports on infection rates were required from each command of the Far East Command (FEC) as well as the Korean commands during the Korean War, along with an instituted system of contact tracing to find infected soldiers’ sexual partners. An FEC-wide conference on the subject and its prevention was held on 28 July 1952, with commanders from occupied Japan and Okinawa. The papers of the Far East Command are replete with continual correspondence on the problem, with commanders requesting information on infection rates, sharing strategies of prevention with each other, and querying chaplains about the men’s morals. See all paperwork filed under the War Department’s decimal number for venereal disease, prostitution, and sex vices (726.1) in the archives of the Far East Command for this period (AG, FEC, RG 554, NACP) and the records of the Eighth Army in Japan and Korea (AG, Eighth Army, RG 338, NACP).

girls have venereal disease at one time or another.”<sup>32</sup> Under this mindset, all women became suspect of carrying disease. Military Police in Japan conducted frequent round-ups of women and sent suspected sex workers to the hospital for compulsory pelvic exams and disease checks, often picking up non-sex workers, and sometimes forcing women to pay for their own exams. The focus was on Japanese women, but white women in the Women’s Army Corps were also forced to undergo compulsory pelvic exams, underscoring the potential for disease the military believed was latent in all female bodies.<sup>33</sup>

Part of the problem, for SCAP, was the perceived lure of Japanese women. On September 18, 1950, Brigadier General Bryan Milburn wrote to the commander of the Far East Command, complaining that the Japanese police had not effectively controlled pimps and streetwalkers. Milburn argued that this was “a problem which cannot be solved by the discipline of the soldier alone”; because of their young age, “their comparatively new and strong sex awakening and the abundant opportunity of attractive and submissive girls, it is indeed difficult for the soldier to cope with the situation.”<sup>34</sup> Worried about soldiers’ morals, the deadly charms of Japanese women, and the burgeoning sex trade, military officials ignored how the interweaving of American military occupations around the Pacific, Japanese colonial systems of prostitution, and sexualized racial fantasies about Asian women created the conditions in which soldiers

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<sup>32</sup> VD disease lecture, 1950, Folder 726.1, Box 280, GC, AG, FEC, RG 554, NACP.

<sup>33</sup> Kovner, *Occupying Power*, 32, 42. These raids are referred to in testimony from a military investigation in which Japanese women were using Army mess hall passes to try and exempt themselves from inspection when picked up by raids: Guest cards for women in Japan, investigation and exhibits, Folder “Incl No-1 Subj: Guest Cards to NCO and EM Messes; Use of (726.1/1/BKI/FEC Secret/51)”, Box 863, Secret General Correspondence (SGC), AG, FEC, RG 554, NACP.

<sup>34</sup> Control of Solicitors and Streetwalkers, 1950, Folder 2501.1 and 2, Box 199, GC 1950, AG, FEC, RG 554, NACP.

operated. The imaginary of Japan as an eroticized playground for American soldiers quickly became a standard and accepted part of American cultural production.<sup>35</sup>

### ***Looking for Babysan***

The idea of a feminized Japan in need of American benevolence quickly became a sexualized ideal, as symbolized in the wildly popular cartoons of Bill Hume, whose pseudo-pornographic “Babysan” comics portrayed a young, Japanese sex kitten and her continual relationships with buffoonish American troops. “Babysan” was a particular favorite of American troops during the Korean War. The cartoons were suitable artifacts of the sexualized, imperial fantasy of occupied Japan—as Hume wrote in the book’s introduction, Babysan’s “name was a fiction but her existence was a fact.” As depicted by Hume, Babysan’s carefree charm, her titillating and exotic racial difference, and her pin-up girl figure made a serviceman’s “stay in the land of the cherry blossoms a pleasant one,” “a delightful legend in the history of the GI dynasty in Japan.”<sup>36</sup>

The historical role of the Japanese geisha, as skilled entertainer, hostess, dancer, and courtesan was transformed during the occupation into American servicemen’s orientalist fantasy of the geisha as a submissive, erotic woman who would fulfill any of their desires. In response, cabaret girls, waitresses, and sex workers were termed “geishas” by American servicemen and establishments catering to them.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 211; see Kovner, *Occupying Power*, ch. 2, for a detailed look at the various kinds of relationships between Japanese women and foreign men.

<sup>36</sup> Shibusawa, *America’s Geisha Ally*, 36; Bill Hume, *Babysan: A Private Look at the Japanese Occupation* (Tokyo: Kasuga Boeki K.K., 1953), 6–7.

<sup>37</sup> Kovner, *Occupying Power*, 57; Shibusawa uses the geisha as a central metaphor for understanding how Americans perceived and occupied Japan, in *America’s Geisha Ally*.

Japan soon became seen by GIs as an erotic playground in which sexual violence was condoned and expected: R&R leave, in Korean War-era GI alliterative slang could also mean “Rape & Restitution,” “Rape & Ruin,” “Intercourse & Intoxication,” or “Booze & Broads.”<sup>38</sup> Under the American occupation of Japan there were 330 sexual assaults and rapes per day, according to one Japanese estimate.<sup>39</sup> Japanese police figures from Kanagawa prefecture around Yokohama stated that in the first month of the occupation in Japan, 58 rapes by GIs were reported.<sup>40</sup> Rape became part of an overall pattern of crimes by American troops against Japanese nationals, a trend that military commanders constantly bemoaned and warned against. General Robert L. Eichelberger, Commanding General of the Eighth Army in Japan, wrote to all his unit commanders on June 22, 1946,

There are cases of malicious beating of Japanese by both individuals and groups, of breaking into homes and taking trivial amounts of money from needy natives, of destruction of furniture [sic] and windows in districts, of assault of women on the highways and in their homes, and in addition, many indications of deliberate, arrogant, bullying attitudes on the part of some of our soldiers.<sup>41</sup>

Japanese women reported being abducted and raped by servicemen while walking home at night, on empty buses, or in their homes.<sup>42</sup> Gang rape was a particular favorite of

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<sup>38</sup> E. J. Kahn, *The Peculiar War: Impressions of a Reporter in Korea* (New York: Random House, 1951), 12–13; Dickson, *War Slang*, 236, 246, 253; Bussey, *Firefight in Yechon*, chs. 4 and 5.

<sup>39</sup> See Grace Cho, *Haunting the Korean Diaspora: Shame, Secrecy, and the Forgotten War* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008); Charles J. Hanley, Sang-Hun Choe, Martha Mendoza, *The Bridge at No Gun Ri: A Hidden Nightmare from the Korean War* (New York: Henry Holt, 2001), 28; Sturdevant and Stoltzfus, eds., *Let the Good Times Roll; Yuh, Beyond the Shadow*.

<sup>40</sup> Kovner, *Occupying Power*, 50.

<sup>41</sup> Incidents involving US troops, 22 June 1946, Folder 250.1 “(Jan Dec) 1946 (OCC),” Box 909, Occupation File (OF), AG, Eighth Army, RG 338, NACP. Eichelberger’s was one of many reports, statements, and warnings about the conduct of R&R personnel in Japan or conduct of US troops against Japanese nationals.

<sup>42</sup> See the complaints filed by named and unnamed Japanese women, reported in: Folder 250.1 “(Jan Dec) 1946 (OCC),” Box 909, OF, AG, Eighth Army, RG 338, NACP; Folder 250.1 “Morals and Conduct,” Box 32, GC 1946–1948, G-2, Eighth Army, RG 338, NACP; Folder 250.1 “Alleged Misconduct of Occupation

soldiers in Japan, as it would be in Korea—in Yokohama, an eleven-year-old Japanese boy witnessed four to five U.S. Marines rape a 26-year-old woman and then take a photograph of her vagina; in Hiroshima in 1947, twenty Australian soldiers gang-raped a young Japanese girl.<sup>43</sup>

Between 1947 and 1949, the Army received reports of 455 rapes by U.S. personnel, leading to 306 arrests and 44 total convictions (See Appendix A). While Japanese women did report rapes, reports leveled off after a month of foreign soldiers' entrance into a region, perhaps as women realized that it was useless to complain—one Japanese woman reporting her rape was treated like a prostitute and put in a guarded venereal disease hospital.<sup>44</sup> Convictions were even rarer because, as back home in the United States, the burden of proof was always on the victim in a climate in which Asian women were seen as dangerous, diseased seductresses. Nonetheless, throughout the Korean War, General MacArthur maintained that there was “complete camaraderie” between the Japanese people and American soldiers, a statement possible only if one understood an epidemic of sexual assault as a form of “camaraderie” or harmless fun.<sup>45</sup>

The sexualization of women in general was central to promoting servicemen's camaraderie, and the increasingly eroticized paintings of nude and partially clothed white

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Troops Against Japanese Nationals,” Box 199, GC 1950, AG, FEC, RG 554, NACP; Folder 250.1 #1, Box 884, SGC 1952, AG, FEC, RG 554, NACP.

<sup>43</sup> Kovner, *Occupying Power*, 50–51.

<sup>44</sup> Kovner, *Occupying Power*, 51–54; Kovner's conclusions support, extend, and correct those of Yuki Tanaka in *Japan's Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery and Prostitution during World War II and the US Occupation* (New York: Routledge, 2002).

<sup>45</sup> General Omar N. Bradley, “Substance of Statements Made at Wake Island Conference on 15 October 1950, Compiled by General of the Army Omar N. Bradley, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, From Notes Kept by the Conferees in Washington,” p. 13, Folder 18, “Wake Island – conference statements,” Box 206, Korean War (KW), President's Secretary's Files (PSF), Harry S. Truman Papers (HSTP), Truman Library.

pin-up girls decorated base signposts and the noses of bomber jets as good luck charms.<sup>46</sup> As in World War II, representations of white, American women's sexuality was promoted by military officials as a "necessary" part of morale-building and a way to organize "healthy" heterosexual masculine desire.<sup>47</sup> Marilyn Monroe's visit to Korea as a young starlet is one of the most well-documented and well-remembered entertainment tours of the war.<sup>48</sup> Even white American reporters were not immune from sexualization: several months into the war, *Collier's* war correspondent Charlotte Knight wrote a feature story about flying in an F-80 bombing raid over Korea. The story was promoted by *Collier's* with a front cover pin-up photo of Miss Knight (as she was called) in a short tight coverall outfit on the wing of an airplane.<sup>49</sup>

However, it was Asian women who were seen as available for American soldiers' viewing at any time and became objects of sexual fixation in the American imperial imaginary. In a series of over 120 snapshots taken by Army Sergeant Richard H. Rohrbach while on R&R leave in Japan, he and his friend "Whimp" captured scores of women walking down the street. The over 120 photographs depict many different women, as if Rohrbach and Whimp had stopped women and young girls walking down the street and asked them to pose. Some women, in American rolled up jeans and loafers

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<sup>46</sup> CSKW, photo files, PP337; Author unknown, "Nose Art: Korean War," CSKW vertical files. For a history of nose art in the Korean War and photographic examples from a Japanese airfield in 1952, collected by US Air Force Master Sgt. John C. Barnes, see: Dr. James S. Griffith, "Military Aircraft Nose Art: An American Tradition: Korean War: A Loss of Innocence," Through Our Parent's Eyes, University of Arizona web project, <http://parentseyes.arizona.edu/militarynoseart/ashiyafield.htm>.

<sup>47</sup> As Susan Zeiger notes, World War II introduced the idea of the American soldier not as a "boy" to be cared for parentally by military officials but as a "red-blooded man" that required female sexual servicing and subsequent military accommodation to those sexual needs. Susan Zeiger, *Entangling Alliances: Foreign War Brides and American Soldiers in the Twentieth Century* (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 75.

<sup>48</sup> Footage of Monroe's USO performance is compiled in: *Korean War in Color*, Goldhill DVD, (Kralyevich Productions, 2002). A photograph of Monroe is the most-requested snapshot photograph in the CSKW collection, according to archival director Paul Edwards. (Personal conversation with author, April 2010.)

<sup>49</sup> Charlotte Knight, "I Flew a Jet Strike Over Korea," *Collier's*, 30 September 1950, cover, 13–15, 67.

or wide skirts, are sitting on the hoods of shiny cars, and many are shown embracing one of the men outside of a white picket fence or in front of a house. Sometimes the men are reaching up the women's skirts in a pose for the camera, and sometimes the couples are awkward and stiff, staring straight into the camera or away. On the back of one particularly domestic image of Rohrbach and a woman in front of a white picket fence is the handwritten caption, "This was good fucking" (see illustrations, pp. 175–177).<sup>50</sup>

The snapshots, according to the catalogue, were identified by Rohrbach as "good pieces." One wonders if he meant the snapshots or the women who have become objects in them. Rohrbach and Whimp's photo roll is not so much an "authentic" snapshot of their experience as much as evidence of how much the figure of the sexualized and available Asian woman had become naturalized. In one of Hume's Babysan cartoons, he explained that "Babysan will be coy and shy about having her picture taken—at first—but she loves it." Rohrbach and Whimp's photo series is evidence of the effort to find Babysan, or perhaps to locate her in any women, no matter how unposed or unsmiling she might be.<sup>51</sup> My point here is not to specially indict Rohrbach and Whimp, but to point out the ways in which all Asian women were always available for Rohrbach's Brownie camera, and the way that a photograph of a happy embrace can simultaneously reveal the way Asian women became "good pieces."

Just as American soldiers moved easily between Japan and Korea on tours of duty and on leave, so too did the continuum of militarized prostitution and rape, as all Asian

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<sup>50</sup> See the full Rohrbach photo series, CSKW PP. 900–974. There are sometimes two photos per call number. The catalogue description reads: "A group of 120+ photographs of Richard H. Rohrbach, and a series of unidentified Korean and Japanese girls, presumed to be at R and R stations; identified by Rohrbach as "good pieces, gift of son, Donald." The "good fucking" captioned snapshot is PP. 957. One contemporary observer noted that the occupation forces shot so many photographs that a camera seemed to be a part of every American's uniform: Lucy Crockett, quoted in Shibusawa, *America's Geisha Ally*, 17.

<sup>51</sup> Hume, *Babysan*, 76–77.

women became fair game for soldiers' sexual embrace. The militarized systems of prostitution under Japanese rule moved fairly easily into the Korean camptown, the ubiquitous location outside American military bases and encampments that offered a variety of sexual services by Korean women to American soldiers. The first camptown appeared just months after the American occupying forces arrived in Incheon in 1945, situated in the nearby town of Bupyong, serving liquor and Korean women to American soldiers. Militarized prostitution was indubitably linked to the American military, as historians have found little evidence suggesting that it continued in the North after 1945 or that North Korean women were recruited or sought out sex work catering to the Chinese or North Korean troops during the war.<sup>52</sup>

As in occupied Japan, the problem for American officials was how many troops were contracting sexually transmitted infections from Korean women: in 1948, nearly 20% of American troops in Korea were hospitalized for such a reason.<sup>53</sup> Military officials sought to find "healthy recreational opportunities" for servicemen. "Rest and recreation" facilities were built for American occupying forces in Korea starting in 1947, alongside shopping centers full of American products, enshrining the emergent camptowns into American military practice. These geographical centers of prostitution were supported by the newly independent Republic of Korea in 1948 and became further institutionalized

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<sup>52</sup> Yuh, *Beyond the Shadow*, 241n27. The difficulty of assessing institutions and instances of prostitution and/or sexual exploitation and violence is hindered by the inaccessibility of North Korean archives, which almost certainly contributes to the silence on this issue. In Lieutenant Colonel Charles Bussey's memoir of his Army command in Korea, he indicates in passing that the rape of South Korean women by North Korean soldiers was widespread during the first months of the war, which is likely, though I have found no other indications of this in American war writing: Bussey, *Firefight at Yechon*, 165.

<sup>53</sup> Whitney Taejin Hwang, "Borderland Intimacies: GIs, Koreans, and American Military Landscapes in Cold War Korea," (PhD diss., University of California-Berkeley, 2010), 28n66. Hwang reports that the rates of venereal disease in occupied Korea were the highest in the Far East Command, with 85, 178, and 169 out of 1000 servicemen hospitalized in September, October, and November of 1948.

during the Korean War.<sup>54</sup> As in occupied Japan, U.S. servicemen raped Korean women: in early March of 1946, four U.S. soldiers were sentenced by the Army to life imprisonment for rape.<sup>55</sup> In February of 1947, three Korean women were raped by American soldiers on board a train, sparking widespread Korean protest.<sup>56</sup> Between 1947 and 1949, 55 rape cases were reported to the U.S. Army, though they led to only four convictions (see Appendix A).

Once the war began in 1950, it dislocated and impoverished millions of Koreans and produced thousands of orphans and widows. American military installations offered the hope of steady work as houseboys, janitors, housekeepers, cooks, servers, secretaries, and sex workers. In addition, American soldiers and bases provided “luxury” goods like toothpaste, soap, cigarettes, and liquor. Often, employment on an American base could support an entire family, and goods stolen from the bases could be illegally resold for high profits. Sex work offered a viable form of employment, as well as access to luxury goods, gifts, and a steady stream of income from American clients, boyfriends, and husbands.<sup>57</sup>

Prostitution in the camptowns began to flourish, encouraged, sanctioned, and regulated by both the U.S. military and the South Korean state. Similar to occupied Japan, the poverty and dislocation of wartime presented few options for women and families to support themselves, and sex work was one viable option. For other women,

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<sup>54</sup> In the 1970s, American military officials and the South Korean government collaborated on “cleaning up” the camptowns by regulating sexually transmitted diseases. This always put the burden on Korean sex workers, and literally tagged their bodies as acceptable for American soldiers or not. Hwang, “Borderland Intimacies,” 26–28, 89–90. See also Cho, *Haunting the Korean Diaspora*; Sturdevant and Stoltzfus, eds., *Let the Good Times Roll*; Yuh, *Beyond the Shadow*.

<sup>55</sup> “5 in Korea Sentenced for Rape,” *New York Times*, 6 March 1946, 7.

<sup>56</sup> “1947—What the U.S. Policy did in Korea—1948,” *Korean Independence* (Los Angeles) 5, no. 45, whole no. 201, 7 Jan. 1948.

<sup>57</sup> Hwang, “Borderland Intimacies,” ch. 1, esp. 38–40.

entering the camptowns was not even a question of their own limited economic choice: some of the first camptown women were victims of rape by U.S. or U.N. forces, or were kidnapped or sold by poor families into prostitution. One British war journalist wrote in 1952 of the “flourishing trade in girls to serve the needs of the US Army,” in which the South Korean police “supplied the refugee girls.”<sup>58</sup>

Despite their origins in dislocation and sexual violence, the camptowns were encouraged by American military leaders, who saw them as a “release” for troops that improved morale, and a way to protect “virtuous” Korean women from the possibility of rape by sexually frustrated American soldiers. The new ROK government saw the camptowns as issues of national security necessary to maintaining friendly U.S.-ROK relations, as well as an economic boon to the country.<sup>59</sup> In many cases, the camptowns provided the only way for Koreans to make a living, through sexual labor, black marketeering, or other American-centered service occupations. Camptowns were adaptable and appeared overnight as military installations relocated. So-called “blanket squads” of camptown women, later organized by Korean pimps and U.S. military personnel, followed American troops on maneuvers into rural areas and conducted their business on their blankets. The Bupyong camptown expanded during the war to host two thousand women working in its clubs and bars.<sup>60</sup>

British journalist René Cutforth described the “racket in girls” in wartime Seoul during 1950–1951:

But the racket in girls was the most profitable because there was no unprofessional competition. The Korean family custom is rigid and requires a

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<sup>58</sup> Yuh, *Beyond the Shadow*, 31; Hwang, “Borderland Intimacies,” 26; René Cutforth, *Korean Reporter* (London: Allan Wingate, 1952), 224.

<sup>59</sup> Yuh, *Beyond the Shadow*, 25; Moon, “Regulating Desire.”

<sup>60</sup> Yuh, *Beyond the Shadow*, 20.

rigorous chastity in women. So right from the start the G.I.s encountered a formidable and unprecedented non-co-operation in sexual affairs. It took some time to dawn upon them that this could be, and their reaction was a bitter loathing of all Gooks. Girls were worth their weight in gold, and there were plenty of them homeless and starving in the refugee columns. An Kiu's Victory Dance Hall [featuring topless dancers] probably netted £2,000 a week, of which the police took half. The result of this situation was, to quote an army doctor, "It's probably the most venereal war in history."<sup>61</sup>

Cutforth proposed one way that sexuality escalated and drove the collapse of Korean subjectivity into the all-purpose, unmournable "gook," as well as the conversion of ROK police graft, American soldiers' desire, and Korean women's wartime displacement.

Real Korean and Japanese women living in camptowns, following Army squads, working as sex workers, or coerced into sexual labor were, of course, more than victims or mute bodies acted upon. In Japan, a range of relationships—monetary and romantic and defensive—between Japanese women and American men were constantly being negotiated within the context of the occupation; sex workers sometimes organized professional associations; and Japanese women and Japanese men constantly protested the American need for sex services or American treatment of Japanese people by writing letters of protest and pleas for redress.<sup>62</sup> Indeed, the idea that women's bodies were passively available for military men of alternating empires and nations was the institutionalizing logic of the sexual exploitation of Korean and Japanese women in the

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<sup>61</sup> Cutforth, *Korean Reporter*, 31.

<sup>62</sup> This is the argument of Kovner, *Occupying Power*, esp. ch. 2. In 1950, an organization for sex workers in Tokyo had 600 card-carrying members: Kovner, *Occupying Power*, 88. Japanese citizens also wrote constantly to MacArthur, SCAP, or U.S. military officers about injustices directed toward them and asked for redress, and the Japanese press reported consistently on crimes by U.S. forces: "Unfavorable Press in Occupied Japan," 3 Nov. 1952, Folder 250.1, Box 519, GC 1952, AG, Eighth Army, RG 338, NACP; "Ski Slope Beatings," March 1949, Folder 250.1 #1, Box 575, SGC, AG, FEC, RG 554, NACP; "Japanese Complaint," 23 Jan. 1950, Folder 250.1 "Alleged Misconduct of Occupation Troops Against Japanese Nationals," Box 199, GC 1950, AG, FEC, RG 554, NACP; postcard from K. Yukashita, 17 May 1952, Folder 250.1 "Alleged Misconduct of Occupation Troops Against Japanese Nationals," Box 199, GC 1950, AG, FEC, RG 554, NACP; Case 2, Mrs. Yasuyo Onishi, Folder 250.1 "Alleged Misconduct of Occupation Troops Against Japanese Nationals," Box 199, GC 1950, AG, FEC, RG 554, NACP.

first place. Moreover, as scholars and camptown women themselves have argued, the ideas of Korean women as victims to be rescued fit neatly within a discourse of South Korea as a land to be liberated by Americans, with each rescue fantasy legitimating the other.<sup>63</sup>

My point here is that the figure of the Asian woman in American occupation and war stories was only a racialized and gendered caricature and an absence of subjectivity that fit easily into the sexual embrace of American empire. What I have traced here is the route through which the structures of American and Japanese imperialism relied upon the bodies of Korean women and on an American imperial imaginary that proposed sexual access to Asian women as inseparable from a militarized embrace of East Asia.

### ***The brutal embrace: wartime rape and narrative silence***

Though it only appears as a footnote in histories of the Korean War, the widespread rape of Korean women by South Korean and U.S./U.N. allied forces constituted a structural component of the war's violence. Sexual violence during the Korean War barely registered in American war stories, changing and intensifying the process of forgetting, though the practice was prefigured by the attitudes of American

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<sup>63</sup> See the interviews in *The Women Outside*; Cho, *Haunting*. Korean and Korean American feminists have similarly argued that a narrative of South Korean women as sexually victimized by imperial Japan and the continual presence of the American military has co-opted women's trauma into the service of South Korean nation-building. Narrating their victimhood as a primarily national one—a crime against all of Korea—has only silenced women's voices further, and obscured the history of Korean state collusion in the process. See: Choi and Kim, "Introduction," in Choi and Kim, eds, *Dangerous Women*, 1–8; Yang, "Re-membering the Korean Military Comfort Women," in Choi and Kim, eds., *Dangerous Women*, 123–139; Soh, *The Comfort Women*. The testimony, writings, and activism of Korean camptown workers and their families articulate how Korean women navigated the landscape of the camptown as sex workers, black marketeers, or GI wives, even if their choices were vastly circumscribed. For oral histories, memoirs, and accounts of activism of camptown workers and their families in Korea from the 1960s onward, see: Fenkl, *Memories of My Ghost Brother*; interviews with camptown women in *The Women Outside*; and the oral histories printed in Sturdevant and Stoltzfus, *Let the Good Times Roll*. For an eloquent oral history–based account of Korean military brides in the United States, some of whom had been camptown workers in Korea, see: Yuh, *Beyond the Shadow*.

soldiers toward prostitution and rape in occupied Japan and the ubiquity of rape by American soldiers in both the European and Pacific theaters of World War II. The archival silence around rape in wartime rendered sexual violence both normal and invisible, a process that reflected the logical outcome of the gendered imperial imaginary and helped to naturalize wartime violence (for Americans) to the point of non-existence.<sup>64</sup>

Rape was often used as a weapon of war. North Korean accounts alleged the continual rape of North Korean female communists and collaborators as a form of mass punishment inflicted by American and South Korean soldiers and accused American soldiers of keeping Korean women with their units for days as sexual slaves. This is corroborated at least partially by a North Korean eyewitness report from 1950, describing how 300 politically suspect Korean women were confined to a warehouse and used at will by American soldiers after the recapture of Seoul in 1950.<sup>65</sup> As I discuss further in

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<sup>64</sup> That the widespread American practice of rape in wartime has gone un-discussed or actively suppressed is not news, but has received little scholarly attention: for specific accounts of rape and sexual violence in World War II and the Vietnam War, see: Mary Louise Roberts, *What Soldiers Do: Sex and the American GI in World War II France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013); J. Robert Lilly, *Taken by Force: Rape and American GIs in Europe during World War II* (orig. French ed. 2003; New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007); Nick Turse, *Kill Anything that Moves: The Real American War in Vietnam* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2013), esp. 166–171; Gina Marie Weaver, *Ideologies of Forgetting: Rape in the Vietnam War* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2010). For a general discussion of the silence around reporting wartime rape, Susan Brownmiller’s second-wave feminist classic is still a foundational source: Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1975). For more contemporary accounts of the historical silence around wartime rape in many different historical contexts, see Anne Llewellyn Barstow, ed., *War’s Dirty Secret: Rape, Prostitution, and Other Crimes Against Women* (Cleveland, Ohio: Pilgrim Press, 2000); Enloe, *Maneuvers*, ch. 4; and the online Women Under Siege Project, <http://www.womenundersiegeproject.org/>. It was not until the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s that rape was considered a separate prosecutable war crime by the United Nations International Criminal Tribunal, though it had been covered generally under the Geneva Conventions since 1949 (see Lilly, *Taken by Force*, 19–20; Enloe, *Maneuvers*, 135). The United Nations did not officially classify rape as a weapon of war until 2008: “UN classifies rape a ‘war tactic,’” BBC News, 20 June 2008, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/7464462.stm>.

<sup>65</sup> Bruce Cumings, “Silent but Deadly: Sexual Subordination in the U.S.-Korean Relationship,” in *Let the Good Times Roll*, eds. Sturdevant and Stoltzfus, 172; for another North Korean account of Americans raping Korean women before executing them, see Bruce Cumings, “Occurrence at Nogun-Ri Bridge: An Inquiry into the History and Memory of a Civil War,” *Critical Asian Studies* 33, no. 4 (2001): 520.

chapter six, an international commission of women's organizations found that the U.S. and ROK forces routinely used sexual violence and sexual torture to punish and kill women leaders of Communist women's organizations in North Korea.<sup>66</sup>

In some cases, rape was the way that women were forced into more formal institutions of sex work for the U.S. military. North Koreans reported to the international women's commission that American soldiers imprisoned North Korean women in brothels, keeping the "pretty ones" for American and English soldiers and the "others" for South Korean troops. In U.S.-occupied Pyongyang in the fall and winter of 1950, a North Korean father testified that the Opera house was turned into a military brothel, staffed with women and young girls captured in the streets.<sup>67</sup>

As with the general patterns of wartime brutality, American commanders alternately encouraged or derided the violence of their ROKA trainees, and this was the case with rape of Korean women by ROKA forces as well. In one such incident in November 1950, two soldiers from the 1<sup>st</sup> ROK Division entered the village of Yongten in the morning and ordered all female members of the North Korean Youth Group to report to the "No. 1 Man's home." Eleven women responded and were held at gunpoint throughout the day; in the evening, two were released and the nine remaining teenagers—all virgins—were taken with the soldiers on foot to the next town. Four were released but five were taken to the next town, held all day, and raped. When one girl's father reported the incident to ROK military police, he received no response, and the case was taken to

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<sup>66</sup> See this dissertation's chapter six for further discussion. Women's International Democratic Federation, *We Accuse! Report of the commission of the Women's International Democratic Federation in Korea, May 16 to 27, 1951* (WIDF: Berlin, 1951). See in particular the testimony on pages 16, 35, 36.

<sup>67</sup> WIDF, *We Accuse!*, 16, 28. See this dissertation's chapter six for further discussion of the provenance of this document.

the American commander; three of the girls identified the men and directed American investigators to the crime scene.<sup>68</sup>

Korean scholars, historians and anthropologists are now engaged in a study of the structures of hatred that allowed for such brutal violence amongst Koreans during this period. Their work, along with the postwar truth and reconciliation commissions in Korea, has found that “sexual punishment”—everything from gang rape to public sexual humiliation—of suspected communist women by right-wing youth groups and the South Korean military and police forces was routine during the war.<sup>69</sup>

Combined with the ties of distrust, racialization, and hatred inscribed on Korean bodies, and the institutionalization of the camptown by the American military, the rape of civilian Korean women by American, South Korean, and U.N. forces took on what seems to be epidemic proportions. American troops were said to entice young Korean refugee girls across the Naktong River to rape them, and informal accounts describe families either hiding their daughters or trading time with their daughters to American soldiers in exchange for cigarettes or gum.<sup>70</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Charles Bussey remembered intervening between two of his troops and a Korean woman they were trying to rape; the woman escaped by jumping into a vat of human excrement, used for fertilizer. A month later, Bussey overheard his troops discussing how best to “rape a woman.”<sup>71</sup> A U.S.

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<sup>68</sup> Report by Major Rex. D. Brown, 9 Nov. 1950, Folder “Correspondence to Civ. Agencies, Oct-Nov 1950,” Box 1437, Civil Assistance Files (CAF), Civil Affairs Section (CA), Eighth Army, RG 338, NACP.

<sup>69</sup> Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War: The Roaring of the Cataract, 1947–1950*, vol. II, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 702. Volume I was published in 1981, but they are considered a series. For one brief reference to rape by ROK soldiers in American papers during the war, see “Koreans doom 600: 3,416 tried for wartime crimes since outbreak June 25,” *New York Times*, 31 Oct. 1950, 10. I thank Hwasook Nam for bringing recent Korean scholarship to my attention.

<sup>70</sup> Hanley et al, *Bridge at No Gun Ri*, 103, 189–90.

<sup>71</sup> Bussey saw rape as a regrettable but normal part of warfare; his solution to the latter situation was to rent a warehouse for his soldiers and bring in a medic with extra rounds of penicillin. Bussey, *Firefight at Yechon*, 238–243, 255.

Army chaplain complained to American General Matthew Ridgway that early in the war, the murder and rape of Korean civilians was widespread because of the lax army attitude toward crimes against civilians; the chaplain reported one case of seven American soldiers caught raping Korean women in Pyongyang who were released unpunished. One North Korean testimony described three peasant women from Mih Yen Ri who fought back against being raped by U.S. soldiers in fall of 1950, and were mutilated and sexually tortured before being killed. By winter of 1951, this violence, including rape, had increased, particularly in United Nations–occupied Seoul.<sup>72</sup>

In 1952, the Red Cross Society of China—what would become the state-sponsored humanitarian organization of the People’s Republic of China—published an English-language booklet of alleged “sworn statements” issued by American and British prisoners of war held in Chinese camps, attesting to atrocities—rape, murder, and mass execution—committed by American forces against Korean civilians. The booklet, presumably for dissemination amongst Americans and other English-language speakers, promised that the statements had been written of prisoners’ own free will and rendered in their own words, though most of these soldiers had likely been subjected to “re-education” seminars, violence, or threats of violence as prisoners. Though none of these reports can be verified or taken as authentic truth per se—the soldiers’ language ranges from genuine anger and frustration to stock communist phrases (“puppets,” “imperialist ambitions,” “Wall Streeters”) to naïveté—nearly all of the eleven accounts report that the soldiers themselves or their officers or buddies had raped Korean girls and women. Some

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<sup>72</sup> Callum A. MacDonald, *Korea: The War Before Vietnam* (New York: Free Press, 1986), 210, 216; WIDF, *We Accuse*, 38. Rape was also mentioned by U.S. journalists critical of the way Koreans were being treated, particularly the left-leaning African American press: P. L. Prattis, “The Horizon: American Attitudes Making Enemies of Many South Koreans,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1 Sept. 1951, 18.

reported gang rapes; a few reported how little officers seemed to care or discipline soldiers for doing so. These soldiers and their buddies went “looking for girls,” wanted to “shack up with some girls,” had to beat women “pretty bad” before they would submit, and talked about “how nice” the women were afterwards. Several included photographs—presumably taken by Chinese soldiers—showing female corpses lying spread-eagled, still partially clothed in the traditional white dresses of Korean peasants. Even if falsified, embellished, or coerced, these statements and photographs underscored the centrality of female sexuality to the war’s execution and its representations.<sup>73</sup>

More verifiable are the letters of Army commanders, continually decrying American soldiers’ crimes against Korean civilians, including rape. On November 16, 1950, Major Theodore Searles ordered troops in X Corps to stop committing “capital offenses” against “an already victimized people.”<sup>74</sup> On April 7, 1951, General Ridgway sent a letter from his Eighth Army headquarters—the umbrella unit for Army operations in Korea—to all subordinate commands, summarizing the high rates of “criminal offenses” including “murder, rape, manslaughter, homicide, and assaults with dangerous weapons” and instructing his officers that “[t]here must be an unceasing effort to reach the minds of this potentially criminal element” to reduce their occurrence.<sup>75</sup> Several months later, the General was compelled to send another letter in his new status as

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<sup>73</sup> Ten of the soldiers were listed as corporals or privates in the U.S. Army; one was a private in the British Army. The accounts also list mass executions and looting, as well as accounts of soldiers’ desertions. One copy of this pamphlet is available in the Main Reading Room Reference Collection, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. *Out of their Own Mouths: Revelations and confessions written by American soldiers of torture, rape, arson, looting and cold-blooded murder of defenceless civilians and prisoners of war in Korea* (Peking: Red Cross Society of China, 1952).

<sup>74</sup> “Capital Offenses,” 16 Nov, 1950, Folder 250.1 “Ridgeway,” Box 740, SCGC 1950, AG, Eighth Army, RG 338, NACP.

<sup>75</sup> His letter prompted swift responses from his officers, who sought to determine the “small element” of those committing the crimes. “Criminal Offenses” letter and related reports, 7 April 1951, Folder 250.1 “Ridgeway,” Box 740, SCGC, AG, Eighth Army, RG 338, NACP.

MacArthur's replacement as commander of all U.N. forces in Korea. Sent to the entire Far East Command on June 26, 1951, General Ridgway called for an "unrelenting investigation and vigorous prosecution" into the "continued prevalence of crimes of violence" including "rape, murder, manslaughter, robbery, and aggravated assault and battery," particularly when committed "against the civilian populace of Korea." The General was particularly angry that these crimes seemed to be going unreported and under-investigated.<sup>76</sup>

As in occupied Japan, the Army's Provost Marshal's office kept monthly statistical reports of crimes in Korea. The reports were partial, and the most complete data specific to U.S. forces in Korea is for April–August 1951, during the retaking of Seoul and the stabilization around the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel after the retreat from the north during winter 1950. For each month, the number of rape cases reported in the Korean War theater by U.S. military personnel were 20 (April), 16 (May), 11 (June), 11 (July), and 4 (August), though the number of soldiers arrested on a rape charge each month was double or triple the number of cases. This suggests a persistent trend of gang rape, as well as continual efforts on the part of the Army's Criminal Investigate Division to identify perpetrators. Arrests made were almost exclusively of Army enlisted men, not service staff or Air Force, which suggests that the reported rapes took place during combat or patrol; and as in Japan, black soldiers and officers were arrested in much higher numbers than white soldiers (see Appendix B). In all cases, though, the numbers were much lower than colloquial accounts would suggest and should be understood as the tip of the iceberg. For a report to even make into military files, it would have to be a formal

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<sup>76</sup> The Judge Advocate's office commented that crimes occurred in Korea when soldiers went "in search of women or liquor, or both" in civilian villages. "Crimes of Violence" letter, 26 June 1951, Folder 000.5, Box 730, SCGC, AG, Eighth Army, RG 338, NACP.

complaint lodged by the Korean woman or her family, in the midst of a largely war-torn and destroyed climate.

***“Underneath it all, they’re still Marines”:* rape as anomaly**

In fact, stories of sexual violence cannot be disavowed, for they are not even told in the first place. In none of the contemporaneous American and British journalist accounts of the war I have consulted, so intent on describing the use of napalm, guerrilla warfare, and Americans’ anti-Asian racism, was there a description of the rape of Korean women.<sup>77</sup> Multiple English-language histories of the war, from military histories to revisionist and contemporary ones, have no mention of sexual violence (or prostitution, for that matter). Bruce Cumings’s massive two-volume accounting of the war, published in 1990, mentions in one sentence that American soldiers dragging women off and raping them was “common” but adds no more.<sup>78</sup> Sociologist and criminologist J. Robert Lilly, whose 2007 book meticulously documents incidences of GI rape in World War II’s European theater, scoffed at the idea of widespread GI rape in Korea because of the lack of “verifiable sources.”<sup>79</sup> Susan Brownmiller’s pioneering feminist classic on rape from 1975 is still the only American source to try to account for American Army court-martial convictions for rape and attempted rape in the Korean War.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> BBC journalist René Cutforth describes talking to an old Korean Catholic priest, who describes the Korean frustration with “the bombs and the burning and the raping behind the battle line,” but this is as much as Cutforth says: *Korean Reporter*, 189–190.

<sup>78</sup> Cumings, *Origins* II, 706, 904n120.

<sup>79</sup> Lilly, *Taken by Force*, 31.

<sup>80</sup> Brownmiller, *Against Our Will*, 99, 417. Brownmiller found 31 Army court-martial convictions for rape and attempted rape between May 31, 1951 and May 30, 1953, though she admits that her information is partial, and is based on two telephone interviews with officials from the U.S. Army Court of Military Review. Still, the numbers she was able to obtain are much higher than those of Army convictions in the Vietnam War, perhaps due to more lax investigations in Vietnam. Either way, the difficulty of obtaining information on rape cases—and the lack of military convictions—illustrate precisely my point, that rape

This historiographical lacuna did not emerge after the fact but was a continuation of American and European reportage during the war's fighting. Despite the military's myopic, if consistent, account of rape cases against Korean civilians, rape almost never appeared in American media coverage. In one of the only American news-reported rape cases of the war, it was not Americans but other U.N. allies who were culpable. Several Canadian and British soldiers were court-martialed in August 1951 for the murder of three Koreans and the attempted rape of two Korean women, a case that the *New York Times* claimed was emblematic of the "widespread contempt" United Nations troops showed for Koreans.<sup>81</sup> The *Times* reported this as "particularly shocking," but in fact it was routine: the *Times*'s "shock" was both a recognition and disavowal of the landscape of sexual violence these archival traces exposed.

The only two rape cases to reach national headlines in the United States during the war were of the Canadian and British soldiers accused of attempted rape and murder; and a racially charged case taken up by the NAACP, in which African American Navy steward Paul Crosslin was convicted by military court-martial for the alleged rape of a Navy nurse.<sup>82</sup> When sexual violence and Asian women's sexual labor were mentioned by

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was so normalized that it was unseen and unremarkable. There are, however, several scholarly accounts that tabulate rape, sexual violence, and sex work in occupied Japan, and discuss the Korean War as part of that context. Most notably: Kovner, *Occupying Power*; Tanaka, *Japan's Comfort Women*.

<sup>81</sup> George Barrett, "Koreans Watch U.N. Murder Trial as Test of Curb on Unruly Troops," *New York Times*, 21 Aug. 1951, 3. The *Times* followed the case closely throughout the month of August, with a series of follow-up articles. That this was a rare case of reporting on rape is evidenced by the author's Proquest database search for news articles in the *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Seattle Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, as well as prominent African American papers the *Chicago Defender*, *Baltimore Afro-American*, and the *Pittsburgh Courier*.

<sup>82</sup> It is also notable that the only other case was one that referenced the long American tradition of accusing black men of raping white women; the case was taken up by to the NAACP for just this reason. Crosslin was convicted to a ten-year term in 1951; the NAACP's lawyers petitioned to reopen the trial in 1953. "Navy Steward's Case to Judge Advocate," *Memphis World*, 27 Feb. 1953; "Ask new trial in Navy case," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 28 Feb. 1953, 21; this is the case referenced in Brownmiller, *Against Our Will*, 37n. Mary Louise Roberts has shown how rape by American GIs in World War II-era France became

Korean War correspondents in the 1950s, they were generally dismissive. In 1951, *New Yorker* correspondent E. J. Kahn, Jr. reported as a kind of colorful joke that for American soldiers in the Korean War, “R&R” duty in Japan didn’t stand for “Rest and Relaxation” but “Rape and Restitution.” BBC correspondent Reginald Thompson mentioned Korean “camp followers” “laughing,” and his readers might have assumed that these women were voluntary sex workers or perhaps, girlfriends.<sup>83</sup>

The silence in American accounts is belied by the memory of Korean women and men during the war and, I assume, American soldiers. The widespread rape of Korean women forms one of the most enduring memories of the war for Koreans who lived through it.<sup>84</sup> Some Korean women explicitly remember how U.S. soldiers would call out “saekssi, saekssi” as they looked for Korean women, using the Korean word that meant “maiden” but sounded to American ears like “sexy” and to Koreans as an intention to violate women.<sup>85</sup> Rape and sexual exploitation of Korean women by American soldiers and Korean men have become a trope in contemporary Korean fiction and film about the Korean War and postwar camptown life.<sup>86</sup> That it remains nearly unexplored in American

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coded by both French civilians and military officers as a racial crime, and presumed that African American soldiers were always rapists or potential rapists: Roberts, *What Soldiers Do*, chs. 7–8.

<sup>83</sup> Kahn, *The Peculiar War*, 12–13; Thompson, *Cry Korea*, 125. This disavowal continues to this day. I have no way to verify these accounts, but see a recent discussion on the “ROK Drop” website about military engagement in Korea, in which the blogger disputes readers’ comments and proposes that rape by US and ROK forces was not epidemic during the war: “Thug GI’s During the Korean War?” ROK Drop website, 19 Oct. 2004, <http://rokdrop.com/2004/10/19/thug-gis-during-the-korean-war/>.

<sup>84</sup> Ji-Yeon Yuh noted in a footnote to her text on Korean military brides, “My own aunts have described to me how women and girls were hidden every night during the war for fear of rape by U.S. soldiers.” Yuh, *Beyond the Shadow*, 242n36. Bruce Cumings noted that the widespread rape of Korean women was one of the most enduring memories of South Koreans he has interviewed: Cumings, interview by Dean Lawrence Velvel on the Massachusetts School of Law/Comcast’s “Books of Our Time” television program, air date 20 March 2011. The original program was available on the Massachusetts School of Law Media website, [msslawmedia.org](http://msslawmedia.org), as of 2 May 2013.

<sup>85</sup> Yuh, *Beyond the Shadow*, 242n36; Chungmoo Choi, “Nationalism and Construction of Gender in Korea,” in *Dangerous Women*, eds. Choi and Kim, 15.

<sup>86</sup> See, for example: Ahn Junghyo, *Silver Stallion: A Novel of Korea*, transl. to English by Ahn Junghyo (Seoul, 1986; New York: Soho Press, 1990); Yoon Chongmo, *Gobbi I* (Seoul: P’ulbit, 1988), passage translations and storyline given in English in Yuh, *Beyond the Shadow*, 33–34; Nora Okja Keller, *Fox Girl*

cultural productions of the Korean War or postwar Korea only reflects how much must remain repressed in the memories of American servicemen.

The traces in the American archive alluding to the mass practice of rape only serve to outline the absent figures of the women themselves. The absence of Korean women in American representations—the absence of American veterans who name themselves as such aggressors, the absence of reconciliation by the South Korean government or American military—also implies the destructive effects these absent voices and these unnoticed silences might do to structuring narratives of American power. To rewrite these stories would be to begin to name the structural reliance of the American military on sexual violence and of American democracy on imperial violence.<sup>87</sup> There are only a handful of American war stories that address the American rape of Korean women, in the numerous films and memories produced about the war. In these stories, rape is commonly written away as an anomaly, and there is a valiant American soldier to act as a savior and bring the “bad” soldier to justice. In this way, rape was rewritten as an opportunity for the U.S. Army to serve as the savior rather than the violent intruder.<sup>88</sup>

In the 1962 film *The Nun and the Sergeant*, a rag-tag group of brig-rat Marines are ordered on a suicide mission to destroy a North Korean ammunitions center, when

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(New York: Penguin, 2002); Fenkl, *Memories of My Ghost Brother*. Both Fenkl and Keller are native Koreans living and writing in the United States. Chungmoo Choi discusses the use of Korean women’s violated bodies as a trope in Korean nationalist fiction in: Choi, “Nationalism,” 15–18. For a representative film, see: *Ji-oghwa (The Flower in Hell)*, directed by Shin Sang Ok (Seoul Films Co., 1958). I am indebted to my co-panelists Molly Hamer and Seonna Kim for bringing some of these works to my attention, “Representing Women and the Korean War,” Association for Asian American Studies conference, Seattle, WA, 20 April 2013.

<sup>87</sup> Feminist scholarship on sexual violence in Korea and Vietnam has begun this work: see, for example, Cho, *Haunting*; Choi and Kim, *Dangerous Women*; Soh, *Comfort Women*; Weaver, *Ideologies of Forgetting*.

<sup>88</sup> Mary Louise Roberts has traced this discursive move in her recent study of soldiers in World War II and postwar France: Roberts, *What Soldiers Do*.

they are attacked by North Korean guards. A bus full of Korean Catholic schoolgirls and their escorting Nun (Anna Sten) were victims of the same attack, and the Marines promise to guide them to safety. In the course of the story, one schoolgirl and Marine fall in love, while another Marine, Dockman (Leo Gordon), tries to foment a mutiny against the commanding officer and to rape one of the schoolgirls. Dockman's proposed victim is the schoolgirl Bok Soon (Linda Wong), whose character is the most angry with the Americans and thus most fiercely defiant of their goodwill overtures. The other Marines refuse to participate in either the mutiny or the rape, and prevent the delinquent and disloyal Dockman from achieving either. "Underneath it all," one character tells us, "they're still Marines."<sup>89</sup>

The film proposes the "proper" sexual embrace of Korean woman as its happy ending, as the loving Marine/Korean couple only highlights Dockman's improper, thuggish rape attempt. In fact, the film's ending proposes a forced union between Dockman and Bok Soon, as both run toward the ammunitions factory together in a first, suicidal effort at completing the Marines' wartime mission, an act of heroism that rewrites Dockman's character as a military hero, not a rapist. Fighting the war, the film proposes, requires the death of disloyal Marines and sullen, anti-American Koreans, as well as a forgetting of past histories of sexual exploitation.

As evidenced by its paper-thin plot, though, the film was first and foremost a sexploitation film, marketing semi-clothed Asian women and their (violent) embrace by Americans as its publicity strategy. Promotional posters for the film featured the semi-clothed actresses (particularly Linda Wong, who played the character of Bok Soon) either in sexual peril or in feral and seductive positions. One poster used a film still of the rape

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<sup>89</sup> *The Nun and the Sergeant*, directed by Franklin Andreon (United Artists, 1962).

scene as its main image, showing Dockman holding Bok Soon by the neck, while others included promotional text promising sexual peril and titillating violence. A provocative drawing of a half-dressed, crawling Wong, flanked by Sten's Nun and Gordon's Dockman, was captioned: "A Nun in a world where men have to be animals—with nothing but her faith to fight with! The stripes on his arm gave him the right to take what he wanted . . . without asking!" The background of several posters promises a nude bathing scene of the schoolgirls frolicking in a river. Both the fictional Marines and American audiences, then, were promised some experience of embrace.

*The Nun and the Sergeant* was one of several Korean War-themed, low-budget exploitation films, but was by far the most exploitative of the sub-genre, and the one which used Korean, not American, women as its bait. Indeed, the film was (rightfully) panned by critics and tanked at the box office.<sup>90</sup> My point here is not that the film was influential to popular conceptions of the war in any meaningful way, but rather that the issue was raised only through the genre of low-budget exploitation films and with a narrative strategy of anomaly.

The story of rape-as-anomaly was repeated again in James Brady's critically acclaimed 1990 Korean War memoir, *The Coldest War*. Brady, a widely read journalist and novelist, served as a Marine lieutenant in Korea in 1951, leading a rifle company in the First Marine Division. His memoir, told in a series of short, episodic chapters, was considered for the Pulitzer Prize and favorably reviewed by high-profile journalists like

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<sup>90</sup> Others include *Operation Dames* (1959), starring Playboy playmate Eve Meyer as one of a group of U.S.O. entertainers trapped behind enemy lines. Robert Lenz's comprehensive review of Korean War films found that nearly one-fifth made between 1951 and 1995 feature women in peril, often U.S. or U.N. nurses or U.S.O. entertainers: Robert J. Lenz, *Korean War Filmography: 91 English-Language Features through 2000* (Jefferson, NC: MacFarland and Co., 2003), 263–237, 439–440. For more on this subgenre of Korean War films, see: Paul M. Edwards, *A Guide to Films on the Korean War* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1997), 87–88.

Walter Cronkite, Dan Rather, and Jim Lehrer. The *New York Times* reviewer wrote of Brady's eloquence and modesty, noting in his June 1990 review that "there is no heroic flag-waving here."<sup>91</sup> There is actually quite a bit of flag-waving in Brady's retelling of a rape case; it is notable both that women's bodies become the vehicle for Brady to describe his views of the American mission and that the *Times* reviewer didn't mention this.

As one of his wartime memories, Brady recounts how a group of Korean townspeople petitioned his reserve battalion for redress after two Marines had broken into a nearby home and raped two Korean women. Shocked, Brady determined "We're Marines. We won't have rape," and began an investigation to find the two culprits, eventually sending them to general trial. Part of Brady's disgust at the rapist Marine gunners was not just because of the crime, but because the two old Korean women had "faces like baked potatoes." If they had been less ugly, perhaps, the crime might not have been so shocking.<sup>92</sup>

This is a fascinating account, for Brady reports that the male town leader came to petition him for redress along with the two women who had been victims of the rape. Though they speak Korean and Brady doesn't describe the women (other than their unattractive appearance), his account alludes to the steps these two women took to seek a kind of remunerative justice. The women describe the rapists to the Marine interpreter and point them out, just as they had first brought their assault to the attention of their neighbors and town authorities. Though they do not speak in Brady's story, the possibility for a very different narrative of the war is hinted at here, one in which the

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<sup>91</sup> Herbert Mitgang, "2 Views of Korea, One Lofty, One Muddy," *New York Times*, 23 June 1990, 15. Blurbs from Lehrer, Rather, and Cronkite decorate the 1990 paperback book jacket.

<sup>92</sup> James Brady, *The Coldest War: A Memoir of Korea* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 1990), 181.

story doesn't begin with Brady's shock or end with his chapter's closing, but which would exceed both.

In this story, though, Brady figures himself as the savior of these Korean women and also of Korea as a country. He writes, these rapes “undid everything we were trying to do, saving their country for these people, giving it back to them.”<sup>93</sup> Brady's story here is not a kind of public witnessing or personal ownership of the crime—this is not about the women involved—but rather a story told to prove his own and American benevolence, figured now as a gendered protection of women's bodies.<sup>94</sup> In this framing of gendered imperialism, Americans were responsible for protecting and thus either controlling or accessing Korean women's bodies: *saving their country for these people, giving it back to them*. Saving Korean women for these people and giving the women back to them.

### ***Something never seen cannot be later disavowed***

These dismissals of wartime rape as anomaly, as the work of a few soldiers, figure rape as inconsistent with the larger American imperial embrace of South Korea that “guided” Koreans toward democracy. This American embrace constituted a counterinsurgent, violent occupation and a brutal war, the precondition for Brady's story and the history that had to be erased to make Brady's shock and American altruism possible. The narrative strategy that either erased rape or posed it as an isolated,

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<sup>93</sup> Brady, *The Coldest War*, 178, 181.

<sup>94</sup> Contrast this to the testimony of Vietnam veterans about their own complicity in sexual violence against Vietnamese women, at the Winter Soldier Investigation hearings in 1971: Vietnam Veterans Against the War/Winterfilm, *Winter Soldier*, redistributed by New Yorker Video, 2006. For a useful discussion of the hearings and soldiers' motivations in discussing sexual violence, see Weaver, *Ideologies of Forgetting*, ch. 3.

individual event is also one that implicitly denoted militarized prostitution as routine. In fact, nothing about rape in wartime or militarized prostitution is or was natural as I have argued for the Korean War context. The institutionalization of militarized prostitution—through Japanese imperial legacy, American military policy, and ROK encouragement; the displacement, impoverishment, and dislocation of Korean women; orientalist and discursive frameworks that linked the sexual embrace of Korean women to American empire and coded it as “benevolence”; and the misogynistic aspect of much American combat training—all combined to make these situations possible.<sup>95</sup>

The Korean War is often remembered in the United States only for its “forgotten” character. Gender violence during the war seems not just to have been forgotten, but almost never seen: and something never seen cannot be later disavowed. As feminist theorists have argued, this is due to the longstanding naturalization of modernity’s gender relations which presume the continual presence of an active, virile, and violent masculinity: witness the Japanese and American armies’ presumptions that prostitution, “comfort,” and sexual servicing was a natural and “necessary” part of soldiering. This non-seeing, the inability to even see to forget, was a part of the gendered imperialism at work in Korea during the war.

Grace Cho has eloquently argued that the silent figure of the Korean *yanggongju* who sexually services the American soldier—the “western princess,” the “U.N. Lady,” the camptown girl, the “yankee whore”—embodies all the trauma of the Korean War. As Cho writes, “the trauma of the Korean War is an assemblage of the remains of the massacred, the ruins of bombed out cities and towns, the memories of survivors, affects of fear and hope, and the ongoing daily practices of the war, all of which have become

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<sup>95</sup> Cynthia Enloe makes this point about multiple historical contexts: Enloe, *Maneuvers*, ch. 4.

ghosted in the yanggongju.” In a larger sense, Cho argues for the *yanggongju* as a figure of the grief and trauma of Korea’s colonial and postcolonial history, and suggests that this trauma is always gendered.<sup>96</sup>

Judith Butler has written that “gender is a construction that conceals its genesis,” and feminist theorists have proposed that warfare is the crystallization of gendered power relations, providing a particularly intense field onto which opposing armies or nations can perform their projects through gendered frames and the reinvigoration of masculinity.<sup>97</sup> As gender conceals its constructed nature particularly when conflated with biology and sexuality, so too does warfare, often seen as a part of human nature and particularly of a transhistorical masculinity.

The naturalization of war as continual human condition is always the simultaneous and largely subconscious naturalization of a kind of gender essentialism. The archival silence around rape in wartime stems partially from the work war narratives do to reinscribe systems of gendered power and code them as natural. These gendered power relations and positions are so naturalized, that is, normalized, that female bodies—particularly those already made precarious by racial and national differentiations—are always potentially violable. Thus does rape become seen as an effect of war, rather than a form of it; thus can rape be narrated as both shocking and indistinguishable from wartime looting and pillage.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Cho, *Haunting*, 40–41.

<sup>97</sup> Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990 and 2006), 190; Zillah Eisenstein, “Resexing Militarism for the Globe,” in *Feminism and War*, ed. Riley et al, 35; Susan Jeffords, *The Remasculinization of America: Gender and the Vietnam War* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), xv; George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006), 70–104. Naoko Shibusawa has written about this normalization in the context of the American occupation of Japan, in *America’s Geisha Ally*.

<sup>98</sup> See Eisenstein, “Resexing Militarism,” 38; Enloe, *Maneuvers*, 108; Roberts, *What Soldiers Do*.

To identify rape as a structural element of the American presence in Korea must also be a project of examining the silences where it may be exposed and the partial references that mark its archival trace. The normalization of gendered imperialism and sexual access to Asian women enabled these silences on multiple registers, for the same narrative structure that rendered prostitution “necessary” made rape either “anomalous” or unseen.

### ***Conclusion***

I have proposed a very different war story, one in which this effacement of Asian women’s subjectivity and their representation only through sexual embrace becomes the central problematic. We might see the unnamed woman in the opening snapshot embraced not just by her smiling GI boyfriend, but enfolded within a longer history of imperial sexual violence rewritten as American democracy and U.S.-South Korean partnership. This might allow space for her story to be much more than that of a “good piece” and different from my story of American militarization in East Asia. Rather, she might tell her own, complicated story.

In short, I want to suggest that we think of sexualized embrace as central to the workings of American power at mid-century. The naturalization of gender violence generated a climate of everyday terror for Asian women that so suffused the militarized landscape that it was rendered unremarkable. Bringing American democracy to Korea and Japan was not possible without gendered imperial violence and its attendant disavowal. We need new epistemologies, new enfolding narratives that attend to the silences by outlining them, constructing histories that show the shape of what is lost.



“Whimp” and unidentified woman.  
The back caption reads “How about  
that?”

(Left) Photograph courtesy of the  
Center for Study of the Korean War,  
Richard Rohrbach photograph  
collection, PP. 904.



American GIs on rest and relaxation leave in occupied Japan saw sexual access to Asian women as an expected and normal part of their military experience. This photo series of Richard Rohrbach (above left) and his friend “Whimp” (above right), likely on leave in occupied Japan during the Korean War, show how almost any Asian woman became available for their camera’s gaze and for their embraces. According to the archival catalogue, the women in these snapshots were identified as “good pieces.”

(Above) Photographs courtesy of the Center for Study of the Korean War, Richard Rohrbach photograph collection, PP. 901.

(Below) Photographs courtesy of the Center for Study of the Korean War, Richard Rohrbach photograph collection, PP. 941.



The handwritten caption on the back of this snapshot (right) reads “This was good fucking.”

(Right) Photograph courtesy of the Center for Study of the Korean War, Richard Rohrbach photograph collection, PP. 957.





In this context, GI snapshots of schoolgirls and young women take on a more ominous tone, pointing toward the climate of gender violence the U.S. military occupations of Japan and Korea, and the war in Korea, produced.

Photographs courtesy of the Center for Study of the Korean War, Richard Rohrbach photograph collection, (above) PP. 970, (below) PP. 936.



## Chapter Four

### *Happy Endings*

Yong Soon Morgan was the first Korean military bride to be brought to the United States by a (white) U.S. serviceman during the Korean War, Sergeant John “Johnnie” Morgan. The two twenty-three-year-olds had just married in Taegu, South Korea, where Yong Soon had been a supervisor of telephone operators. When they stepped off their Navy transport ship, the *General M. M. Patrick*, in Seattle on October 18, 1951 they were greeted by a Hollywood film starlet and Yong Soon was handed a bouquet of red roses by a Seattle city councilman, “America’s traditional family welcome.” A widely circulated Associated Press photograph showed Yong Soon holding the bouquet, embraced by her smiling husband and his two parents, a symbolic embrace of her Asianness into the American social body.<sup>1</sup> After receiving her bouquet of roses and “America’s traditional family welcome,” the Morgans eventually moved to Seattle’s multiracial Central District neighborhood, and Yong Soon was naturalized as an American citizen in a court ceremony on Valentine’s Day, 1955, just before moving to Japan for Sergeant Morgan’s next military assignment. When the couple returned to Seattle two years later with their three children in tow, the *Seattle Times* praised them as an “all-American family.”<sup>2</sup>

Yong Soon Morgan’s story is produced as one of love—red roses, Valentine’s Day, a happy marriage, and smiling children—approved by the civic authorities of

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Information Service, newsreel footage shown in *The Women Outside*; “1<sup>st</sup> Korea-War Bride to Land Here Thursday,” *Seattle Times*, 16 Oct. 1951, 8; “Transport to Land 954 in Seattle,” *Seattle Times*, 17 Oct. 1951, 21; “First Korean War Bride Speechless at City’s Greeting,” *Seattle Daily Times*, 18 Oct. 1951, 1.

<sup>2</sup> “Some Aliens May Take Short Cut to Citizenship,” *Seattle Times*, 6 March 1955, 4; “First Korean War Bride Returns,” *Seattle Times*, 14 Oct 1957, 1.

Seattle. As the papers were happy to report, the couple was married on Valentine's Day, 1951, the bride's twenty-third birthday, and Mrs. Morgan chose this day to naturalize as an American citizen, neatly tying her origins, marriage, and citizenship together.<sup>3</sup> Her story was, in fact, narrated as a romance, for it was a story of Yong Soon moving from wartime Korea to the United States, brought by the ties of love to a new country, a new name (Mrs. Morgan), and praised as that most desirable of social units, the "all-American family." It was the story of an individual moving into full subjective realization, a gendered narrative arc in which U.S. benevolence allowed a route to Korean women's, and thus the Korean nation's, self-realization and presumed familial fulfillment.<sup>4</sup>

There are multiple routes by which we might think about the American narration of Yong Soon Morgan's story, for she was figured at once as the grateful and then well-assimilated immigrant, her American family proposed as a new, multiracial possibility for what "all American" might mean; and she was represented as a symbol of the gendered happy ending to a U.S.-South Korean partnership, a disavowal of the violence of the Korean War through the familial embrace of the nation. The figure of the Korean war bride worked to gloss over and somehow resolve histories of domestic American racial formation along with the state violence inherent in the American occupation and

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<sup>3</sup> In fact, her official naturalization date was Jan. 24, 1955, but it seems she chose to undertake the naturalization ceremony in court on Feb. 14, 1955. Yong Soon needed to file for citizenship before she was able to travel to Japan to be with Johnnie, who was stationed overseas, and her application for naturalization was expedited for that reason. See Yong Soon Morgan's petition for naturalization on Jan. 12, 1955: The National Archives at Seattle, Seattle, Washington, *RG 21 United States District Courts*, Volume: *Petitions for Naturalization*; and the travel logs of her departure to Japan to meet Johnnie, who was stationed there: *Passenger Lists of Vessels (January 1949-March 1957)* and *Passenger and Crew Lists of Airplanes (June 1947-March 1957) Departing from Seattle and Tacoma, Washington*, NARA Microfilm Publication A3376, rolls 1-9, Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service [INS], Record Group 85, National Archives, Washington, D.C. For *Seattle Times* news coverage and more on her naturalization ceremony, see: "First Korean War Bride Speechless at City's Greeting," *Seattle Daily Times*, 18 Oct. 1951, 1; "Some Aliens May Take Short Cut to Citizenship," *Seattle Times*, 6 March 1955, 4.

<sup>4</sup> For a brief overview of the genre of "romance" as a story of individual subjective liberation, see Raymond Williams, "Romantic," *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, rev. ed. (New York: Oxford, 1983), 274-276.

war in Korea. As Yong Soon Morgan was held out as a model (minority) citizen for a new, postwar, multiracial America, she promised both a happy ending to this cold war containment and the history of U.S. racism. This chapter proposes that immigration debates and cultural narratives of Asian military brides continued the process of gendered forgetting discussed in the previous chapter. During the Korean War, stories like Mrs. Morgan's circulated through U.S. culture in films, novels, and popular magazine stories, and Asian war brides were held up as perfect "test cases" for challenging bans on interracial marriage, obscuring the landscape of militarized gender violence and war in which the couples had met.

The story of the Morgans was national and international news, reported by the United Press and Associated Press newswires, as well as by local papers in all regions of the United States. The story and, often, the Associated Press picture of the Morgans with Johnnie's parents and Yong Soon holding the bouquet of roses, was front-page news in cities as varied as Las Cruces, New Mexico; Benton Harbor, Michigan; Joplin, Missouri; Auburn, New York; and Florence, South Carolina. The Australian Associated Press ran the story as well, and features on Yong Soon's arrival appeared in the daily papers of Sydney, Perth, and Hobart, Tasmania. "Pretty" Yong Soon Morgan's story was captioned as one of "new horizons," in which Mrs. Morgan was quoted as saying, "in her best English . . . 'I'm so happy to be here.'"<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> For examples of local U.S. papers' coverage of Yong Soon's arrival, see: "War Bride on Way," *Spokane Daily Chronicle* (Spokane, WA), 17 Oct. 1951; *The Advocate* (Clifton, IL), 15 Nov. 1951, 7; "New Horizons" *Florence Morning News* (Florence, SC), 20 Oct. 1951, 1; *Joplin Globe* (Joplin, MO), 21 Oct. 1951, 1; "New Horizons for War Bride," *The Citizen-Advertiser* (Auburn, NY), 20 Oct. 1951, 1; *Newport Daily News* (Newport, RI), 19 Oct. 1951, 10; *Benton Harbor News Palladium* (Benton Harbor, MI), 19 Oct. 1951, 1; *Las Cruces Sun News* (Las Cruces, NM), 22 Oct. 1951, 1. For the Australian papers, see: "First Korean War Bride in U.S.," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 Oct. 1951, 3; "First Korean War Bride," *The Mercury* (Hobart, Tasmania), 22 Oct. 1951, 13; "A Korean War Bride Arrives," *Sunday Times* (Perth, Western Australia), 21 Oct. 1951, 3.

In the journalistic narration of Yong Soon Morgan's story, we see both a recognition and an elision of the landscapes of violence that made her story possible—what I have been calling the process of forgetting. In the first news article to mention her impending arrival in Seattle (in which she is erroneously referred to as “Yong Sook”), the *Seattle Daily Times* reports that she and Sergeant Morgan met in Seoul in 1949, where Sergeant Morgan had been stationed as part of the American military advisory group. Lee Yong Soon (as the paper later correctly identified her maiden name) had worked in the American military headquarters as a supervisor of telephone operators. The *Seattle Daily Times* ran a photograph of the couple with the caption, “Korean War interfered with their romance” but in fact, the American military presence and subsequent war was the precondition for their meeting.<sup>6</sup> What interfered most with their romance, however, was military regulations seeking to prevent GI/Asian marriages, and the legal and social structures of white supremacy in the United States, which made it first impossible and then difficult for Asians to immigrate and which curtailed the states, cities, and neighborhoods in which couples like the Morgans could live. The Morgans' happy ending both obscured a history of wartime and racial violence and at the same time always referenced it.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> “Soldier bringing first Korean bride to this country,” *Seattle Daily Times*, 30 Sept. 1951, 5; “First Korean War Bride Speechless at City's Greeting,” *Seattle Daily Times*, 18 Oct. 1951, 1.

<sup>7</sup> My argument follows the work of academic and artist Grace Cho, who has argued that figuring the Korean war bride relied on a “willful forgetting” of the landscapes of militarization, displacement, and sexual violence wrought by the American occupation, war, and military presence in Korea: Grace Cho, *Haunting the Korean Diaspora: Shame, Secrecy, and the Forgotten War* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), esp. ch. 4.

***“Neither white nor colored”***

The emigration of Korean women to the United States as war brides constituted the largest wave of Korean immigration to the United States between the onset of Asian exclusion laws and immigration reform in 1965. From 1953 to 1960, almost 500 Korean women arrived in the United States each year as GI wives, and their numbers continued to rise throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Between 1950 and 1989, nearly 100,000 Korean military brides entered the United States.<sup>8</sup> During the Korean War years, these women were described as, in the words of one 1951 news story, “excited” and “shyly hopeful of the future.”<sup>9</sup> Often, couples arrived with young children in tow, and pictures of white soldiers with their “pretty Korean brides” and happily smiling babies were featured as front-page news photographs.<sup>10</sup>

These images of pretty, hopeful, eager-to-be-assimilated war brides was a continuation and a borrowing from the national discourse on war brides—particularly Japanese war brides—from World War II and the subsequent American occupation of Japan.<sup>11</sup> During and just after World War II, white war brides from Europe, Australia, and New Zealand were celebrated as “good mothers,” model wives, and perfect

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<sup>8</sup> Sucheng Chan, *Asian Americans: An Interpretive History* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1991), 140; Ji-Yeon Yuh, *Beyond the Shadow of Camp Town: Korean Military Brides in America* (New York: New York University, 2002), 2; Daniel Booduck Lee, “Marital Adjustment Between Korean Women and American Servicemen,” in *Koreans in America: Dreams and Realities*, eds. Hyung-chan Kim and Eun Ho Lee (Seoul: Institute of Korean Studies, 2009), 104.

<sup>9</sup> “11 Asiatic war brides fly to new U.S. homes,” *Los Angeles Times*, 22 Nov. 1951, 10.

<sup>10</sup> For example: “More Twins—From Korea / Twins Steal Show as Veterans Return” *Seattle Daily Times*, 16 Aug. 1952, 1–2.

<sup>11</sup> Both Susan Zeiger and Caroline Chung Simpson have argued that it was not until the mid-1950s that white men marrying Asian war brides were not seen as making a “tragic mistake,” a date marked by James Michener’s 1955 *Life* article. My own research suggests that the shift was not as clearly delineated as that, nor as late, but existed during the Korean War. Zeiger also notes the turn in the 1960s to see Asian war brides not as hopeful figures for a racially integrated America, but as parasitic and villainous former prostitutes: Susan Zeiger, *Entangling Alliances: Foreign War Brides and American Soldiers in the Twentieth Century* (New York: New York University Press, 2010); Caroline Chung Simpson, “‘Out of an Obscure Place’: Japanese War Brides and Cultural Pluralism in the 1950s,” *differences* 10, no. 3 (1998): 47–81.

American domestic consumers, reaffirming postwar heterosexual marital relations after the gender turmoil of World War II.<sup>12</sup> The figure of the war bride was understood by Americans in the immediate post-World War II moment as an allegory for the larger system of postwar alliances between the United States and Europe. As columnist Malvina Lindsay wrote in the *Washington Post* in 1946, “Welcome War Brides! . . . We welcome you with the hope that together we may be able to push a little further along the trail toward an harmonious world and a secure planet.”<sup>13</sup> If welcoming “white” war brides figured as part of a reinscription of prewar gender roles and an articulation of America’s global embrace, the conflicted acceptance of Asian war brides—particularly Japanese war brides—came to represent debates over cold war racial liberalism and cultural pluralism.

As Caroline Chung Simpson has argued, the Japanese war bride—the largest group of Asian military wives to emigrate—became, by the early 1950s, “the ideal postwar racial subject.” As Simpson maintains, this was a fraught process, for the Japanese war bride also invoked the racial fears of subversion and discomfort associated with the internment of Japanese Americans during the war, and the debates over Japanese American resettlement in the war’s aftermath. A 1952 feature in the *Saturday Evening Post*, for example, proposed a *Madame Butterfly*-like tragic end for these couples, as the authors wrote that “the great question of how they will fit in and whether they will be welcomed or shunned remains to be answered.”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Zeiger, *Entangling Alliances*, ch. 4. Note that this includes women from France, Germany, and Italy, who were understood in the terms of the post-1945 U.S. alliances, as “white.”

<sup>13</sup> Lindsay quoted in Zeiger, *Entangling Alliances*, 127–128.

<sup>14</sup> Janet Wentworth Smith and William L. Worden, “They’re Bringing Home Japanese Wives,” *Saturday Evening Post*, 19 Jan. 1952, quoted and discussed in Simpson, ““Out of an Obscure Place,”” 51 and passim.

As with the resettlement of the Nisei after internment, the “loyalty” of Japanese wives was part of their appeal and charm. In an article from June 1953, the *Los Angeles Times* praised Takako Poitevint both for her “petite” figure and for her commitment to her husband. Korean veteran Roland Poitevint had returned to Sun Valley, California after his tour and filed papers with the Immigration Service to allow his wife to enter. The *Times* celebrated Takako’s arrival with a photograph of the happy couple, “together again.” In a similar story, the *Seattle Times* published an Associated Press wire from November 1953, commending Yasuko (Linda) Roach for waiting four years for her American fiancé, Sergeant Rayburn Roach, who was captured as a prisoner of war during the Korean War. Yasuko, praised by the *Times* as “the girl who waited,” and Sergeant Roach were married in Kyoto as soon as he was released.<sup>15</sup>

Japanese military brides entered the United States within the context of debates over the resettlement of Japanese Americans after their incarceration during World War II.<sup>16</sup> Though Korean brides did not figure in this specific cultural debate over the place and potential “loyalty” of Japanese Americans, the cultural readings of Asian military brides projected out on Japanese women came to encompass Korean military brides as well. As with soldiers’ expected access to all Asian women as they moved through occupied Japan en route to Korea, there was often little cultural distinction in the United States between the specificities of Japanese or Korean women.

Racial exclusion laws treated all Asian women the same, and the entrance of Korean and Japanese military brides into the United States was often legally barred due to congressional and military prohibition of Asian war brides’ marriages and emigration.

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<sup>15</sup> “Ex-GI and his Japan bride reunited here,” *Los Angeles Times*, 10 June 1953, 11; Associated Press, “Ex-P.O.W. honeymoons with Japanese girl who waited,” *Seattle Times*, 25 Nov. 1953, 21.

<sup>16</sup> See Simpson, “Out of an Obscure Place.”

World War II was the first war in which soldiers needed to acquire a commanding officer's approval in order to marry a foreign woman, allowing officers' racial and national attitudes to determine the fitness of such marriages.<sup>17</sup> During the occupation of Japan and the Korean War, officers were under command pressure to reduce "fraternization" of soldiers with the Japanese, and were even more disinclined to view interracial marriages with ease, given that they were illegal in the majority of American states, particularly in the South and West. Soldiers would sometimes wait two years for their paperwork to be filed by officers, followed by months of inaction as the papers reached the State Department, a problem that was compounded by racial bias in the case of nonwhite soldiers.<sup>18</sup> As the Army's Commanding General office reminded commands in 1947, if soldiers applied to marry "aliens ineligible for citizenship in the United States," they could be reassigned to a "distant station" far away from their fiancée. As marriage policy was worked out through the late 1940s and early 1950s, the Army went out of its way to remind soldiers that these marriages would likely not be acceptable at home, except in the case of Nisei soldiers marrying Japanese women.<sup>19</sup>

Johnnie and Yong Soon Morgan, for example, had undergone "the long task of unraveling Army red tape for permission to marry."<sup>20</sup> For the Morgans, judging from other military marriage applications in Korea, this meant that they likely had to travel to

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<sup>17</sup> Zeiger, *Entangling Alliances*, 74.

<sup>18</sup> Lt. Col. Charles M. Bussey, *Firefight at Yechon: Courage and Racism in the Korean War* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991), 62–65; Brenda Gayle Plummer, *Rising Wind: Black Americans and U.S. Foreign Affairs, 1935–1960* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 208–9.

<sup>19</sup> U.S. Army Commanding General Office to the Commanding General of the 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne, "Marriage of Occupation Personnel to Japanese Nationals," 5 May 1947, Folder 291.1 (1947) Occ, Box 967 Occupation File 1947, Official File (OF), Adjutant General Section (AG), Eighth U.S. Army (1944–1956), Record Group 338: Records of Army operational, tactical, and support organizations, WWI and thereafter (RG 338), National Archives, College Park, MD (NACP); Office of the Commanding General, Staff Memorandum no. 55 "Policy on Marriage for Occupation Forces, Foreign Nationals, and Japanese," 13 Oct. 1947, Folder 291.1 (1947) Occ, Box 967 Occupation File 1947, OF, AG, Eighth Army, RG 338, NACP.

<sup>20</sup> "Soldier bringing first Korean bride to this country," *Seattle Daily Times*, 30 Sept. 1951, 5.

the Foreign Service Desk in Pusan with birth certificates and documentation of citizenship, Yong Soon's official Korean Family Register, the written approval of Johnnie's Army Commander, and the written permission of Yong Soon's head of family. If these documents were satisfactory, the couple would be given a certificate of marriage to be presented to the City Mayor. The Foreign Service then needed to verify the Mayor's signature, at which point more paperwork would be forwarded to the couple to be filled out in quadruplicate—and only then would the marriage be legal. For couples in occupied Japan, marriages often involved interviews with an Army chaplain, blood tests, parental vouchers, personal statements, bank statements attesting to financial stability, and police background checks.<sup>21</sup>

The 1945 GI Brides Act excluded “persons ineligible for admission” from its purview, a ban on American/Japanese marriage upheld by the American military leadership in occupied Japan in line with the occupation's formal non-fraternization policies and spatial segregation. Between 1945 and 1952, five congressional bills were passed to address foreign wives and children of U.S. soldiers and expedite their entry into the United States, but because of long-standing Asian exclusion laws, Asian brides were still classified as “racially inadmissible” for citizenship and not permitted to immigrate.<sup>22</sup>

This was not an issue of former national enemies, but of racial fears: as

German/American marriages were approved (and travel for German wives funded) by the American military and American Congress after 1946, a U.S. Army circular was still

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<sup>21</sup> For the Korean theater, see: Foreign Service Desk in Pusan, memorandum on marriages between American citizens and Korean citizens (nationals), 28 Nov. 1951, Folder 291.1, Box 491 General Correspondence 1951, General Correspondence (GC), AG, Eighth Army, RG 338, NACP. For marriages in occupied Japan, see for example: Office of the Commanding General, Staff Memorandum no, 55 “Policy on Marriage for Occupation Forces, Foreign Nationals, and Japanese,” 13 Oct. 1947, Folder 291.1 (1947) Occ, Box 967 Occupation File 1947, OF, AG, Eighth Army, RG 338, NACP.

<sup>22</sup> Zeiger, *Entangling Alliances*, 131–132.

attempting to define the amount of “Japanese blood” that would nullify a woman’s marriage or visa request.<sup>23</sup>

A series of waivers were passed in 1947 and 1950 allowing “alien spouses” of soldiers previously “considered inadmissible because of race” to enter the country if they registered within a limited period of time. Though framed around immigration, the two waivers implicitly posed the question of what kinds of interracial marriages were both socially and legally permissible in the post-World War II years. Congressmen supporting the first waiver, the Alien Brides Act of 1947, were careful to stipulate that their support for the measure was based on the desires of Nisei veterans to be able to marry Japanese wives, a move that furthered the immanence of Japanese Americans as racially distinct from other Americans and left aside the question of Asian/non-Asian interracial marriages. It was not until the 1952 McCarran Walter Act that Asian immigrants, and thus, military brides, were able to naturalize as citizens.<sup>24</sup>

Despite these immigration restrictions, American servicemen and their fiancées openly flaunted the ban on marriages, either getting married in civil ceremonies, rushing to register under the waiver, or individually protesting military regulations. The *Baltimore Afro-American* published one photo of the last day before the 1950 waiver expired allowing servicemen to bring their Japanese wives to the United States. Under a picture of a crowd of White American, Asian American, and African American soldiers filling out paperwork at the consulate desk, the *Afro-American* described the “mad rush” that “ensued as service men from as far as the Korean area flew in to beat the deadline.”<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Zeiger, *Entangling Alliances*, 181.

<sup>24</sup> Zeiger, *Entangling Alliances*, 182.

<sup>25</sup> “Deadline on wives causes bureau jam,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, 12 April 1952, 3.

When Asian war brides did manage to move to the United States, their presence confused and troubled U.S. racial boundaries, legal statutes against interracial marriage known as “miscegenation” laws, and other *de facto* and *de jure* racial restrictions from Washington to Georgia.<sup>26</sup> Though Washington State had no anti-miscegenation law when the Morgans arrived in 1951, they were still confined within the racial landscape of the city. The Morgans settled in Seattle’s Central District, the primarily African American and Japanese neighborhood on the hill above Seattle’s Chinatown, created by Seattle’s racial housing covenants (legally enforced until 1948 and enforced *de facto* through the 1960s) that prohibited “Asiatic persons” from renting or owning property.<sup>27</sup>

Despite the legal restrictions on immigration, however, as most war bride marriages in the 1950s took place in occupied Japan under military or civil auspices, couples came into contact with American miscegenation laws only after successfully moving together to the United States. Miscegenation laws—a legal formation to enshrine white supremacy in the post–Civil War nation—varied state by state, and covered nearly all western, southern, and midwestern states by 1950. In the West, state laws explicitly legislated against Whites intermarrying with Chinese, Japanese, Filipinos, Koreans, Hindus, Native Hawaiians, and American Indians, as well as White/Black marriages.

This “multi-racial framework of white supremacy,” as one scholar termed it, had come to

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<sup>26</sup> On the explicitness of white racial purity and white supremacist ideology to miscegenation laws, see Peggy Pascoe, *What Comes Naturally: Miscegenation Laws and the Making of Race in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), esp. introduction and p. 8.

<sup>27</sup> The Morgans lived at 1108 Yesler Way, at the corner of Yesler and Broadway: see “Some Aliens May Take Short Cut to Citizenship,” *Seattle Times* 6 March, 1955, 4. For census maps and racial covenants see: “Racial Restrictive Covenants” and U.S. Census maps for 1960, “Special Section: Segregated Seattle,” Seattle Civil Rights and Labor History Project, University of Washington, <http://depts.washington.edu/civilr/covenants.htm>. The numbers of Koreans and Korean Americans in the United States and particularly the Pacific Northwest at this time was too small to be targeted specifically by laws, and Koreans were often—to their chagrin—put in the same category as the Japanese for legal segregation purposes and in the white American mind. No sizable Koreatown existed in Seattle: see Jessie Kindig, “Koreans and Korean Americans in the Pacific Northwest,” unpublished manuscript commissioned by the Korean American Historical Association, 2012.

define American ideas of race, heterosexual marriage, and “natural” sexual relations by the 1950s. Though the laws were challenged and repealed throughout the 1950s and early 1960s on a state-by-state basis, it was not until 1967 that the Supreme Court overturned anti-miscegenation statutes in *Loving v. Virginia*.<sup>28</sup>

White soldiers stationed or returning to the United States learned that their marriages were illegal under state law.<sup>29</sup> Though miscegenation laws blanketed the American West and specifically targeted White/Asian marriages as well as other permutations of interracial marriage, Asian war brides produced a particular challenge to the binary ideas of race in the Jim Crow South, where most statewide miscegenation laws banned only the marriage of Whites to Blacks.<sup>30</sup> Asians and Asian Americans in the South were seen to introduce dissonance to Southern conceptions of race at the same time that their presence offered opportunities for upholding what legal rights and social identity whiteness maintained.

According to the influential African American newspaper, the *Chicago Defender*, by 1952, only two war bride/veteran couples had managed to establish residence in Mississippi, one by living on Keesler Air Force Base in Biloxi, where the military’s official policy of racial desegregation allowed military areas to be exempt from state

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<sup>28</sup> Pascoe, *What Comes Naturally*, esp. 6, 243. Pascoe argues that it was the work of marriage clerks and petty bureaucrats that practically upheld these laws, as interracial couples sought and were denied marriage licenses. In similar manner, it was military officials and officers in the occupation and war zones who upheld the “non-fraternization” policies in Japan and could obstruct these marriages.

<sup>29</sup> Different states had different laws, with some banning marriage between Whites and Blacks only, and some also naming White/Asian and/or White/Indian marriages as well. In the West in particular, these laws were dismantled on a state-by-state basis between 1951 and 1965. In 1951, however, well over half of the country had some miscegenation ban; only New England, the upper midwest, Washington, Kansas, and New Mexico had no formal laws. See Pascoe, *What Comes Naturally*, 243.

<sup>30</sup> Exceptions were Missouri, Mississippi, Georgia, and Virginia, who also legislated against White/Indian and White/Asian marriages: see Pascoe, *What Comes Naturally*, 118–119.

racial laws.<sup>31</sup> The next year, *Defender* columnist Enoc P. Walters devoted his “Adventures in Race Relations” column to the conundrum of “a Negro married to a Japanese girl in a state where interracial (meaning white and Negro marriages) are prohibited by law.” As Walters noted, Asian war brides “were neither white nor colored by Americans [sic] standards.” Walters described the solution to this problem as dark satire, for the soldiers’ commanding officer, not wanting to lose the officer or bow to the community’s demands, gave the soldier and his wife lodging on base in a luxurious officer’s house. Because they were now on Army property, the community was “frustrated” but “had no right to protest” the couple’s “residence on army property.”<sup>32</sup>

***“Not quite friends, but neighbors”***

Paralleling this history of legal segregation, immigration exclusion, miscegenation laws, and white hostility were currents of 1950s racial pluralism that came to figure the Asian war bride as the model subject for a new, racially integrated American society. Just as the Morgans were proposed as an “all-American family” by 1957, tendencies within political and legal activism, civil rights law, and social science converged to propose racial integration and multiracial communities as a “harmonious” ideal. As I will discuss further in the following chapter five, 1940s-era theories of race as a cultural phenomenon were being applied by social scientists, government and military officials, and civil rights

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<sup>31</sup> “Miss. segregation laws hit oriental war brides,” *Chicago Defender*, 31 May 1952, 1; Plummer, *Rising Wind*, 209; Melinda L. Pash, *In the Shadow of the Greatest Generation: The Americans who Fought the Korean War* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 281n289. Also, see this dissertation’s chapter five for a discussion of military desegregation.

<sup>32</sup> Enoc P. Walters, “Kicked Into Luxury: Adventures in Race Relations,” *Chicago Defender*, 12 Sept. 1953, 11.

activists in the 1950s to argue that racial integration was both possible and beneficial to achieving the (presumed) democratic promise of the United States.

These cultural arguments, however, were based on the assumption of racism as an individual pathology that damaged American democracy, rather than a structural problem stemming from the construction of the nation through a series of legal, extralegal, and violent racial exclusions. The marital embrace of Asian women by American soldiers could be celebrated as a story of individual romance overcoming backwards attitudes, and a gendered story of Asian wives serving as model American housewives, eclipsing and supplanting a story of militarized occupation across the Pacific and legal and social structures of white supremacy within the United States.

The 1952 King Vidor film *Japanese War Bride* exemplified just this figuring of the war bride and GI couple in post-WWII California, and was billed by publicity posters as “The story of a miscegenetic love!”<sup>33</sup> In the film, Lieutenant Jim Sterling (Don Taylor), is wounded in Korea and falls in love with the Japanese Red Cross worker Tae (Shirley Yamaguchi), who marries him and returns to his family’s farm in California’s Salinas Valley. Tae and Jim face massive hostility from both Jim’s family and their white neighbors, already uneasy about the resettlement of Japanese American farming families after internment. Tae eventually runs away with their child, and in the final scenes, is embraced by Jim, who has found her about to throw herself off a cliff into the Pacific. The presumed tragic ending of interracial marriage is here saved through Jim’s act of love.

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<sup>33</sup> A reproduction of the poster is in Robert J. Lenz, *Korean War Filmography: 91 English-Language Features through 2000* (Jefferson, NC: MacFarland and Co., 2003), 182.

Racism, in the story, is coded as the hostility of individuals, most often stemming from an inability on both sides to get over historical enmity and injustice. The neighboring Japanese American family, the Hasegawas—“not quite friends, but neighbors,” Jim’s mother says—welcome Tae to Salinas, but the elder Mr. Hasegawa refuses to speak to Jim or any of the Sterlings due to bitterness over the family’s recent wartime internment. Mr. Hasegawa’s refusal is mirrored in the racist mother of Jim’s old girlfriend, Mrs. Milly Shafer, who refused to sit in the same room as Tae because the Japanese Army had killed her son at Bataan. When racism is not explained as the inability to let go of the past, it is characterized as buffoonery, in the case of Jim’s drunken friend at a party, or as sexually deviant, in the figure of Jim’s sister-in-law Fran, whose incestuous desire for Jim leads her to mistreat Tae.<sup>34</sup> That overtly racist characters serve as the villains of the film proposes its story as a kind of political stance, but the film suggests that racism is only overcome through the forgetting past histories of racial injustice.

*Japanese War Bride*’s themes were taken up again by James Michener, one of the most famous “middlebrow” novelists of the early cold war period whom *Life* magazine called “one of the West’s most sympathetic interpreters of the East.”<sup>35</sup> By the mid-1950s, Michener was already the prize-winning author of four works about American military men in East Asia and the South Pacific islands, drawn from his Navy service in the Pacific during World War II and his work as a journalist on board Navy ships during the

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<sup>34</sup> *Japanese War Bride*, directed by King Vidor (20<sup>th</sup>-Century Fox, 1952).

<sup>35</sup> “Middlebrow” is term used by Christina Klein to describe the popular but not elitist culture of the post-1945 period that endorsed American-centric global integration, the cultural arena of Broadway musicals, *LIFE* magazine, and serials like *Reader’s Digest* and the *Saturday Evening Review*. Klein, *Cold War Orientalism*. The quote about Michener is a sidebar written by the editors of *Life* for a longer piece Michener wrote for the magazine: Editors, “The Author with Penny Pfeiffer,” *Life* 38:8 (21 Feb 1955), 126.

Korean War. With his particular knack for sketching out characters that perfectly embodied tropes in cold war discourse, Michener's 1953 novel *Sayonara* borrowed from the circulating debates about Asian war brides and interracial marriage to write what was arguably the most influential contemporary text on the subject.

*Sayonara*, first serialized in the popular *McCall's* magazine, was the fictional story of Air Force jet fighting ace Lloyd Gruver, who falls in love with the beautiful Japanese dancer and actress Hana-ogi while stationed in Kobe during the Korean War. Though initially hostile to the idea of interracial marriage, Lloyd finds that it is only with Hana-ogi, and not Eileen Webster, the general's beautiful, Vassar-educated daughter to whom he is engaged, that he feels he can be free to fully love. Lloyd and Hana-ogi's romance is paralleled by that of Lloyd's friend Airman Joe Kelly and his wife Katsumi, whom Kelly was able to marry only after spending months fighting with military officials and appealing to his Congressman. The Air Force, dismayed by Kelly's Japanese wife and his flaunting of military non-fraternization policies, orders Kelly back to the U.S., where Katsumi is not allowed to follow. A *Romeo and Juliet* for occupied Japan, Kelly and Katsumi commit double suicide rather than part. Their deaths help convince Lloyd that American racism is too strong and interracial marriage too difficult, and Michener's tale ends with Lloyd's tearful parting from Hana-ogi as he realizes their marriage could never have a happy ending. Michener's tale is both an aborted version of a *Madame Butterfly* narrative and a gendered reflection on America's fraught relationship with Japan: Lloyd's final farewell is the melodramatic "And you, Japan, you crowded islands, you tragic land—sayonara, you enemy, you friend."<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> James A. Michener, *Sayonara* (New York: Random House, 1953), 243.

*Sayonara* drew from and helped to redefine the long-standing ideal of interracial marriage as a tragic mistake at the same time that it condemned the intransigence of American racism, as institutionalized by the military. As the West Point-educated Lloyd reflects as he leaves Japan, “I was forced to acknowledge that I lived in an age when the only honorable profession was soldiering, when the only acceptable attitude toward strange lands and people of another color must be not love but fear.”<sup>37</sup> Though the book received mixed reviews—critics either raved of his “delicacy and restraint” and his “sympathy for alien cultures” or condemned his “soap opera on a soapbox” for its stock characters and stilted story—its popularity among readers remained steady, and spiked after the release of the film version in 1957.<sup>38</sup>

In 1955, *Life* magazine commissioned Michener to write a piece on Japanese-GI marriages, an exercise that led Michener to a much different ending. Titled “Pursuit of Happiness by a GI and a Japanese: Marriage Surmounts Barriers of Language and Intolerance,” Michener’s feature article told the story of Frank and Sachiko Pfeiffer, who had met in occupied Japan and resettled in Chicago. The article narrated the couple’s trajectory along the lines of the postwar American Dream, as they escaped the anti-Asian racism of their neighbors in the poor urban center for a house of their own in the suburb of Melrose Park. In the article, Michener described how the couple’s love and tenacity overcame the individual racism of particular neighbors and of Frank’s mother Esther, eventually winning over both Esther and their new suburban neighbors. In Michener’s retelling of the war bride story, racism was a sort of individual pathology that could be

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<sup>37</sup> Michener, *Sayonara*, 243.

<sup>38</sup> See, for example, these reviews: *Library Journal* 79, 15 Jan. 1954, 142; *New York Herald Tribune*, 24 Jan. 1954, 4; J. H. Jackson, *The New Yorker* 29, 23 Jan. 1954, 100; *Time* 63, 25 Jan. 1954, 114.

overcome both through a couple's deep love and the economic opportunities post-WWII America could provide.<sup>39</sup>

Michener continued his about-face by writing the screenplay for the film version of *Sayonara*, released in 1957 and starring Marlon Brando as a brooding, masculine Lloyd Gruver. The film kept the double-suicide of Kelly and Katsumi but counterposed it with a happy ending for Lloyd and Hana-ogi: as they leave the dance hall together in an act of defiance, Lloyd gives the assembled newspapermen his final words on racial prejudice: "Tell 'em we said sayonara!"<sup>40</sup> In Warner Brothers' production notes, the film's backers promised that the film made passé the idea that "East is East and West is West and never the twain shall meet." This was, the studio claimed, a blow to American racial intransigence through the "smashing climax" of a love story.<sup>41</sup>

What Michener and Brando—who had lobbied for the new ending—understood as a political defense of interracial marriage, however, was always prefaced on the expected submission of Asian women. Hana-ogi's love for Lloyd is described not as her own desire, but as fulfilling Lloyd's: in the line used as a caption for publicity posters, Hana-ogi tells Lloyd that because of her commitments to her dance troupe, "I am not allowed to love. But I will love you if that is your desire . . ." The film thus promised orientalist fantasies of Asian women's sexual submission as a precondition for their acceptance by American men, and allowed women to defy Japanese customs only

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<sup>39</sup> Michener had indeed changed his mind, for several months after this article was published, he married Mari Yoriko Sabusawa, a Japanese American woman. James A. Michener, "Pursuit of Happiness by a GI and a Japanese: Marriage Surmounts Barriers of Language and Intolerance," *Life* 38, no. 8, 21 Feb. 1955, 124–141. See also Caroline Chung Simpson's excellent extended analysis of this article: Simpson, "'Out of an Obscure Place,'" 66–77.

<sup>40</sup> *Sayonara*, directed by Joshua Logan (Warner Brothers, 1957).

<sup>41</sup> "Production Notes on 'Sayonara'," Warner Brothers Studios, Burbank, California, Folder 2: Motion Pictures, *Sayonara* nd, Box 101, James A. Michener Papers, Library of Congress (LOC).

through another kind of national/gendered submission to American men.<sup>42</sup> The film, expensively produced and shot on location in Japan, was a moneymaking hit for Warner Brothers, and was nominated for ten academy awards, winning four.

### ***Model (minority) marriages***

The idealization of war bride/GI marriages as ones of individual love, “all-American families,” and American suburban domesticity allowed the figure of the Asian war bride to become a useful “test case” for legal and academic challenges to anti-miscegenation prejudice. Asian war brides and their white husbands were useful precisely because their marriages could be so easily leveraged to define the symbolic success of a benevolent American embrace of East Asia, reliant on the heroism and personal appeal of American soldiers. And because Asian war brides were “neither white nor colored by American standards,” in the words of the *Defender* columnist, and (as yet) untainted by the history of American racial exclusions, their presence deflected thornier questions of domestic racism. The embrace of the Asian war bride was thus both a liberal and a conservative project, for it allowed the incorporation of Asian women into the American national imaginary while leaving unresolved the escalating protests of the civil rights movement and unanswered questions about Japanese American resettlement. Furthermore, it accepted Asians only as wives, and linked racial acceptance to a gendered hierarchy. As historian Peggy Pascoe writes, mid-1950s discourse around the Japanese wives of white Americans hinged around white men’s citizenship rights to marry

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<sup>42</sup> Film poster reproduced in Lenz, *Korean War Filmography*, 311. Brando directed many of the changes to the script, and his own defense of interracial marriage was described by him in just such terms. Defending his marriage of Anna Kashfi, a South Asian woman, he later said that foreign women knew “exactly when to encourage [their men] and when to shut up.” See Naoko Shibusawa, *America’s Geisha Ally: Reimagining the Japanese Enemy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 267.

whomever they chose, not around the rights of Asian women in the United States, regardless of marital status.<sup>43</sup> White supremacy was reproduced by insisting on Asian women's acceptance into the American body politic only as wives, disavowing the recent legacy of Japanese American internment and forgetting the landscape of gender violence produced by American military occupations and war in East Asia.

As Pascoe has chronicled, throughout the 1950s and early 1960s, civil rights organizations like the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), Anti-Defamation League (ADL), and the Japanese American Citizens' League (JACL) sought to challenge federal miscegenation laws and argue that interracial marriage was a "natural right" and a question of individual love and choice. Because of the JACL's and ACLU's moderate liberalism and emphasis on maintaining a middle-class, respectable image of nonwhite communities, they came to see white veteran/Asian war bride couples as a perfect "test case" for a legal challenge to miscegenation laws. In a series of internal memos from 1955 to 1963, the ADL, JACL, and ACLU described their idea of a "good case" as, in the words of one 1963 confidential memo amongst JACL officials, one involving "an American serviceman, preferably a decorated combat veteran, who married a Japanese woman in Japan while on duty there and who has been returned to the states and assigned to one of the eight states that specifically prohibits persons of the white race to marry 'Mongolians' or 'Japanese.'"<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Pascoe, *What Comes Naturally*, 233; Simpson, "Out of an obscure place."

<sup>44</sup> Memo quoted in Pascoe, *What Comes Naturally*, 232. As Pascoe and Zeiger both note, black civil rights organizations like the NAACP and the mainstream black press discussed the black veteran/Asian war bride couples as personal, natural, romantic choices, though black soldiers often sought to leverage domestic civil rights discourse to describe opposition to their marriages as another form of racial discrimination. Zeiger, *Entangling Alliances*, 186–188; Pascoe, *What Comes Naturally*, ch. 7.

Asian war brides also became “test cases” in another sense, as academic institutions turned new tools and theories of race relations toward the demographic influx of Asian war brides. During the 1950s, the University of Chicago, the University of Hawai‘i, the University of California-Berkeley, and the University of Southern California devoted major resources toward research projects on Asian war brides’ “adjustment” to American culture. Countering 1940s-era eugenics-inflected social science that claimed that “exogamous” marriages—that is, marriage of socially different people—were doomed to failure, this new wave of 1950s social scientists found that interracial relationships led to greater cooperation and understanding.<sup>45</sup>

As with the social science work around military desegregation, this work proposed that social harmony came with racial integration, and proposed a liberal narrative of continual progress and assimilation into an ideal “America.” In this sense, however, Asian war brides’ “success” was conditioned upon becoming invisible—that is, assimilated into the largely white mainstream. Three early sociological studies of Japanese war brides in 1954, 1955, and 1958, for example, placed near-total responsibility on Japanese wives to “adjust” to American life, not on the white husband.<sup>46</sup> And as with studies on military desegregation, unquestioned gender assumptions underwrote the work, as monogamous, heterosexual marriage was proposed as the most “stable” and desirable outcome.

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<sup>45</sup> A 1971 overview of the field thus far by sociologist Bok-Lim Kim describes six major surveys between 1954 and 1973, based in major U.S. cities and near bases, studying Japanese, Korean, and later, Vietnamese and “other” national/racial groups of military wives. Bok-Lim C. Kim, “Asian Wives of US Servicemen: Women in Shadows,” *Amerasia* 4, no. 1 (1971): 91–115. See also Zeiger, *Entangling Alliances*, 190–194.

<sup>46</sup> The studies were conducted by: A. L. Strauss, Chicago, IL, 1954; G. J. Schnepf and A. M. Yi, St. Louis, MO and Chicago, IL, 1955; and George A. Devos, San Francisco Area, CA, 1958. Discussed in Kim, “Asian Wives of U.S. Servicemen,” esp. 105. Simpson argues this same point by analyzing cultural texts in ““Out of an Obscure Place.””

Dr. Yukiko Kimura, a Japanese-born, University of Chicago-trained sociologist, interviewed 324 Japanese and European war brides married to servicemen and living in Hawai‘i, one of the largest research samples of the 1950s studies. Based at the University of Hawai‘i and undertaken between 1953 and 1957, Kimura’s study (published in 1957) found that when war brides and in-laws shared a “cultural background,” the marriages were more rather than less conflicted, and proposed the seemingly counterfactual idea that cultural difference was the key to learning greater cultural tolerance. Kimura’s study saw the primary site of “cultural conflict” between Japanese wives and ethnically Japanese American in-laws, as the in-laws expected the wives to be more “traditionally Japanese” and less “Americanized.”<sup>47</sup>

Kimura’s study differed in some ways from other sociological work and popular discourse around war brides, for it proposed the Japanese women as overly independent and assertive in the eyes of some of their in-laws, contrary to popular culture stereotypes of Asian women as submissive, tractable wives.<sup>48</sup> For Kimura, the wives’ independence was not the problem producing conflict, but rather, the less-than-equitable expectations of ethnically Japanese in-laws, who expected more “Japanese” submission from their new daughters-in-law. Kimura was also not concerned with the assimilation of Japanese war brides into “white” American life, but rather into Hawai‘i’s multiethnic society. The husbands in her study were grouped not into “white” and “non-white” research groups, but into two groups of American men of Japanese ancestry (whom she termed “Japanese”) and those of non-Japanese ancestry, whom she noted included only small

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<sup>47</sup> Yukiko Kimura, “War Brides in Hawaii and Their In-Laws,” *American Journal of Sociology* 63, no. 1 (July 1957): 70–76.

<sup>48</sup> Kimura, “War Brides in Hawaii,” 74.

numbers of “Caucasians” alongside men of Chinese, Korean, Puerto Rican, Filipino, Portuguese, and native Hawaiian ancestry.<sup>49</sup>

Kimura was by training perhaps inclined to argue for a theoretical model of racial tolerance and assimilation, particularly in a Hawaiian setting. Kimura finished her Master’s Degree at the University of Hawai‘i, working for Andrew Lind, and was sent on to the University of Chicago to finish her PhD, before returning to the Social Science Research Laboratory at the University of Hawai‘i. Lind was himself a student of Robert Park at the University of Chicago, where Park developed his famous four-part assimilation “cycle” of race relations, as well as a proponent of what became known as a set of Hawaiian exceptionalist theories of racial assimilation. Lind was best known for his work in the 1950s proposing Hawai‘i as a multiracial melting pot, free of ethnic or racial discord, and took over from Romanzo Adams—who had piloted similar theories about Hawai‘i in the 1930s—as director of the Social Science Research Laboratory in Hawai‘i in 1934.<sup>50</sup>

Though Adams and Kimura argued for a kind of Hawaiian racial exceptionalism, when writ large, their proposition of peaceful and harmonious racial assimilation was aligned with 1950s progressive discourses of cultural pluralism and racial integration. Intended to combat biological theories of racial conflict, legal segregation, and immigration restrictions, these theories all nonetheless produced race as a cultural, interpersonal identity and overlooked the structural violence that underwrote racial

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<sup>49</sup> Kimura, “War Brides in Hawaii,” 70n1.

<sup>50</sup> See, for example, Andrew W. Lind, *Hawaii’s People* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1955); Lind, *Hawaii: The Last of the Magic Isles* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969). See also: Romanzo Colfax Adams, *Interracial Marriage in Hawaii: A Study of the Mutually Conditioned Processes of Acculturation and Amalgamation* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i, 1937). For biographical details, see: Henry Yu, *Thinking Orientals: Migration, Contact, and Exoticism in Modern America* (New York: Oxford, 2001), 155–156, 207–210.

identity in the United States. Even more, they all proposed the United States as the great melting pot in which peaceful assimilation could take place, obscuring—among many other things—the militarized policies and imperial violence that had produced these racial identities and fostered these streams of immigration in the first place.<sup>51</sup> In this way, the United States’ military embrace of the world was validated and mirrored in the American embrace of global nonwhite subjects.

### ***Conclusion***

In both the film and novel versions of *Sayonara*, Hana-ogi tells Lloyd of her family’s history, a personal narrative that is in fact a history of violence and has left her with deep anti-American prejudices that only her love for Lloyd can overcome. Her father was killed by U.S. military airstrikes during World War II, and the family was so poor that she was “sold away” into a geisha house. Luckily, she was “rescued” by a “rich man” and was quickly taken on as at the Takarazuka dancing school as an apprentice. As Hana-ogi carefully narrated her “rescue” from prostitution, her character also alluded to its naturalization in occupied Japan. Just as these histories of gender exploitation and violence structure but barely appear in the film and novel, so too did they only marginally appear in American war stories about the Korean War. The cultural figure of the Asian war bride and her embrace in American popular culture as a figure of racial pluralism was reliant on the often violent, militarized embrace of Korean and Japanese women that functioned as both the institution and allegory of the U.S. military presence in East Asia.

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<sup>51</sup> Following the development of his thinking on (and personal experience of) interracial marriages, James Michener also became a proponent of this theory of harmonious racial assimilation: his 1959 novel *Hawaii* reads as a fictional version of the 1930s sociological theories of Hawai‘i as an interracial paradise full of multi-raced “golden men.” James A. Michener, *Hawaii* (New York: Random House, 1959).

These war stories were possible by forgetting much, not least of which was a forgetting of the actual women they sought to represent.

## Chapter Five

### *Harmonious Integration*

On September 6, 1950, Sergeant First Class John Raymond Rice, a World War II veteran, was killed in action in South Korea, a victim of the heavy combat fighting early in the war. His widow, Evelyn, purchased a plot in the Memorial Park Cemetery close to the family in Sioux City, Iowa, and arranged for a funeral with all the honorary military trappings, including a three-shot salute from the local American Legion firing squad. After the funeral party had departed, as Rice's coffin was about to be lowered into his grave, a cemetery official approached the undertaker and explained that he could not allow Sergeant Rice—a Native American from the Winnebago tribe—to be buried, for the cemetery was reserved “for the Caucasian race.” The story made national headlines, and the next morning President Truman wired Sioux City to report that he had personally authorized the burial of Sergeant Rice in Arlington National Cemetery, and promised to fly Mrs. Rice to Washington with her family to witness the burial.<sup>1</sup> Truman's act, based on his own moral outrage, was of a piece with federal Indian policies that were pushing for the full assimilation of native peoples into American society. The interment of Sergeant Rice's body was thus symbolic of the available political choices for incorporating nonwhite people into the American social body: either national assimilation or local segregation.<sup>2</sup>

A little over a year later, eighteen-year-old Korean War combat soldier Curtis James Morrow arrived in California's East Bay to another “all-American” homecoming.

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<sup>1</sup> National Affairs: Soldier's Burial,” *Time* (10 Sept. 1951).

<sup>2</sup> Dean J. Kotlowski, “Burying Sergeant Rice: Racial Justice and Native American Rights in the Truman Era,” *Journal of American Studies* 38, no. 2 (Aug. 2004), 199–225.

For Morrow, a young black man from Chicago, combat in Korea had been a dual trauma, for the psychological effects of killing were bound up with American racism and the treatment he had received fighting in a segregated Army unit. As Morrow remembered, the crowd in the Bay greeted the soldiers with

thunderous roars of welcome, and we passed through the cheering crowds of faces representing many races. There were black ones, white ones, red ones, yellow ones; and they all had jubilant looks of joy on their faces. Many of the young girls had roses which they passed to us . . . . I felt good for the first time in a year! . . . . But as the thought of the many killings entered my mind, I momentarily experienced a cold chill that passed through my body.

Celebrating that night in San Francisco, Morrow found that the bartender would serve his white buddies but not him; after a pregnant moment of silence, Morrow and his friends tore up the bar in retribution.<sup>3</sup>

These two homecomings raise the question: to what home were nonwhite soldiers returning to? For Puerto Rican, Native Hawaiian, and Native American men, claiming home was a historical struggle; and for African American men, the very notion of being *welcome* at home seemed impossible. James Baldwin wrote retrospectively of an experience similar to Morrow's, of being refused service at Chicago's O'Hare Airport bar in the company of two friends, black Korean War veterans. Meditating on the homecoming of the black soldier, Baldwin wrote "*Home!* The very word begins to have a despairing and diabolical ring."<sup>4</sup>

This chapter explores this condition of being welcomed home, and examines how racial belonging for nonwhite soldiers was figured through the cultural and legal frame of

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<sup>3</sup> Curtis James Morrow, *What's a Commie Ever Done to Black People? A Korean War Memoir of Fighting in the U.S. Army's Last All Negro Unit* (Jefferson, NC: MacFarland, 1997), 84–85.

<sup>4</sup> James Baldwin, "Down at the Cross: Letter from a Region in My Mind," in *The Fire Next Time* (1962; New York: Vintage, 1990), 54–56. Toni Morrison's 2012 novella *Home* also meditates on the quality of home, and follows the character of Frank Money, a black Korean War veteran. Money returns to the U.S. searching for a location of solace, and finding instead homelessness, mental breakdown, and haunting memories. Toni Morrison, *Home* (New York: Knopf, 2012).

racial integration. As the previous chapter argued in the case of Asian military brides, domestic racial integration policies were imperial yields, produced through military occupation and war in East Asia. The process of forgetting that emerged out of Korean War communist containment policy was evident in seemingly “domestic” racial formation and culture. Ideas of racial integration were developed through wartime violence, an origin simultaneously referenced and disavowed in American culture.

The Korean War was a pivotal moment in the United States’ policies of racial integration, for it was the first war fought with an officially desegregated army. For liberal social scientists, civil rights journalists, and government policy-makers, the Korean War was a perfect laboratory for studying the practical effects of racial integration, and allowed them to propose a series of best practices for achieving the harmonious assimilation of people of color into the (presumed) white American social body. Yet as Morrow’s experience of a “cold chill” and Sergeant Rice’s military decorations referenced, this vision of liberal racial integration was made possible through the enactment of wartime violence on Asian bodies. Out of the Korean War and its extreme violence came blueprints for civilian integration, sociological theories for assimilating black men into white America, and a sense of nationalism forged around a violent cause. The Korean War served to obscure the fractures of colonization and racism in the United States and East Asia even as it exacerbated their tensions.

Liberal racial policies sought to rearticulate racial difference and define an assimilationist blueprint for integration, a project that addressed U.S. racial politics as if they were only a national concern. However, these seemingly “domestic” politics rested on the ability to wage a war in Korea, a war in which race determined who could kill and

be killed, and one in which the nation's desegregation policies were literally tested, studied, and adapted in theaters of war. Yet as the Korean War provided a "laboratory" for studying racial assimilation, the war's destructive racial violence was forgotten, as the Korean War became a story of civil rights success. Even as the Korean War's violent practices provided social scientists, government officials, and journalists with data for study, the Korean War was evacuated of its meaning, becoming, as integrationist journalist Lee Nichols put it, "the most significant social war in the nation's history."<sup>5</sup> What had been for Korean civilians a destructive and brutal war and for nonwhite soldiers a harsh lesson in the doubled injuries of racism and combat, became, in the words of one military official, a "harmonious" process of integration. 1950s liberal integrationist politics obscured the physical violence of war and occupation in East Asia, and of white supremacy in the United States. This chapter argues that U.S. racial liberalism at mid-century was an imperial yield reliant on wartime violence and its subsequent forgetting.

### ***Jim Crow shock***

Curtis Morrow had enlisted in the Army as a fresh-faced seventeen-year-old, excited to see combat duty. He arrived in Korea in early December 1950 as a rifleman with the 24<sup>th</sup> Regimental Combat Team (RCT), the largest segregated unit within the U.S. Eighth Army, the fighting force in Korea.<sup>6</sup> Trudging through the frozen rice paddies,

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<sup>5</sup> Lee Nichols, *Breakthrough on the Color Front* (New York: Random House, 1954), 3.

<sup>6</sup> The Eighth Army was the overall unit designation of all forces in Korea, and had been stationed in occupied Japan prior to the war's outbreak. The 24<sup>th</sup> RCT was a self-sufficient infantry unit combining three other all-black units (the 77<sup>th</sup> Engineers, the 159<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Battalion, and the 512<sup>th</sup> Military Police Company) together with the 24<sup>th</sup> Infantry to create a self-sustaining, segregated combat unit that could operate semi-independently in combat. William T. Bowers, William M. Hammond, George L.

Morrow likened the exploding bombs on the “distant crimson horizon” to the “bombs bursting in air” of the “Star-Spangled Banner,” and his thoughts drifted to his childhood hero, Crispus Attucks, the first black man to die in the war for American Independence. Wanting to continue “our fight” for “freedom, liberty, and justice for all,” Morrow instead found a wholly different battle in the wartime landscape of Korea. On his first night, his commander, platoon sergeant Bedgood, singled Morrow out and schooled him in what Morrow called “the realities of war, as it applied to us black Americans.” Angry at overhearing Morrow extoll the welcome new recruits received in the Army, Sgt. Bedgood angrily counseled him to put his faith in his black buddies, not his nation nor the war:

So, if you want to stay alive, soldier, forget about all that patriotic, liberty, justice, and freedom for all propaganda you been indoctrinated with. That’s another fight we’ll have to deal with when, or if, we return to America. Here, we are fighting for our lives. And the best chance we have of surviving this war is to stick together.<sup>7</sup>

Sticking together meant protecting each other in battle, and Morrow’s 1997 memoir is a tortured account of his own jubilation in combat, and his continual cycle of “glory[ing] in” killing and then wondering how he could have done so. His writing, nearly fifty years later, moves between these two positions and between past and present tenses: the battle in Korea and within Morrow is still very much alive. To survive a night attack, he remembered, you must “shoot at anything that moves,” a prescription that relied on designating enemies as racial and ungrievable: “in the heat of the fight, I could smell the fuckin’ Chinks’ breath.” And yet Morrow also argues, in a text littered with descriptions of the enemy as “gooks” and “Chinks,” that no one in his unit hated the

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MacGarrigle, *Black Soldier, White Army: The 24<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment in Korea* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Military History, U.S. Army, 1996), 70.

<sup>7</sup> Morrow, *What’s A Commie Ever Done*, 8–9.

Chinese or Koreans.<sup>8</sup> Morrow reads his wartime killing as a “haunting” and a “nightmare” necessitated by the desire to stay alive. As much as killing enters the text, so do moments of empathy: Morrow and his buddy share a meal in the home of an old Korean woman, and Morrow “still sees in his dreams” an eleven-year-old Korean boy he almost killed.<sup>9</sup>

Instead, the hatred is reserved for white officers, white racists in the United States, and a home that is structured by white supremacy. Morrow and others in his unit are engaged in near-constant commentary about the racial politics of the Korean War. One new replacement talks about the choice between joining the army, “going to jail,” or “getting strung up by a lynch mob” for preventing a white man from raping his wife. Sergeant Bedgood recounted his own encounter with a lynch mob—fortunately, the “white mob” used a rope that was long enough for his toes to reach the floor and which kept him from choking.<sup>10</sup> What Morrow found in Korea was a battle against U.S. racial violence that was inseparable from war in East Asia and from military racism:

It was a bitter pill to be reminded of the racist attitudes of some of our fellow Americans back home—to receive news about some black man being lynched and then to be told by one of your comrades that that’s his hometown. And he knew the victim. It always left a bitter taste in my mouth, especially after viewing the

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<sup>8</sup> Morrow, *What’s a Commie Ever Done*, 39, 42. “Gook” appears throughout the text in reported dialogue from Morrow’s buddies and well as his own narration—for examples, see 8, 18.

<sup>9</sup> Morrow, *What’s a Commie Ever Done*, 19, 38. Michael Cullen Green has argued that black soldiers relied on racial attitudes toward Asians as part of his larger argument that black soldiers by and large supported and benefitted from growing U.S. military empire in East Asia. Green’s work relies on the most conservative African American press accounts and memoirs as representative—particularly that of career officer and self-described misogynist Charles M. Bussey—and overlooks the complexities of black soldiers’ experiences of wartime killing and U.S. racial politics: Michael Cullen Green, *Black Yanks in the Pacific: Race in the Making of American Military Empire after World War II* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010), esp. ch. 5. As ought to be clear, I disagree entirely with his argument, and follow the work of Kimberley Phillips, who proposes that military service presented a “paradox” in African American life, between empowerment, dignity, racism, and distrust: Kimberley L. Phillips, *War! What is it Good For? Black Freedom Struggles and the U.S. Military from World War II to Iraq* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012).

<sup>10</sup> Morrow, *What’s a Commie Ever Done*, 26–27.

torn bodies of comrades who maybe an hour or so earlier had been fighting at my side but now lay dead all around me.<sup>11</sup>

The torn and lynched bodies of black men converged, for Morrow, as a specter of American racial violence, one that continued to haunt him nearly a half-century later, and led him to ask if his own liberation could be effected through warfare.<sup>12</sup>

One war earlier, Langston Hughes had called this experience of the black soldier “Jim Crow shock” that deepened and extended the shell shock of combat.<sup>13</sup> “What,” Morrow asked in a raging section of his memoir,

had the commies ever done to us black people (that is, before we came to Korea)? . . . Have the communists ever enslaved our people? Have they raped our women? Have they ever castrated and hanged our fathers, grandfathers, uncles, or cousins? . . . Man, the Chinese, the North Korean, and every other fighting man in this war must be telling each other that we (black Americans, Negroes, Niggers, colored people, or whatever the fuck they chose to call us) must be the biggest fools in the world.<sup>14</sup>

What young men like Morrow entered was an Army entrenched in racist practices and beliefs. Longstanding military practice, particularly within the Army, held that black men were psychologically “unfit” for combat. Military officials—and military historians—had long cast black soldiers as lazy, unintelligent, and cowardly, borrowing from the stereotypes of slavery days and the rise of biological racism around the turn of the century. Military officials pointed to soldiers’ intelligence tests (biased toward literate and educated white citizens) and reports of poor black troop performance to argue that blacks could not fight as ably as whites. And despite protests against the unfairness of intelligence testing, the idea that black soldiers in particular were less intellectually

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<sup>11</sup> Morrow, *What’s a Commie Ever Done*, 9, 11.

<sup>12</sup> As Kimberley Phillips has argued in her study of black soldiering from World War II to Iraq, the question of whether military service and violence can bring about black people’s freedom has been raised near-continuously throughout the recent U.S. past: Phillips, *War!*.

<sup>13</sup> Hughes quoted in Phillips, *War!*, 76.

<sup>14</sup> Morrow, *What’s a Commie Ever Done*, 34.

capable than whites was accepted by military officials as a proven fact since the 1920s and remained a potent way to argue for segregation throughout the Korean War period.<sup>15</sup>

Throughout the late 1930s and 1940s, African American activists increasingly focused on the military as a primary goal in the battle for equal rights. Both World Wars became spaces of agitation for African American servicemen and women, who sent thousands of letters of grievance to national organizations like the NAACP and the influential organs of the black press, like the *Pittsburgh Courier*, the *Baltimore Afro-American*, and the NAACP's *The Crisis*. National NAACP officers like Walter White toured military bases and camps during World War II agitating for military desegregation as a method of highlighting the constant injustice African Americans faced, while black journalists visited military bases to report on segregation and racial abuse. Pressured, and fearing the loss of the black electorate, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed an antidiscrimination clause in the new Selective Service Bill in 1940, which mandated service be proportionate to racial representation in U.S. society, and allowed black officers to command black troops, as well as integrated training. However, the bill strictly maintained segregation in the services, and nonwhites would only be inducted if they were deemed to be mentally and morally "fit" for service and if separate facilities were available to maintain segregation.<sup>16</sup>

Codified in 1940's Selective Service Act, this hardened into the military's "Negro Policy," and throughout World War II, African American servicemen and women were

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<sup>15</sup> Selika Marianne Duckworth, "What Hour of Night: Black Enlisted Men's Experiences and the Desegregation of the Army During the Korean War, 1950-1" (PhD diss., Ohio State University, 1994), ch. 6; Sherie Mershon and Steven Schlossman, *Foxholes and Color Lines: Desegregating the US Armed Forces* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 17.

<sup>16</sup> Richard M. Dalfiume, *Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces: Fighting on Two Fronts, 1939-1953* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1969), 36-40.

assigned to labor units, recruited according to a quota system, and herded into “colored” facilities. Even on military facilities outside the Jim Crow South, the military’s stated segregation policies followed, and military installations functioned as a disparate network of segregation, often spreading apartheid to towns and facilities outside bases that catered to soldiers.<sup>17</sup> Black soldiers reported being refused service in mess halls that served Nazi prisoners of war, and the Red Cross policy of segregating blood transfusions by the race of the donor led to both angry protest by black men and women at blood donation centers and a frenzied defense of the policy in the halls of Congress.<sup>18</sup> Nationally, the NAACP waged a campaign against segregated Red Cross clubs in the European theater, while the National Association of Colored Graduate Nurses spent the first years of the war in a prolonged struggle against the segregation of the Army Nurse Corps.<sup>19</sup>

African American servicemen and women spent World War II challenging these policies through riots and mass on-base protest, and consistently brought their grievances to national audiences through civil rights organizations and in the pages of the black press. These riots were considered such a threat that photographs of racial protests on military bases in Louisiana and New Jersey were censored by the federal Office of Censorship throughout the war.<sup>20</sup> Soldiers stationed at Camp Blanding, Florida, “tore up”

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<sup>17</sup> Christopher S. Parker, *Fighting for Democracy: Black Veterans and the Struggle against White Supremacy in the Postwar South* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 42–43; Phillips, *War!*, 66–68, 102–103. For one firsthand example, see A Soldier, “Here’s what Fort Jackson Soldier writes AFRO Today,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, 28 March 1942, 5.

<sup>18</sup> Gabriel DeAngelis, “*Nobody Knows . . .*” (New York: Committee Against Jim Crow in Military Service and Training, 1949), 7, held in Folder 55, Accession 1002, Seattle Civic Unity Committee Papers, Special Collections, University of Washington Library; “Rankin OKs Segregated Blood Policy,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, 6 June 1942, 21. Mrs. Gabriel Jones and Mrs. Ellise Davis refused to give blood in a segregated center in St. Louis, “Refuse to Give Blood after Red Cross Jim Crow,” *Chicago Defender*, 30 Sept. 1944, 11.

<sup>19</sup> Ernest E. Johnson, “Jim-Crow of Negro Nurses by Army Protested,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 27 Dec. 1941, 8; “NAACP Continues Attack Against Red Cross Jim Crow,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, 2 Jan 1943, 11.

<sup>20</sup> George H. Roeder, *The Censored War: American Visual Experience during World War II* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 8, 56.

buses when they were told to ride in the back, and forced the Army to commission new buses for their use.<sup>21</sup> Soldiers at Fort Jackson, South Carolina staged a rowdy boycott of a segregated USO show.<sup>22</sup> Army Chaplain R. H. Goss brought “thunder and lightning” to the officers’ mess hall in Fort Sill, Oklahoma when he loudly refused to eat in the corner of the hall by submitting to “damnable, ignorant discrimination.”<sup>23</sup> As an airman from Drew Field in Florida wrote to the *Chicago Defender*, “I’m not afraid of dying but I just can’t see myself dying for these no-good Southern crackers. Do you blame me?”<sup>24</sup>

Military bases in the North and West were also “veritable powder kegs” of racial unrest and violence, from Alaska to New Jersey.<sup>25</sup> When the Army sent an all-black unit to “aid farmers” in Arizona’s cotton-fields, the explosion in the black press over this “return to slavery status” forced Secretary of War Henry Stimson to rescind the order.<sup>26</sup> At Fort Lawton in Seattle, Washington, black soldiers protested the policed restriction of their movements while Italian POWs were allowed to move around freely. Provoked by military police, black soldiers purportedly rioted on August 14, 1944, and twenty-three black soldiers were charged in a mass court-martial for the alleged killing of one POW.<sup>27</sup>

Military segregation required the management, segregation, and discipline of all soldiers. Chinese American, Puerto Rican, and Japanese American soldiers were confined to segregated battalions, and while the combat of the “loyal” 442<sup>nd</sup> RCT of Nisei soldiers were much lauded, they became the model exception rather than the rule. Segregation

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<sup>21</sup> B. T. Gillespie, “Scrapbook,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, 3 Feb. 1945, 3.

<sup>22</sup> “Discrimination Hits USO Stage Show,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, 11 April 1942, 15.

<sup>23</sup> “Chaplain Refused to Be Segregated,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 13 Feb. 1943, 24.

<sup>24</sup> A Soldier, “Protests Segregation at Florida Field,” *Chicago Defender*, 22 Jan. 1944, 12.

<sup>25</sup> Michael Carter, “New Jersey’s Fort Dix is a Veritable ‘Powder Keg,’” *Baltimore Afro-American*, 22 May 1943, 14; “Soldiers Report Abuse in Alaska; Probe Sought,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, 23 Oct. 1943, 20.

<sup>26</sup> Horace R. Cayton, “Cotton Pickers,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 6 March 1943, 13.

<sup>27</sup> Heather MacIntosh, Priscilla Long, David Wilma, “Riot Involving African American Soldiers Occurs at Fort Lawton and an Italian POW is Lynched on August 14, 1944,” *Historylink*, 6 July 2005, [http://www.historylink.org/index.cfm?DisplayPage=output.cfm&File\\_Id=7378](http://www.historylink.org/index.cfm?DisplayPage=output.cfm&File_Id=7378).

also involved the disciplining of white soldiers who protested military racism: when Sergeant Alton Levy, a white Jewish man, expressed outrage at the Jim Crow treatment he saw at his Army base in Lincoln, Nebraska, he was court-martialed, fined, reduced in rank, and sentenced to four months' confinement in the guardhouse.<sup>28</sup>

The segregated military became the central focus of African American protest at mid-century. The “double V” campaign for victory against fascism abroad and racism at home highlighted a longstanding debate within the black freedom movement as struggles for the right to fight as a way of claiming equal citizenship coincided with others skeptical about promoting national military service as a route to racial justice.<sup>29</sup> No one personified the militant strategy more than A. Phillip Randolph, who went beyond appeals for military desegregation to the threat of mass protest, through two separate grassroots mobilizations for a “March on Washington” demanding an end to segregation and racism in military culture, first in 1940–1941 and again in 1945. Reorganized as the Committee Against Jimcrow in Military Service and Training, Randolph formed ad hoc alliances with military veterans, civil rights organizations, labor unions, and radicals united around a program of civil disobedience.<sup>30</sup> Frustrated with a legislative strategy that appealed to national morals, *Pittsburgh Courier* columnist George Schuyler argued in 1941 “It is utterly asinine for Negroes to be flattered by the privilege of defending a democracy which is everywhere denied them.”<sup>31</sup> The Committee Against Jimcrow advanced Schuyler’s critique and argued for continued direct action: a 1949 pamphlet on

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<sup>28</sup> “Jim Crow in Army Hits Chinese, Too,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, 1 April 1944, 7; Gilberto N. Villahermosa, *Honor and Fidelity: The 65<sup>th</sup> Infantry in Korea, 1950–1953* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Military History, US Army, 2009), 5–10; Takashi Fujitani, *Race for Empire: Koreans as Japanese and Japanese as Americans during World War II* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), ch. 5; “White Sergeant Courtmartialed for Friendliness to Race Troops,” *Chicago Defender*, 11 Sept. 1943, 5.

<sup>29</sup> Phillips, *War!*, 4.

<sup>30</sup> Phillips, *War!*, 102–111.

<sup>31</sup> George S. Schuyler, “Views and Reviews,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 4 Jan. 1941, 6.

racism in the military included a cartoon of a black man being lynched in a sea of “sympathy.”<sup>32</sup>

Alongside Randolph’s militant stance, however, was a representation of the African American soldier as middle-class, “respectable,” and a “credit to the race,” a source of national pride and community dignity. At the same time that the African American press ran stories of outrage at military racism, journalists also reported with pride on black troops serving as Honor Guards, a compliment to “the loyalty characteristic of Negro soldiers and civilians.”<sup>33</sup> Historians and writers sought to portray African American military service as a consistent and continual force “interwoven into the pageant of American life,” while loyalty pledges for black workers in wartime industries were distributed to prove the “dignity” and “efficiency” of black workers during the war.<sup>34</sup> A discourse that hewed too closely to American nationalism fell into a willful blindness to American racism. In *The Negro Soldier*, one of the War Department documentary films produced by Frank Capra in his *Why We Fight* series, the middle-class, churchgoing black soldier is portrayed as the latest in a long line of African American freedom fighters who built and defended America—yet neither slavery nor then-existing military segregation is mentioned, even as black recruits move from integrated induction centers to training in segregated units.<sup>35</sup>

The extent to which these claims to national loyalty were successful is dubious—black workers in shipbuilding and railroad industries, among others, were increasingly

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<sup>32</sup> DeAngelis, *Nobody Knows*, 11.

<sup>33</sup> Emmett J. Scott, “Negro Troops Serving as Guards of Honor,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 3 Jan 1942, 13.

<sup>34</sup> Mary Robertson Hadley, “Cites Negro Soldiers’ Valor in American Wars,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 2 Jan. 1943, 15; National Council of Negro Women, “Loyalty, Cooperation and Efficiency—Negro War Workers’ Pledge to American Industry for Production,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 25 Sept. 1943, 5.

<sup>35</sup> *The Negro Soldier*, directed by Stuart Heisler, (Frank Capra and U.S. War Department, 1944).

militant about racism within their industries—but the language of national inclusion and personal dignity was pervasive.<sup>36</sup> Paralleling and overlapping with more militant stances, the African American soldier was portrayed as both radical and traditional, with demands in excess of the nation’s racial structures while also claiming a rightful place inside them.

### ***The liberal politics of racial disavowal***

*The Negro Soldier* perfectly described what one scholar has called the emergence of “polite racism” in U.S. policy and discourse, in which the wartime needs for manpower forced the military to seek out previously “undesirable” bodies—those of the “potentially subversive” Japanese Americans and African Americans who had been previously found “unfit” for combat. Beginning with the start of military desegregation policies in World War II and continuing through the Korean War, nonwhite soldiers were officially and discursively welcomed into the U.S. nation state through the military.<sup>37</sup> Liberal politics of racial inclusion were formed through disavowal, both addressing and eliding the history and continuing structures of racialization that made such policies necessary. As past racial violence was forgotten in the service of inclusion, the nation state was proposed by liberals as a neutral space in which racial harmony might flourish.

The emergence of “polite racism” arose from a convergence of military need, liberal race politics, and the growing belief that large-scale social engineering could solve social problems. Elite formations of racial integration policy at mid-century were not a continual progression toward equality or a moral imperative, but were driven by the

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<sup>36</sup> For a brief review of black worker militancy during World War II, see William H. Harris, *The Harder We Run: Black Workers since the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 113–122.

<sup>37</sup> “Polite racism” is the form of governmentality theorized by Takashi Fujitani in his study of Japanese Americans in the U.S. and Korean soldiers in Japan during World War II: Fujitani, *Race for Empire*.

violent and racist institution of the military, “researched” and “proven” in the Korean theater of war. The form of racial integration worked through these violent arenas was intensely limited, for it focused on only black/white relations, understood nationalism and masculinity as centrally cohering forces, and proposed that black people assimilate to a white national ideal.

From the 1920s to the 1940s, American intellectual theories of race and sexuality underwent a transformation from theories of biological determinism to a belief in social constructionism and cultural relativism. Introducing these new ideas were social scientists like Margaret Mead, Robert Park and his students at the University of Chicago, Swedish scientist Gunnar Myrdal, and the European émigrés of the Frankfurt School who argued for the primacy of culture and environment in shaping individual attitudes to race and sexuality.<sup>38</sup> This was a profound intellectual turn away from reading race and homosexuality as inherently biological conditions, and these emergent anthropological and sociological theories shaped the politics of American liberalism in the New Deal and post-World War II eras, opening up new avenues for sociological study.

The vast social mobilization for American entry into World War II, the increasingly vocal calls for civil rights and an end to segregation, and the acceptance of social science as a primary framework for analyzing American society linked questions of racial integration, large-scale social engineering, and American liberalism together in the 1940s. Swedish scientist Gunnar Myrdal’s landmark 1944 study *An American Dilemma* crystallized the thinking of what one historian calls a “liberal orthodoxy” of intellectual

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<sup>38</sup> JoAnn Meyerowitz in particular has argued for the connections between theories of sexuality and race in social constructionist thought: Meyerowitz, “‘How Common Culture Shapes the Separate Lives’: Sexuality, Race, and Mid-Twentieth-Century Social Constructionist Thought,” *Journal of American History* 96, no. 4 (March 2010): 1057–1084.

and government elites, which modeled itself on Myrdal's belief in social science as the best tool to analyze racial problems and provide solutions in the form of large-scale political programs. Drawing on social constructionist thought, the liberal orthodoxy was drawn to Myrdal's argument that the "culture" of segregation harmed white people as much as it did black people, preventing either group from being healthy, whole, American citizens and living up to the democratic promise of the "American Creed." If, as new social constructionist theories suggested, the perceived "inferiority" of the black character and black culture was due not to an innate inferiority but to problems of a segregated environment, these could be fixed through controlled integration and the education of both whites and blacks about the necessity of integration to a healthy democracy.<sup>39</sup>

The goal of these racially liberal social scientists and government policy officials was one of assimilation and individual transformation. White America was implicitly privileged as the model toward which blacks should aspire, and "the race problem" was one of morality and psychology, not structural inequality. Although they argued for large-scale institutional desegregation and education programs, these were intended to teach individuals to accept one another and live up to, in Myrdal's words, the "American creed."<sup>40</sup>

Though noted for its extreme racial and social conservatism, the American military embraced the social science of the 1940s, for its daily functioning demanded that it engineer soldiers as efficiently as possible from civilian material, and that it inculcate

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<sup>39</sup> Walter A. Jackson, *Gunnar Myrdal and America's Conscience: Social Engineering and Racial Liberalism, 1938–1987* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990).

<sup>40</sup> Meyerowitz calls this a "liberal biopolitics," in "How Common Culture Shapes the Separate Lives," 1059.

in them a sense of nationalism.<sup>41</sup> Modern warfare involved the vast bureaucratic management of thousands and sometimes millions of people's labor across military, civilian, transportation, and industrial sectors. The military language for social management relied on these technological metaphors of "efficiency," "manpower," and "capacity" that viewed soldiers as semi-interchangeable masculine units taught to obey a strict chain of command. The vast problem of social management during World War II made the Armed Forces intent on unlocking the secret to greater combat effectiveness and unit morale through scientific research, and the institution began to invest in sociological, psychological, and psychiatric studies.<sup>42</sup> In accepting the military's aim of adapting individual soldiers to an already-existing collective unit, military-based sociology pioneered a marked intellectual shift within the discipline. The emergence of the "individual-collectivity" model theorized the ways in which individuals related to a larger body and sought to provide data that could be used for promoting greater national unity during wartime.<sup>43</sup> As military concerns and disciplinary tendencies directed their work, social scientists premised their ideas on a belief in the perfectability of American democracy, exemplified by Myrdal's *An American Dilemma*.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> See Mershon and Schlossman, *Foxholes and Color Lines*, for a discussion of the conservatism of all branches of the Armed Forces. In their telling, the conservatism of military officials was overcome by military need for a better way to utilize the troops at their disposal. As I argue, the victory of the military's shift from segregation to integration borrowed from social science terminology.

<sup>42</sup> Kurt Lang, ed., *Military Institutions and the Sociology of War: A Review of the Literature with Annotated Bibliography* (California: Sage Publications, 1972), 20. The most famous of these studies, framed around the perfectability of human social engineering, is Samuel A. Stouffer et al., *The American Soldier*, vols. 1–4 (New York: Wiley and Sons, 1949).

<sup>43</sup> As Andrew Abbot and James T. Sparrow write, "the IC model was a logical necessity of the very concept of national morale", yet drew on longstanding ideas of "adjustment" that had guided social science since the 1920s. Andrew Abbott and James T. Sparrow, "Hot War, Cold War: The Structure of Sociological Action, 1940–1955," in *Sociology in America: A History*, ed. Craig Calhoun (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 301–308.

<sup>44</sup> Abbot and Sparrow, "Hot War, Cold War," 307. David Paul Haney argues convincingly that sociology's new claims to scientific empiricism aided this sense of American democracy as a normative concept for postwar social science. All that remained was to engineer American institutions and individuals correctly in

In just this way, *The Negro Soldier* documentary sought to engineer harmony and morale among troops, and Capra asked the Army's Information and Education Division to draw up a list of "dos and don'ts" in portraying African Americans in film. In seeking to generate a sense of racial harmony, the film's narration relied on the disavowal of existing discrimination and of historical racial violence. This was underscored by its production: African American writer Carlton Moss wrote much of the script in the cafeteria of the Library of Congress, one of the only unsegregated eating places in Washington, D.C.<sup>45</sup>

### *A laboratory for racial integration*

Racial liberalism and social science existed in a mutually constitutive relationship with overt racial violence and imperial forms of apartheid: the military firmly relied on racial segregation and a segregated fighting force to structure its overseas military occupations in West Germany and Japan. In West Germany, though many black soldiers found a more welcome reception in defeated Nazi Germany than they had expected, postwar Germans in the American-occupied zone learned to accept racial organization and racist ideology as consistent with—not antithetical to—democratic forms and values.<sup>46</sup> In occupied Japan, segregation—between white and black soldiers, and between Japanese and Americans—was made explicit, as officers' clubs, bars, and brothels were kept separate, with some dedicated to serving only black soldiers. The head of the Tokyo

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order to realize it. David Paul Haney, *The Americanization of Social Science: Intellectuals and Public Responsibility in the Postwar United States* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008), 66–67.

<sup>45</sup> Thomas Cripps and David Culbert, "The Negro Soldier (1944): Film Propaganda in Black and White," *American Quarterly* 31, no. 5 (1979), 620–623.

<sup>46</sup> Heide Fehrenbach, *Race after Hitler: Black Occupation Children in Postwar Germany and America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), ch. 1 and esp. 45.

Bureau of Epidemic Protection remembered being summoned to MacArthur's (all-white) SCAP headquarters in mid-September 1945, where officers laid out an aerial photograph of Tokyo for him and asked which districts should cater their prostitution to black soldiers versus whites.<sup>47</sup> Stationed in Gifu, Japan, the 24<sup>th</sup> Infantry found actual and customary segregation in housing, schools, facilities, and social events, while their performances in the annual Fourth of July parade in Tokyo often received calls of "blackbirds" "niggers" and "boys" from the sidelines that ended in fights and brawls.<sup>48</sup>

The developing policies and discourse of racial liberalism were refashioned and extended out of the new landscape of global politics after World War II as the emergence of the United Nations, the memory of fascism, and global anticolonial struggle shaped a new world order. As the dominant power, the United States sought to form a multiracial alliance of anticommunist countries in both European colonial nations and the emergent independent nations of Asia and Africa, based around a moderate vision of racial progress. The Truman Doctrine to project U.S. democracy around the world, first expressed by the President in 1947 as an address to Congress, made the administration crucially aware of the negative press the United States was receiving, as Soviet papers as well as international news in Latin America, Africa, Southeast Asia, and Slavic Europe reported on lynchings, segregation, and the second-class treatment of nonwhite diplomats visiting the country. With pro-segregationist Southern Democrats firmly in control of Congress, Truman relied on federal power to institute civil rights reforms to win world opinion, desegregating the armed forces and laying the judicial basis for the landmark

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<sup>47</sup> Phillips, *War!*, 117; Sarah Kovner, *Occupying Power: Sex Workers and Servicemen in Postwar Japan* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 26–27.

<sup>48</sup> Bowers, Hammond, and MacGarrigle, *Black Soldier, White Army*, 48–50.

*Brown vs. Board of Education* case.<sup>49</sup>

As historian Mary Dudziak has argued in her thorough study of what she calls “Cold War civil rights,” the need to project a democratic and tolerant image abroad produced a politics in which domestic crises became international ones, where “events that were local were at the same time international.”<sup>50</sup> While Dudziak emphasizes the narrow spaces for civil rights legislation that were opened by cold war concerns, I want to instead emphasize the profoundly limiting and conservative definitions of “racial progress” that this liberal version of race politics proposed, particularly when military desegregation is considered as a cornerstone of civil rights victories. Rather than open up new routes of protest, cold war civil rights relied on erasure as a narrative strategy, in which social struggles over segregation—the protests of black soldiers like Curtis Morrow—were seen as products of American democracy, not as a response to the racial limits that American democracy produced. In this way, cold war civil rights served to reinforce the disavowal of American racial violence in the United States and theaters of occupation and war abroad.

President Truman’s Executive Order to desegregate the military came in 1948, but the Korean War in 1950 provided a large-scale mobilization in which desegregation could be enforced and its effects studied by social scientists interested in pursuing integration in both civilian and military spheres during peacetime and combat. If Truman’s 1948 Executive Order was primarily the product of electoral concerns, an effort to project a democratic image of America, and a response to civil rights protest, the order also reflected Truman’s own racial liberalism, and the belief of his administration

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<sup>49</sup> Mary Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), ch. 3.

<sup>50</sup> Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*, 17.

that segregation harmed the national unity and health of the American state.<sup>51</sup> His order was a response to the intransigence of the conservative military establishment, who, despite the experience of limited integration during World War II, were set against full integration of the service, believing that it would impact the “combat readiness” and morale of white troops. The order was a well-positioned administrative move that gave the impression of a progressive civil rights agenda without real substance: it bent the military establishment more closely to the will of the executive branch and seemed to reward civil rights activists, yet left desegregation’s implementation to the whims of the individual branches of the Armed Forces.<sup>52</sup>

The military itself was largely hostile to the question of integration in 1950, and the Army produced reports in 1950 and 1951 advocating the necessity of military segregation despite Truman’s order.<sup>53</sup> The impetus for desegregation among military officials was a de facto outcome of the Korean War. The decision to send American troops to Korea on June 25, 1950, and the heavy American losses in the first months of combat left the military by late 1950 with an acute shortage of labor power. As a stopgap measure, nonwhite soldiers were sent to fill out previously all-white units, particularly in the Army, which had been one of the most resolute pro-segregation branches of the service. By May 1951, 61% of all line infantry companies in Korea had become racially mixed, and 9.4% of all black troops in the Pacific theater were serving as “replacements” in what had been all-white companies. Another 9.3% of black soldiers were serving in previously all-black companies to which white soldiers—in what was telling referred to as “reverse

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<sup>51</sup> For a prime example of the Truman administration’s racial liberalism, see the report of his Presidential Committee on Civil Rights, submitted in 1947: *To Secure These Rights: The Report of the President’s Committee on Civil Rights* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1947).

<sup>52</sup> Phillips, *War!*, 114–115; Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*, 83–88.

<sup>53</sup> Mershon and Schlossman, *Foxholes and Color Lines*, ch. 7 and 230–231.

integration”—had been sent as replacements.<sup>54</sup>

The new integrated situation of the Eighth Army in the Pacific was the perfect place for the Army to review its racial policies and the attitudes of soldiers, and to test new methods of efficiency. In grudging accord with the President’s Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Services, known by the name of its chairman Charles Fahy, the Army had issued directives in January and March of 1950 that assigned all skilled soldiers to jobs regardless of race and that abolished the post-1945 10% admissions quota for black personnel. Yet these were not widely implemented and had only just begun when wartime needs for manpower forced a rapid change.<sup>55</sup> As the official report stated, “Korea represented a laboratory for testing various factors pertaining to the effective use of Negro manpower in combat and the relative merits and practices of integration and segregation.”<sup>56</sup>

Though the Army was overwhelmingly focused on black soldiers, desegregation policy forced contradictory military determinations of who was “white” and who was not, and underwrote the artificiality of racial designations as well as the military’s limited understanding of “race” as a black/white question. Stationed in Hawai‘i, the 5<sup>th</sup> RCT was made up of local recruits and retained a strong Hawaiian sensibility in its unit culture and in its ethnic makeup, as soldiers identified as Native Hawaiian, Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino. As the Korean War began, the 5<sup>th</sup> RCT was drawn up to strength by recruiting local reservists and National Guard members, many of whom had served in the Japanese

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<sup>54</sup> Mershon and Schlossman, *Foxholes and Color Lines*, 226.

<sup>55</sup> Mershon and Schlossman, *Foxholes and Color Lines*, 213. For the War Department’s post-1945 policy, which proposed the 1:10 ration of “Negro” to white troops, see: *Utilization of Negro Manpower in the Postwar Army Policy*, War Department Circular 124, 27 April 1946.

<sup>56</sup> H. S. Milton, ed., *The Utilization of Negro Manpower in the Army* (Chevy Chase, MD: Johns Hopkins University, Operations Research Office, 1954), iix. Note that the report was declassified to “confidential” status in 1962, and only later made widely available.

American 442<sup>nd</sup> RCT during World War II. The liminal racial position of Asian Americans and Native Hawaiians allowed the Army to code the unit as “white.” Because of the “ethnic” (but presumably not “racial”) diversity of the unit, the 5<sup>th</sup> was one of the first “white” units to be integrated with black soldiers during the Korean War.<sup>57</sup>

Complicated by the racialization of its colonial history, the Army’s 65<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment was historically an all-Puerto Rican regiment, designated through its location as a colonial possession but also by the racialization and degrees of citizenship extended to Puerto Ricans by the United States. Christened *los Borinqueneers* by its soldiers from the native Taino word for their island home, the 65<sup>th</sup> was commanded by white officers who had little confidence in the abilities of nonwhite soldiers, despite the regiment’s service during World War II, where they had relieved the Nisei 442<sup>nd</sup>. Indeed, the Borinqueneers had to “prove” their abilities to the satisfaction of U.S. Army officials through several months of major military exercises in early 1950 on the small Puerto Rican island of Vieques, known as Operation PORTREX. The positive review of the 65<sup>th</sup> led to the deployment of Puerto Rican soldiers in Korea, where nearly 61,000 Puerto Ricans fought overall, the majority within the Borinqueneers.

Puerto Ricans, unlike Asian American and Native Hawaiians from the 5<sup>th</sup>, were not considered to be quite “white,” inasmuch as white officers from the United States were always used as commanding officers in their units. English-language skills, rather than an explicit racial designation, were used to separate Puerto Rican soldiers from the rest of the U.S. military: as integration policy proceeded in early January 1951, it was those Borinqueneers who spoke English who were considered “white” and could be transferred

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<sup>57</sup> Michael Slater, *Hills of Sacrifice: The 5<sup>th</sup> RCT in Korea* (Paducah, Kentucky: Turner Publishing Co., 2000), 225–226.

as replacements into all-white battalions. Separated by gradations of citizenship—Puerto Ricans were considered “U.S. nationals” but not citizens—Puerto Rican soldiers had an unstable claim on whiteness in the military. Those Borinqueneers whose main language was Spanish were left trying to communicate with white commanding officers from the United States who spoke only English.<sup>58</sup>

### ***Becoming Joe Doakes***

Caught between old segregationist traditions and a new reality, the Army turned to social science. On March 29, 1951, the Army’s Research and Development staff commissioned an independent social science review of its segregation policies and practices, known by the code name “Clear.”<sup>59</sup> The survey was designed to anticipate problems military officials foresaw based on longstanding military stereotypes about black soldiers’ purportedly “lazy” performance and the fear that black integration into white units might erode the performance of white troops. As Secretary of the Army

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<sup>58</sup> Villahermosa, *Honor and Fidelity*, 21; Lt. Col. Gilberto Villahermosa, “From Glory to Disaster and Back,” *Army* (Sept. 2001): 81–84; Edwin L. Silbert, “Operation PORTREX,” *Studies in Intelligence* 4, no. 2 (Spring 1960): A1–A9. The “unstable whiteness” was similar to that of ethnic Mexicans in the United States, who had claim to legal whiteness through treaties annexing Mexico, and race-making hinged on gradations of citizenship: see Mae Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 54–55, 97–98.

<sup>59</sup> The survey was commissioned from the Operations Research Office (ORO) at Johns Hopkins, a research unit that received most of its funding from the Army and served to link the Army’s research staff to the world of academic social science. In turn, ORO contracted with two private social science consulting firms, International Public Opinion Research (IPOR) and the American Institute of Research (AIR) to begin the actual studies. While AIR conducted targeted and smaller-scale surveys around particular questions of combat performance or racial conflict, IPOR conducted larger-scale studies that sought to determine the attitudes of black and white soldiers on integration in a number of different settings. Because of their more extensive work, I discuss the main IPOR studies in this work, not the more limited AIR studies: Leo Bogart, ed., *Social Research and the Desegregation of the US Army: Two Original 1951 Field Reports*, by Leo Bogart, John Morsell, Robert Bower, Ira Cisin, Leila Sussmann, and Elmo C. Wilson (Chicago: Markham Publishing Company, 1969), 20–1. ORO was also contracted during the war by the Army to do studies on the use of guerrilla forces in Asia and Europe, as well as a study of civil affairs and military government in occupied areas: ORO, “Working Outline of Project PARABEL,” 30 Nov. 1951, folder 7, box 30, Staff Member and Office Files (SMOF): Psychological Strategy Board (PSB), Harry S. Truman Papers (HSTP), Truman Library.

Kenneth Royall argued succinctly before the Fahy Committee in 1949, black soldiers could not perform at the same level as whites, and segregation allowed them the chance to serve in jobs to which they were “exceptionally and peculiarly qualified.” Royall feared that integration would both undermine white soldiers’ capacities to serve to the best of their abilities and—perhaps worse—undermine the “effective comradeship in battle” and “warm and close personal relationship within a unit” that soldiering required.<sup>60</sup>

The initial Project Clear study sent scientists from the International Public Opinion Research firm (IPOR) on a whirlwind field research trip to Army bases in Korea and Japan between May 7 and June 15, 1951. Working seven-day weeks, typing up notes and results at night and on trans-Pacific flights, and relying on Army jeeps and mimeo equipment, the IPOR team succeeded in interviewing 450 enlisted men and 150 officers, in administering questionnaires to over 3,000 enlisted men. When Project Clear was extended to the continental United States in July and August 1951, scientists used the same questionnaire and interview format to survey over 9,000 officers and enlisted men at ten different military installations, including National Guard units (many of whom relied on state segregation laws to maintain race segregation) and training units, and also conducted interviews with civilians in towns near military bases.<sup>61</sup>

The scientists made a point to prepare adequate data samples from all-black, all-white, and integrated units and tabulated responses accordingly: the 20% of black

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<sup>60</sup> Mershon and Schlossman, *Foxholes and Color Lines*, 206–207.

<sup>61</sup> Bogart, *Social Research and the Desegregation of the U.S. Army*, 45–48, 191–192; Mershon and Schlossman, *Foxholes and Color Lines*, 247; Outgoing message from Commander in Chief Far East Command (CINCFE) to Commanding General (CG) Eighth U.S. Army in Korea (EUSAK), 26 April 1951, Folder 291.2 Race, Box 747, Security-Classified General Correspondence (SGC) 1951, Adjutant General Section (AG), Far East Command (FEC), General Headquarters Far East Command, SCAP, and United Nations Command, Record Group (RG) 554, National Archives at College Park, MD (NACP).

soldiers in integrated units were compared to the 80% serving in segregated ones, while white soldiers' responses were divided into "Northern whites" and "Southern whites" depending on their previous exposure to Jim Crow segregation in the United States.<sup>62</sup> The questionnaire sought to delimit soldiers with as much detail as possible to establish a series of sample controls in determining response patterns, asking their age, reason for joining the military, education level, previous combat experience, their previous experience with segregation, and their political opinions on the war.<sup>63</sup> Interviews were conducted by white scientists for white and mixed groups of soldiers and by black scientists for black soldiers, and followed an informal script that sought both factual accounts and soldiers' subjective opinions.

The scientists relied on the Guttman scaling technique, developed by sociologist Louis Guttman, who was retained as a consultant on the questionnaire design for Project Clear. Guttman's technique employed a series of related questions asked in a particular order, from those that presumed the most cohesive unity to those that progressively "weed out" dissenters. Thus a low-level response on the Guttman scale presumed the highest level of cohesiveness around a broad topic, while subsequent questions and higher-level responses on the scale revealed the rate at which cohesiveness of opinion broke down.<sup>64</sup> The design of the scientific questionnaires and their complicated cross-tabulations of questionnaire responses sought to determine a degree of unity around particular ideas and define the issues that led to a breakdown of collective solidarity. The survey, then, was predisposed to see unity and agreement as the normative ideal, reflecting both military concerns with unit cohesion and racial liberalism and social

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<sup>62</sup> Bogart, *Social Research and the Desegregation of the U.S. Army*, 51.

<sup>63</sup> Bogart, *Social Research and the Desegregation of the U.S. Army*, Appendices A-I, B-I.

<sup>64</sup> Bogart, *Social Research and the Desegregation of the U.S. Army*, 32.

science's belief in racial assimilation. All questions, then, pointed toward a desire to determine what the best conditions for integrated fighting capability could be, not at registering levels of racism experienced by black soldiers in the Army. According to these overlapping logics, the racial problem was a black/white one, and fostering integration meant creating the proper conditions for blacks soldiers—prone to crippled psyches, rage, or aberrant sexual behavior in social science literature—to assimilate into healthy white companies. Integration-as-assimilation, Project Clear's results suggested, could be attained by fostering a type of healthy, patriotic masculine camaraderie to produce a more effective American fighting force.<sup>65</sup>

The way social scientists designed their survey defined integration as a problem of black/white relations only. The initial part of the administered questionnaire, as well as the interviews, asked soldiers to mark their race, a choice of “colored,” “white,” or “oriental” in the Pacific theater survey; and “colored,” “white,” or “other” in the U.S. mainland survey.<sup>66</sup> Yet the “others” and the “orientals” were quickly written out of view, as the questionnaire asked white soldiers to answer one set of questions and “colored” soldiers another. One might imagine the confusion of a Native American, Asian American, or Puerto Rican soldier faced with no place to continue writing, and the racial choice presented to them as their presence became untraceable and unquantifiable. Indeed, the response to these three choices was never published as part of either edition of the survey's findings. The survey's questionnaire also largely ignored the presence of

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<sup>65</sup> I rely here on the 1969 edition of the two IPOR Project Clear surveys, edited by lead IPOR scientist Leo Bogart, which preserve the original material presented by IPOR to ORO.

<sup>66</sup> Bogart, *Social Research and the Desegregation of the U.S. Army*, 324, 366.

thousands of Republic of Korea soldiers serving within integrated American units.<sup>67</sup>

The invisibility of soldiers outside of the black/white racial dichotomy soon became, in the framework of the survey questionnaire, one that presumed the normal soldier as “white.” The last section of each questionnaire presented soldiers with a series of hypothetical situations featuring protagonist “Joe Doakes, a white soldier.” The questions asked respondents to describe what Joe does; what he *should* do; and, in the U.S. survey, what “you yourself” would do in Joe’s place. As Joe’s unit experiences integration, as he watches black soldiers be mistreated, gets in interracial fights, or witnesses black soldiers’ romantic involvements, survey respondents were asked to imagine themselves acting as a normal white soldier and then to determine what white soldiers’ behavior ought to be. The social scientists saw their work in Freudian terms, surveying the “id, ego, and superego.” But the questions’ format positioned soldiers racially as white even before they answered the question.

Nonwhite soldiers in the Korean survey were asked to observe Joe only from a white soldier’s perspective—that of Joe Doakes. The U.S. survey asked what each respondent might do in Joe’s place, allowing nonwhite soldiers to envision themselves as the normal Joe Doakes and perhaps even understand him as nonwhite; but even in this case, the question remained structured around determining white soldiers’ experiences. Only one question, included in the Korea survey, asked respondents what an explicitly “colored” soldier might do when he was asked to leave a GI club. And though the Joe

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<sup>67</sup> See chapter two for more on the KATUSA program, which had ROK soldiers serve in U.S. units. The presence of Puerto Rican and Korean soldiers is only referred to once in printed interview comments, by a white Chief of Staff serving in an integrated infantry unit in Korea. Five questions in Project Clear’s main troop survey for the Korean study asked soldiers how they felt about the performance of British, South Korean, and Turkish forces, and about the presence of the United Nations, though these answers are not compared to, for example, white soldiers’ feelings about serving with blacks over Turks or South Koreans in either IPOR scientists’ findings or the official ORO report. Bogart, *Social Research and the Desegregation of the U.S. Army*, 32, 62 and Appendices A-I, B-I.

Doakes section of the questionnaire was listed for “all soldiers,” nonwhite men’s responses to the Doakes questions were never used in the final analysis and only appeared in raw tabulations in the classified version of the reports.<sup>68</sup>

If the Doakes questions coded soldiering as normatively white and integration a problem of black/white relations only, they also betrayed an anxiety over the disruptive power of white racism. Indeed, much of the unease over racial integration in the military seemed to center on the possible reactions of white soldiers. In the Project Clear surveys, the majority of statistical graphs presented in the report analyzed responses of white, not black soldiers, and tabulated them according to the white soldiers’ origins in the Jim Crow South or legally integrated North. The Joe Doakes questions were explicitly set up to determine when white racism would produce, in their words, an “unfavorable” incident of racial hostility: for every hypothetical situation, the possible options for Joe’s actions were rated by scientists on a continuum from “favorable” to “withdrawal” and “hostile” behavior.<sup>69</sup>

If one danger to harmonious integration was white racism, the second, and perhaps most troubling, was interracial sex competition. As Project Clear scientists continually noted, Army officials and black and white GIs believed that most racial tensions occurred in situations that involved leisure time and women. These situations were dangerous to harmonious integration because they could provoke, presumably, both white racial violence and black men’s oversexualized nature, both aberrant expressions of soldiers’

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<sup>68</sup> Nonwhite soldiers’ answers to some of the Doakes questions appear only in tabulated graphs, not analysis, and appear in Tables A137–A144 in the Operations Research Office government report, published in 1954 and declassified in 1962. Milton, *Utilization of Negro Manpower*, 297–304.

<sup>69</sup> In the Korean survey, more than 80% of white soldiers advocated “favorable” or “withdrawal” behavior on every question, and over two-thirds predicted non-hostile behavior. Where there was discrepancy between what white soldiers believed Joe should do and what he ought to do, it was from white soldiers who favored integration but were skeptical about the “typical” soldier’s reaction to it. Bogart, *Social Research and the Desegregation of the U.S. Army*, 141–146.

masculinity. Specific Joe Doakes questions were then constructed to examine these instances and propose policies that could prevent this dangerous behavior from endangering integration. Yet the questions themselves rested on a different and more manageable kind of masculinity that could unite soldiers across racial lines: in all of the questions, access to women's bodies was a presumed point of connection for all soldiers asked to envision themselves as Private First Class "Joe Doakes."

The Korean survey offered this hypothetical scenario: "Pfc Joe Doakes has been going with a pretty Korean girl who speaks some English. One day he comes to see her and finds her on the street in front of her house talking to a colored soldier." The survey then asks soldiers what Joe *does* do and what he *should* do, offering choices from saying hello and waiting patiently to telling her to stay away from "colored soldiers" or walking away and refusing to see her again.<sup>70</sup>

In a battery of questions about racial integration, command experience, and troop dynamics, this scenario reinforced the idea that access to Asian women was a normal and consistent part of the wartime experience.<sup>71</sup> This loaded question presumed a shared sense of heterosexual possessiveness over the "Korean girl," allowing all soldiers to consider the question from Joe Doakes's point of view, and seemingly placing black and white soldiers on an equal footing in the sexual and colonial subjection of East Asia. At the same time, though, by referencing the "colored" soldier as problematic, the question evoked white American's mythology of the black rapist and a climate of potential lynchings and vigilante violence.

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<sup>70</sup> For all citations to the Doakes questions and the tabulation of results by the sociologists, see Bogart, *Social Research and the Desegregation of the U.S. Army*, Appendix A-I.

<sup>71</sup> See this dissertation's chapter three, as well as: Katharine S. Moon, *Sex among Allies: Military Prostitution in U.S.-Korea Relations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

Of all of the Joe Doakes questions, this one provoked the highest prediction of and argument for hostile behavior among white infantrymen—47% predicted or advocated it—statistics that confirmed scientists’ beliefs about the causes of white men’s racial aggression. In proving their own hypothesis, though, the scientists were also locating heterosexual masculinity as a common bond between soldiers, a conceptual act made even clearer in the focus on integrated dancing in the United States survey.

Within the United States, base-sponsored dances supplied a steady stream of women for soldiers to dance with, and thus became sites of special concern for Project Clear scientists. It was not the constant stream of women that troubled scientists or soldiers they interviewed, but the women’s race and the kinds of “mixed” dancing that could follow, particularly on bases in the South.<sup>72</sup> Access to the appropriate number of black women for black soldiers to dance with was a chronic problem: one major described needing to transport “girls” from over 200 miles away in order to supply black women in required numbers.<sup>73</sup> The steady stream of “attractive and personable ladies of high character,” in the words of one divisional staff officer, provided the backdrop against which different kinds of black and white masculinity could be performed and explored.

The amount of effort Project Clear scientists put into carefully tabulating results regarding dances and situations of interracial and potentially sexual contact was also telling, for it showed how seriously they took concerns about interracial sexuality and how much they themselves believed it would be a fruitful space to study integration. With the dances in particular, social scientists developed a detailed terminology for

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<sup>72</sup> Bogart, *Social Research and the Desegregation of the U.S. Army*, 290–2.

<sup>73</sup> Bogart *Social Research and the Desegregation of the U.S. Army*, 291. Other instances of this problem are explored in the Korean survey on pp. 166-167.

“mixed,” “joint,” and “integrated” dancing to describe all possible racial permutations of couples on the dance floor and compare soldiers’ attitudes about each different form.<sup>74</sup> In the two Joe Doakes questions on dancing, Joe is attending a mixed-race dance, and witnesses a black soldier dancing first with a black woman and then with a white woman. White soldiers were more likely to want to cut in on the black soldier or, a small percentage, beat him up, when the black soldier was dancing with a white instead of black woman.<sup>75</sup> As with the “Korean girl” scenario, these Doakes questions assumed men’s shared possessiveness over female bodies, and Joe’s possible courses of action are only a continuum of different kinds of protective response.

The Doakes questions on interracial sexuality located women’s bodies as barriers to harmonious integration, bodies that could provoke white racist violence and black lust. And in conceiving of women’s presence as a threat to harmonious integration, the surveys also implied a common masculine gaze among soldiers—indeed, one that was necessary in order to comprehend the Joe Doakes questions and prescribe what Joe should do, what he did do, and what “you yourself” would have done.

Project Clear’s use of the Doakes questions illuminates the process by which the story of integration became separated from its genesis in war and the fact of ongoing military racism. The Doakes questions fixated on gendered and racialized figures—the pretty Korean girl, the oversexualized black soldier, the violently racist white soldier—as a way to envision harmonious integration between healthy black and white soldiers. Significantly, this vision of integration erased Korean women, angry black soldiers, and white racists. And in so doing, it also erased the very conditions—the Korean War,

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<sup>74</sup> Bogart, *Social Research and the Desegregation of the U.S. Army*, 284.

<sup>75</sup> Bogart, *Social Research and the Desegregation of the U.S. Army*, 289, 382.

American empire in East Asia—that allowed for its emergence.

***“How do our Negro troops measure up?”***

The practice of military desegregation during the Korean War was celebrated by the press as a legislative victory and, in middle-class African American magazines like *Ebony*, as a complete and instant success. However, the military still remained a vexed topic for the African American press, who joined celebrations of soldiers’ bravery in the war effort with coverage of continued racism in the military. For the first time, black correspondents were allowed to report from the frontlines so that readers could follow black soldiers’ troop movements in detail.<sup>76</sup> The black press ran stories of the “heroic tales of Negro fighters,” who fought “gallantly” in “all-colored units and mixed combat outfits” to “stem the hordes of Korean and Chinese Communists.”<sup>77</sup> These stories acted as a counterweight to the military’s own evaluations throughout the Korean War, which consistently relied on white officers’ reports about the “unreliability” of African American troops and their inability to properly use military equipment. Black troops, it was believed, had a tendency for “straggling,” for sleeping on duty, for getting “panicky” at night, and for fleeing to the rear.<sup>78</sup> As Curtis Morrow learned early on, soldiers in the field relied on one another’s company and protection, and sought solace, recognition, and respect from each other.

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<sup>76</sup> Phillips, *War!*, 131–133.

<sup>77</sup> For example, see: “Camera Catches Headline Events of 1950,” *Chicago Defender*, 6 Jan. 1951, 4; Bradford Laws, “‘Lost’ Unit of 24<sup>th</sup> Slashes Out of Trap,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, 15 July 1950, 1; and Phillips, *War!*, 119.

<sup>78</sup> Ducksworth, “What Hour of the Night,” ch. 6, esp. 184–186; Phillips, *War!*, 136. These were the findings of the Inspector General’s investigative report into the conduct of the all-black 24<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, a military explanation that passed into official Army history and was not corrected by mainstream historians until Clay Blair’s book in 1987: Clay Blair, *The Forgotten War: American in Korea 1950–1953* (New York: Times Books, 1987), 147–153.

As all nonwhite soldiers knew, federal military desegregation did almost nothing to redefine military culture, for black servicemen and women experienced segregation, racism, and violence during the Korean War in theaters of war and during service and training in the United States. Military bases themselves were, legally, desegregated, but the military made no special provisions for nonwhite soldiers traveling through segregated states to and from base duty. Black soldiers crossing into Jim Crow states found that they face violent retribution on buses, trains, and taxis when they demanded equal treatment and the respect their military uniform deserved.<sup>79</sup> In Wonju, South Korea, in late March 1951, a dispute between a Navy medical company and an Army ordnance company led to a cross burning and stone-throwing standoff between the men, bringing the symbols of domestic white supremacy to illuminate the wartime racial landscape.<sup>80</sup>

Because of the official policy on desegregation, African American soldiers felt empowered to write to their commanding officers protesting unfair treatment. In early 1949, Private First Class Willie Shaw wrote to the Secretary of Defense with charges racial inequity after his transfer out of Korea to a less-skilled unit in Japan. In July 1950, Warrant Officer Thomas Pettigrew, Jr., stationed in Okinawa, wrote to the U.S. Senate about his requests for transfer, and the Senator forwarded his complaints to the Army. Private Shaw, at least, was reassigned according to his wishes.<sup>81</sup> Black soldiers wrote constantly to civil rights organizations like the NAACP to complain, ask for publicity and

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<sup>79</sup> Phillips, *War!*, 86–99.

<sup>80</sup> Correspondence between 55<sup>th</sup> Ordnance Ammunition Co., EUSAK, to CO, 67<sup>th</sup> Ordnance Battalion, 29 March 1951, Folder 250.1, Box 740, SCGC, AG, Eighth Army, Records of U.S. Army Operational, Tactical, and Support Organizations (World War II and Thereafter) RG 338, NACP.

<sup>81</sup> Correspondence on Pvt. Willie Shaw, from Jan.–June 1949, Folder 291.12, Box 115, GC 1949, AG, FEC, RG 554, NACP; Letter from Senator Scott Lucas to Army AG, 3 July 1950, Folder 291.2, Box 115, GC 1949, AG, FEC, RG 554, NACP.

legal inquiries into specific cases, and for explanation of legal policies on integration.<sup>82</sup> They also tore down “whites only” signs on base clubs and movie theaters, staged on-base protests and sit-ins, and helped create positive images of black soldiers in the pages of the black press. Some strove to prove racist presuppositions wrong, by doing their job better than whites, while others wrote to their commanding officers protesting treatment they felt was illegal under the new desegregation policy.<sup>83</sup> As during World War II, Thurgood Marshall from the NAACP surveyed bases and published a study contesting the racially biased courts martial of African American troops. The cause of African American Lieutenant Leon Gilbert, who refused to lead his exhausted men into a suicide mission, became an international leftist cause célèbre as an example of racial bias in military discipline.<sup>84</sup>

The 24<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, the largest of the Army’s last segregated units, was stationed in occupied Japan prior to the Korean War, and moved quickly to Korea as soon as war was declared. Commanded by white officers steeped in the military’s institutional racism, the mistrust and divisions between officers and men simmered. Rumors circulated that the 24<sup>th</sup> would not be sent into combat because of the poor performance of black troops in earlier wars, while white officers whispered that a black chaplain had preached that it was “inappropriate” for black soldiers to fight “an enemy of color” in Korea. The 24<sup>th</sup> bore the brunt of the war’s early months of brutal combat—by August

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<sup>82</sup> Ducksworth, “What Hour of the Night,” ch. 4; Phillips, *War!*, 70.

<sup>83</sup> Lt. Col. Charles M. Bussey, *Firefight at Yechon: Courage and Racism in the Korean War* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991), 21–3; George Lipsitz, *A Life in the Struggle: Ivory Perry and the Culture of Opposition* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988), 51, 56.

<sup>84</sup> Thurgood Marshall, *Report on Korea: The Shameful Story of the Courts Martial of Negro GIs* (New York: NAACP, 1951); *Jim Crow “Justice” in Korea: The Case of Lieutenant Leon Gilbert* (New York: Trade Union Youth Committee for the Freedom of Lt. Gilbert, undated, likely 1950), held in New York University’s Tamiment Library (TL, NYU), Reference Center for Marxist Studies pamphlet collection, Box 60, Folder 2: Korea (2 of 2). Marshall’s report, though, fell on deaf ears at the Far East Command: Bowers, Hammond, MacGarrigle, *Black Soldier, White Army*, 186–187.

31, 1950, the unit had the highest percentage of combat losses in the Army, at 39.1%. Ivory Perry, who served in the 24th, remembered that “nigger go home” was scrawled on camp walls in Japan and Korea. Perry recalled near-constant condescension and abuse from white officers, and that black soldiers were ordered into more dangerous combat situations without adequate time for psychological and physical rest.<sup>85</sup> Unlike their white counterparts, who relied on South Korean civilians to carry ammunition, weapons, and equipment, black soldiers had to carry their own. When they were injured, black soldiers were often refused helicopter rides to combat hospital units, and instead had to be carried on stretchers. For their part, white officers reminded one another that if they were wounded in battle, black troops would not care to save them, either out of malice or cowardice.<sup>86</sup>

The 24<sup>th</sup> also bore the brunt of white scorn as their unit’s losses—due more to lack of equipment, wretched conditions, overwhelming enemy force, and mutual racial distrust between officers and soldiers—were taken as proof of the incompetence of black soldiers. An influential feature article on the 24<sup>th</sup> in *The Saturday Evening Post* on June 16, 1951 set the tenor for the representation of black soldiers in the white, mainstream press. Asking “How do our Negro troops measure up?,” author Harold H. Martin relied on interviews with white commanding officers to portray all the fears and dangers of the harmonious integration model. According to the article, men in the 24<sup>th</sup> “fled like rabbits” and seemed to “just fade off into the brush” during combat, while white commanders had to take scared soldiers “by the hand as if . . . leading a child.” Most problematically, according to Lieutenant Colonel Melvin Blair, was that they seemed proud of this

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<sup>85</sup> Lipsitz, *Ivory Perry*, 40–56.

<sup>86</sup> Bowers, Hammond, MacGarrigle, *Black Soldier, White Army*, 78, 94, 120–121, 159, 174, 266; Ducksworth, “What Hour of the Night,” 116; Lipsitz, *Ivory Perry*, 45.

behavior: Blair allegedly caught soldiers singing the “Bugout Boogie” in praise of their regiment’s “pell-mell retreat.” Their speech rendered in broken dialect, black soldiers were depicted as moody but violent, good-humored but incompetent, terrified but complacent at the same time.<sup>87</sup>

To address this “thorny problem,” the *Post* recommended the integration of the 24<sup>th</sup> into white units where their behavior might be tempered, and compared the seemingly dismal state of the 24<sup>th</sup> with the performance of “mixed” platoons. Quoting another commanding officer, the article argued, “In combat, a soldier does not give a damn whether the man on his right is black, white or green, so long as he will fight. The Negroes I have had with me have fought fine.” Drawing on social constructionist arguments, a black officer confessed “in shame and sore humiliation” that the “Negro soldier” thought himself “a race apart,” and was a victim of “all of the psychological inhibitions he has inherited through generations” of racism. Once black soldiers were disaggregated and assimilated into white units, it seemed, they could unlearn past cultural practices through emulating white models of soldiering and citizenship.<sup>88</sup> The 24<sup>th</sup> was disbanded in the middle of the war as a symbol of the triumph of racial integration. In Army official histories of the Korean War, the racial presuppositions that accompanied this pro-integration move were made clear, for the 1961 official history wrote of the 24<sup>th</sup> as particularly prone to panic and desertion.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Harold H. Martin, “How Do Our Negro Troops Measure Up?,” *The Saturday Evening Post* 223, no. 51, 16 June 1951, 30–31, 139–141.

<sup>88</sup> Martin, “How Do Our Negro Troops Measure Up,” 31, 141.

<sup>89</sup> The official Army history, *South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu*, was written by Roy Appleman in 1961. Appleman’s devastating view of the 24<sup>th</sup> was challenged consistently by black veterans but not taken up in popular history until Clay Blair’s *The Forgotten War* in 1987, which argued that the reputation and fighting capacity of the 24<sup>th</sup> was a casualty of longstanding military prejudice. The Army’s Center for Military History commissioned a nine-year review of the history of the 24<sup>th</sup> and published a detailed oral history-based account in 1996, alleging that the 24<sup>th</sup>’s poor fighting record was due to the stresses of the

### ***“Local boys”***

If the racial politics of the Korean War saw black and white as the only assimilable categories, Asian American, Puerto Rican, Native American, and Hispanic soldiers found themselves in between the triangulated wartime categories of white, black, and the always-suspect Asian enemy. At different moments, groups of nonwhite, nonblack soldiers found themselves pigeonholed and victimized within these frames, lost between them, or able to exploit them for their own benefit in Chinese prisoner of war camps.

For Japanese American soldiers in the Korean War, wartime racism was inseparable from the fresh experience of being interned during World War II. Katsuya “Kats” Nakatani was drafted into the Korean War at Fort Ord, California, before being sent to the Aberdeen Proving Ground in Maryland. Remembering the riot police brought in to break up struggles between protesters and accommodationists in the internment camps, Nakatani listed his background as staying in a “concentration camp” during World War II. He was ordered to change it to “relocation camp” by military authorities.<sup>90</sup> For Marine Robert Mitsuru Wada, his life was full of “looking like the enemy” moments, beginning with the fear he saw in his parents eyes when they burnt their Japanese things and replaced the Emperor’s picture for President Roosevelt’s during the war. Wada went

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unit’s internal racism, alongside poor equipment, harsh conditions, and little training (Bowers, Hammond, MacGarrigle, *Black Soldier, White Army*). Just before this new history was published, a group of black veterans threatened a defamation suit, alleging that this history still condoned a reading of the 24<sup>th</sup> as the worst-performing combat unit (Philip Shenon, “Veterans of Black Unit Threaten Suit over Army’s Account of Their Service,” *New York Times*, 7 May 1996, A16). The debate over the 24<sup>th</sup>’s reputation is helpfully explored in Selika Ducksworth’s dissertation manuscript, “What Hour of the Night.”

<sup>90</sup> Bacon Sakatani, “An Interview with Kats Nakatani, JAKWV Member,” *Japanese American Korean War Veteran Newsletter* 8, no. 1, April 2004, 5, held Folder 32, Japanese American Korean War Veterans: Newsletter and Robert Wada Speech, ‘From Looking Like the Enemy to Solitude’, 2003–2004’, Box 2, George Yuzawa Papers, TL, NYU.

from the internment camps into service as a Marine during the Korean War, where he saw Nisei friends wounded and refused assistance because white soldiers presumed they were North Koreans or Chinese. Returning home as a decorated veteran in 1953, Wada remembered that he still “looked like the enemy,” and was refused apartment rentals because of his Asian features.<sup>91</sup>

Corporal Suey Lee Wong, a Chinese American soldier, was the son of Chinese laundry owners in Seattle and joined his regiment in January 1951, the only Asian American in his platoon. His Asianness made him not black but aligned with the always-suspect, and Wong remembers white GIs trying to run him down in a jeep for sport, yelling “Let’s run down that damned gook kid!” Wong “felt like he was fighting two wars,” as his platoon mates blamed him for the war, yelling at Wong, “I don’t know what we’re doing over here to help you gooks!” Wong, who went on to be an engineer in Seattle’s growing aerospace industry, felt equally grieved by the dual trauma of race war and violent combat, a pain that was only partially contained by individual pride. As he later recalled, “I’d think about this racial bullshit. Why did I get this treatment . . . . We feel, a lot of us, like victims, of circumstances, of the war, of the fighting . . . . I also feel proud of the fact that I participated and served with honor and respectability.”<sup>92</sup> Major Kurt Chew-Een Lee, who became the first Asian American officer in the Marine Corps,

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<sup>91</sup> Robert M. Wada, “From Looking Like the Enemy to Solitude,” speech given to ROTC Cadets at the University of Notre Dame, South Bend, Indiana, 4 Nov. 2003, held in Folder 32, Japanese American Korean War Veterans: Newsletter and Robert Wada Speech, ‘From Looking Like the Enemy to Solitude’, 2003–2004”, Box 2, George Yuzawa Papers, TL, NYU.

<sup>92</sup> Charles J. Hanley, Sang-Hun Choe, Martha Mendoza, *The Bridge at No Gun Ri: A Hidden Nightmare from the Korean War* (New York: Henry Holt, 2001), 178, 237–8.

found that his fellow Marines called him a “Chinese laundry man” behind his back and questioned his ability to kill Chinese soldiers.<sup>93</sup>

Lieutenant Kenneth Wu, an American Army officer of Burmese descent, served as the main Chinese interpreter in the U.N. Armistice negotiations for two years. Despite his star role, when *Life* magazine ran a photograph of him holding the signed armistice agreement, an editor assumed his features made him a Korean soldier, and captioned the photograph “Helpful smile lights this ROK soldier’s face as he holds up copy of truce agreement.” Lieutenant Wu’s Asian features made him, in this mis-captioning, both outside his own ethnic identity of Burmese but outside the nation as well, for it seemed that “Asian American” was also unthinkable to this *Life* photo editor.<sup>94</sup> Corporal Harrison Lee, a Chinese American soldier from Hawai‘i, realized the true precarity of American racism transposed to a wartime context one morning in August 1950, near Pusan, South Korea.

I was at the stream bank doing my laundry in my undershorts when a haole [white/non-Hawaiian] guy from another company approached me with an armful of dirty laundry, dumped it in front of me, and said, “Boy-san, washee, washee.”

I didn’t know whether to laugh or get angry. I looked up at him and shot back, “Wash the goddamn things yourself!” You should have seen the look on his face.

From that time on I realized that I could be mistaken for a Korean or maybe even a North Korean and even be shot by one of our men.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> “Obituary: Maj. Kurt Chew-Een Lee, Singular Marine, Dies at 88,” *New York Times*, 11 March 2014, A16.

<sup>94</sup> The error was pointed out when Capt. Bertrand R. Brinley from the FEC and U.N. headquarters, wrote a letter to *Life* on Wu’s behalf: Capt. Brinley, letter to the editor, *Life* 35, no. 9, 13 Aug 1953, 9.

<sup>95</sup> Oral history with Cpl. Harrison Lee, in Lous Baldovi, ed., *A Foxhole View: Personal Accounts of Hawaii’s Korean War Veterans* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2002), 44. There are other similar accounts: Cpl. Bertram Sebresos was denied a truck ride when the driver thought he “couldn’t speak English.” Oral history in Baldovi, *Foxhole View*, 97.

For soldiers from the territory of Hawai‘i—whose families were Filipino, Chinese, Japanese, and Native Hawaiian—service in Korea was one of the first times many had come into close contact with “haoles” (whites, in Hawaiian pidgin) and blacks from the mainland.<sup>96</sup> Some found more in common with the Korean KATUSAs sent into their units, who were often given onerous duties or physically abused by American soldiers. Corporal Jay Hidano remembered being put in charge of a platoon of KATUSA soldiers to prevent their abuse by white soldiers and aid communication, as both Hidano and the Korean soldiers—former colonial subjects themselves—spoke Japanese. “The company now had an extra platoon made up entirely of KATUSAs and, for that matter, all Asians.”<sup>97</sup> These soldiers from Hawai‘i were often, like Lieutenant Wu, presumed to be KATUSAs, or “yobos.” Sergeant Clarence Young remembered being forced to wait for six hours at an aid station to have shrapnel removed from his leg, until he told them “I’m no yobo, I’m a GI.”<sup>98</sup>

As the Hawaiian units were considered “white,” though their members bore the brunt of anti-Asian racism by other white soldiers, Puerto Rican soldiers—considered to be “colored” by the Army—were integrated into their units. This produced, however, not the kind of harmonious integration centered around fighting that Project Clear and military policy proposed; instead, it allowed a kind of linguistic camaraderie. Corporal Louis Baldovi, himself Filipino American, found that his squad was composed of two KATUSAs, three Puerto Ricans, and three haoles, and he had to communicate with them in his self-described “Hawaiian pidgin English.” Corporal Baldovi had learned Japanese from Nisei friends on the island, and also used that to communicate with the KATUSAs,

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<sup>96</sup> Oral histories of Louis Baldovi and Alan Takamiyashiro, in Baldovi, *Foxhole View*, 171, 181.

<sup>97</sup> Oral histories of Jay Hidano and Irwin Cockett, in Baldovi, *Foxhole View*, 62.

<sup>98</sup> Oral history of Clarence Young, in Baldovi, *Foxhole View*, 115.

who had, of course, learned Japanese during Japanese rule in Korea.<sup>99</sup> As prisoners of war, Nisei soldiers from Hawai‘i were also used as interpreters between North Korean prison guards and the rest of the POWs; sometimes this allowed them to trade insults with the guards, and at other times, they were beaten for speaking pidgin, not fluent, Japanese.<sup>100</sup>

For the Hawaiian soldiers, or “local boys,” as they called themselves, their Hawaiianess, symbolized by their Asianness, was the most important aspect of solidarity and belonging. Private First Class William Abreu, an ethnically Portuguese Hawaiian, remembered seeing a truck of replacement soldiers pull up to his camp in Hwachon, North Korea in October 1952. When he “saw nothing but Oriental faces” his “first thought was, *Local boys from Hawaii* . . . . I got out of the jeep and ran to the truck to welcome them to the company.” But when Abreu heard them speaking not pidgin English but Korean, he realized they were KATUSAs, and “was I ever disappointed!”<sup>101</sup> A shared sense of Asianness also seemed to link Sergeant Clarence Young to a Korean mother and her child. Seeing them on the road in March of 1951, Young gave the woman GI blankets and all the money he had. “What made me do that?” he queried. “I don’t know. I did it without even thinking. Maybe subconsciously, I was thinking about my own family.”<sup>102</sup>

Young was captured by the Chinese, and in the Chinese POW camp, he first hoped his Chinese heritage might make his captors more lenient toward him. He then used his Asian features to ease camp life for his friends, dressing up in his captors’

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<sup>99</sup> Oral history of Louis Baldovi, in Baldovi, *Foxhole View*, 229, 249.

<sup>100</sup> Oral history of Susumu Shinagawa, in Baldovi, *Foxhole View*, 11, 59, 72.

<sup>101</sup> Oral history of William Abreu, in Baldovi, *Foxhole View*, 249.

<sup>102</sup> Oral history of Clarence Young, in Baldovi, *Foxhole View*, 126.

discarded clothes and using his disguise to escape into a nearby village for food to bring back to his friends. Young also spent time harassing mobs of haole POWs who beat his friends for looking like “yobos.” Yet when Young refused allegiance to China—yelling “Uncle Sam is my motherland!” and telling a visiting Chinese general “I’m proud my grandmother was smart enough to leave China when she did!”—he was abused and put in solitary camp confinement. For Young, his own Asianness seemed to allow him to find alternate spaces of leniency and escape, and while he claimed a broad loyalty to the United States, it was to his Hawaiian “local boys,” not the haoles, that his loyalty truly lay.<sup>103</sup>

For the Puerto Rican 65<sup>th</sup>, the military stereotypes of cowardice, panic, and incompetence long attached to black soldiers could also define their unit in the eyes of military commanders. Like the all-black 24<sup>th</sup>, the Borinqueneers were some of the first to meet combat in Korea, and were commended for their part in key strategic campaigns, including defending the Marines’ winter retreat from the Chosin reservoir. In September 1952, the 65<sup>th</sup>—now part of the Army’s 3<sup>rd</sup> Division—fought in the extremely bloody battle for Outpost Kelly, retreating twice from overwhelming Chinese firepower. After the battle, the 65<sup>th</sup>’s commander Colonel Juan Cesar Cordero Davila—the Army’s highest-ranking Puerto Rican officer—was relieved of duty, and replaced by a white officer from the United States, Colonel Chester DeGavre. Colonel DeGavre ordered the men to shave their mustaches “until such a time as they gave proof of their manhood,” cut special rations of rice and beans, and banned the use of “Borinqueneers” as a unit

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<sup>103</sup> Oral history of Clarence Young, in Baldovi, *Foxhole View*, 147–159.

name. As veterans remember, this was more than disciplining, but a destruction of what it meant for them to be Puerto Rican.<sup>104</sup>

Less than a month later, the 65<sup>th</sup> fought in the battle for Jackson Heights, and the combined battles for Outpost Kelly and Jackson Heights lost the unit over five hundred lives. On the third day of battle, eighty soldiers joined together and refused orders to go back, snowballing into a soldiers' strike in the midst of battle, until the unit was ordered away from the front. In early November, thirty-nine men in the 65<sup>th</sup>'s Company L refused to follow their officers across the river. One hundred and sixty-two Puerto Rican soldiers were arrested for this mass refusal, ninety-five of whom were tried in the largest mass courts-martial in U.S. history. Ninety-one were found guilty, and charged with one to eighteen years of hard labor. Due to mass protest among Puerto Ricans, the Army reviewed the history of the 65<sup>th</sup> and determined that "language difficulties" between white English-speaking officers and Spanish-speaking soldiers had led to the "breakdown" of the 65<sup>th</sup>. The report was quiet on any discussion of racism, even though all of the Army's combat units were under increasing stress. Convicted soldiers were pardoned in 1954, given clemency, and reinstated, but the 65<sup>th</sup> regiment was reconstituted through a process of integration. Whereas during the Korean War, English-speaking Puerto Ricans were used to integrate all-white regiments with "colored" soldiers, after the war and trial review, the unit was broken up by integrating white and black mainland soldiers into it and transferring Puerto Rican soldiers into units throughout the Army.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Matthew Hay Brown, "Clearing the Borinqueneers: 65th Infantry -- Pride Of Puerto Rico Movement Targets Taint Of Cowardice From Korean War," *Hartford Courant* (CT), 26 May 2002.

<sup>105</sup> Brown, "Clearing the Borinqueneers"; Villahermosa, "From Glory to Disaster"; Villahermosa, *Honor and Fidelity*, ch. 11. In Puerto Rico, the memory of the Borinqueneers has become the feature of many celebratory martial monuments, plaques, and exhibits in San Juan, the most conspicuous of which is a large column in the neighborhood of Rio Pedro, on the boulevard named after the 65th.

The experiences of nonwhite soldiers during the Korean War are testament to the enduring racism that existed within military culture, reworked and expanded through the racial hatred inculcated amongst troops for Koreans—as Suey Lee Wong put it, nonwhite soldiers were “fighting two wars.” Their experiences also suggest the ways in which the war’s racial politics could be contested, at least, from below: Clarence Young, for example, used race as a kind of disguise to ease life in the prisoner of war camps. When soldiers like Harrison Lee angrily yelled “wash those goddamn things yourself!” they challenged the linkages the war’s racial politics created between Asian features and always-suspect status. Hawaiian “local boys” and the Puerto Rican Borinqueneers wrested their own networks of solidarity out of the racial landscape of the Korean War, one that didn’t rely on assimilating to white military culture.

### ***Harmonious integration?***

Exhibiting the disavowal of continuing racism that racial liberalism relied upon, the Project Clear surveys suggested that this process of racial integration was proceeding quite smoothly. Numerous white officers, when interviewed, described their initial fears of interracial conflict and their “pleasant surprise,” in the words of a white Lieutenant Colonel, that their fears had not been realized. “I didn’t expect integration to be quite so harmonious,” a General Officer enthused, supported by a Regimental Commander’s appraisal that “it has worked beautifully.”<sup>106</sup> The social scientists, too, found a smooth process of interracial contact and the Eighth Army a perfect example of social integration. As they wrote, “It is evident that the Army in Korea is acting as a major vehicle of contact between two groups of individuals whose contacts in civilian life were

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<sup>106</sup> Bogart, *Social Research and the Desegregation of the U.S. Army*, 216, 244–245.

far less frequent. Undoubtedly this makes possible an interchange of ideas and habits and a greater possibility of mutual understanding.”<sup>107</sup>

Harmonious integration, it seemed, was possible because of the social engineering power of Army training to overcome any disparities between soldiers. Even more, it relied on black soldiers’ acceptance of the “values, habits, practices, and standards” of white soldiers. Indeed, one Negro Lieutenant interviewed in Project Clear agreed—or objected?—that the Army space was perfect for harmonious assimilation and integration, observing that, “The Army has worked out the details of every function so completely that individuality has little room.”<sup>108</sup>

In this version of integration, theaters of war allowed the staging of racial harmony. Making black soldiers a part of the masculine camaraderie of white Army life was important to the assimilationist ideal, and would, it was believed, mitigate black protests of unequal treatment. In interviews, the social scientists often found that soldiers spoke of the experience of serving in an integrated unit in terms of male camaraderie. For one white infantryman, the experience of war produced this camaraderie regardless of race, as “uncomfortable differences” vanished “when all you’re worried about is your friends and your skin.”<sup>109</sup> Or as a black enlisted man said of his integrated unit, “These are some good Joes . . . It might be because we have to get along in Korea if we are going to fight the Chinks . . . . We eat, sleep, and play together. We drink out of the same cup or eat out

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<sup>107</sup> Bogart, *Social Research and the Desegregation of the U.S. Army*, 119. General Ridgway also recalled integration as a smooth process, in his 1967 memoir: “After that, the entire United States Army adopted this long-overdue reform, with all the beneficial results we had foreseen—in morale as well as in civilian acceptance.” Ridgway, *The Korean War*, 193.

<sup>108</sup> Bogart, *Social Research and the Desegregation of the U.S. Army*, 246; and Ducksworth, “What Hour of the Night,” 6.

<sup>109</sup> Bogart, *Social Research and the Desegregation of the U.S. Army*, 85.

of the same spoon. We just like one big happy family.”<sup>110</sup> A white infantryman echoed this sentiment, telling the scientists, “I think if you give a man a chance—whether he’s a Polack or Jew or Catholic or what he is—they’re all fighting for the same thing and that’s freedom—freedom of speech, freedom of the press.”<sup>111</sup>

Even more, though, many soldiers interviewed in the first survey in Korea and Japan believed that integration was only possible within the space of war. When soldiers were no longer brought together against a shared enemy or forced into the space of combat, it was feared, male camaraderie would break down along racial lines. In outlining belief patterns among white soldiers about integration’s feasibility outside of a combat zone, the scientists found that “removed from war situations, where lives are interdependent, it is feared that Negro soldiers will become ‘uppity’ and will attempt to dominate the whites with whom they are in contact.”<sup>112</sup>

The vision of harmonious integration was a discursive fiction, not a lived reality, yet the liberal, narrowed vision of integration it proposed structured the terms of debate around racial integration through the simultaneous reliance on and elision of wartime violence. It was also, of course, complicated by individual allegiances, empathies, and sympathies. Lieutenant Colonel Charles M. Bussey, a self-proclaimed “male chauvinist” and career Army officer, spent his career protesting the Army’s racist treatment of African American soldiers like himself, and his outlook seemed to epitomize the harmonious integration ideal. Bussey’s mode of resistance was to claim dignity, respect, and safety through the execution of orders and fealty to military discipline, which required accepting the regularity of sexual access to Asian women and an unapologetic

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<sup>110</sup> Bogart, *Social Research and the Desegregation of the U.S. Army*, 102.

<sup>111</sup> Bogart, *Social Research and the Desegregation of the U.S. Army*, 85.

<sup>112</sup> Bogart, *Social Research and the Desegregation of the U.S. Army*, 163.

acceptance of wartime sexual violence. Recalling the masculine model of assimilation from Project Clear, Bussey's 1991 memoir, written to renovate the reputation of black soldiers in Korea, laid claim to heterosexual manhood: the account was replete with reminiscences of Japanese prostitutes, his soldiers' desires to rape Korean women, and his own "disgust" at "homosexual" members of his unit.<sup>113</sup>

Bussey's war in Korea, like Morrow's, was a dual war against communism and racism, and he could not include Korean civilians in the war's narrowed calculus of empathy. In late July 1950 in Sangju, South Korea, Bussey remembered watching two black GIs shoot an old Korean patriarch for sport. Bussey was distressed at their behavior, but couldn't bring himself to discipline them, for fear of the negative press that might be further heaped on black soldiers: "I felt for the old Korean man lying dead in the road ahead of me, but in my order of priorities it was his life against the lives of ten thousand black soldiers who didn't deserve the ignominy."<sup>114</sup> In another moment, he proclaimed that "The Orient is unfathomable to the Western mind," and allowed that rape and prostitution were a natural part of war, for "Soldiers of occupation have consorted with and bred with the women of all subjugated nations."<sup>115</sup>

Bussey's emphasis on masculine aggression, nationalism, and anti-Asian racism seemed to place him within the vision of harmonious integration laid out by Project Clear. And yet the war for Bussey also involved an unbearable trauma of racism that was too deep for the lines of nation and military to contain. As in Morrow's writing, Bussey's combat scenes fell inevitably into violent struggles against the structures of white

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<sup>113</sup> Bussey, *Firefight at Yechon*, 2, 42, 37, 67, 148, 255.

<sup>114</sup> Bussey, *Firefight at Yechon*, 118.

<sup>115</sup> Bussey, *Firefight at Yechon*, 72–73.

supremacy in the United States. In a firefight near Haman in late August 1950, Bussey remembered:

I heard a man scream in the dusky light, and once again I was doing a dance of death on the killing floor to a demoniacal tune. Feint, parry, thrust, retrieve, pivot, thrust, retrieve, butt stroke, swing, thrust . . . poverty, bigotry, hatred, Ku Klux Klan, stealth, fire, hunger, the pipes, and death. Blow after blow for freedom. Thrust after thrust for justice. Rip after rip for equality.<sup>116</sup>

This passage underlined the ambiguous, unstable position black soldiers found themselves in, for it could be read as a struggle against communism, for the “freedom” Bussey believed America might yet achieve, or for his own personal regeneration and salvation through violence. I might suggest that this passage encompassed all of these.

A minority of soldiers and war correspondents consistently moved well past the vision of nation-based harmonious integration, and proposed a tentative empathy with Koreans. As opposed to Bussey’s reaction, this empathy drew from—instead of being foreclosed by—soldiers’ dual struggle to stay alive in war and combat white supremacy. In the first months of the war, black journalists noted dubiously the use of “gook” as a racial epithet in Korea, noting that it was not the Russians nor, during World War II, the Germans, but always nonwhite peoples who received derogatory racial classification from American fighting men. War correspondent Milton A. Smith reported for the National Newspaper Publishing Association, a trade organization for the African American press, that “the very best ambassadors America ever had in this unattractive peninsula are colored GIs.” As Smith explained, “Koreans said ‘colored soldiers don’t push us around and are not so apt to give us a hard time as do many white soldiers.’” Writing in the *Pittsburgh Courier*, editor and prominent African American journalist Percival Prattis questioned white America’s claims to superiority by calling attention to

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<sup>116</sup> Bussey, *Firefight at Yechon*, 186.

soldiers' abuse of Korean civilians. Prattis likened the attitude of whites in the U.S. toward the "Negro" to the attitudes of soldiers toward Koreans, arguing that it was this abusive and overconfident "white man who must be changed before America's future can be assured."<sup>117</sup> Prattis later published a letter in the *Courier* written to him by fifty-four GIs serving in a segregated quartermaster unit in Fort Devens, Massachusetts, who asked "Can the United States possibly bring freedom to other colored people in other countries if we are not free at home?" They proposed to Prattis that this was "Mister Charlie's War," and Prattis suggested to his readers that "their thinking may represent that of the average Negro."<sup>118</sup>

The political sympathies that brought concerns of the black freedom movement together with global visions of decolonization and solidarity, as I will explore in chapter six, was made real in the interactions between soldiers and Korean civilians during the war. Though the indefinite, speculative solidarities between African American soldiers and Korean civilians should not be overstated, nor should they be overlooked, even though the spaces of empathy could be fitful, conflicted, partial, or one-sided. Out on one of his first wintertime reconnaissance patrols, Curtis Morrow saw movement underneath a bridge. Before throwing a grenade, Morrow yelled "Hey! Come here now!" in broken Korean, and threw a small stone. Hearing a whimpering noise, he moved closer and saw a young Korean boy, shivering in the cold, holding the reins of an ox. Morrow and his buddies took the boy with them and arranged for him to work with the Korean labor force at battalion headquarters. This episode was more than an act of kindness, or a kind of

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<sup>117</sup> "Koreans Won't Like This," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 26 Aug. 1950, 4; "Army Camps, Railroads, Parks Drop Bars in '51," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 15 Jan. 1952, 15; P. L. Prattis, "The Horizon: American Attitudes Making Enemies of Many South Koreans," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1 Sept. 1951, 18.

<sup>118</sup> P. L. Prattis, "The Horizon: Fort Devens GI Inquires about Freedom, Jim Crow in these United States," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 14 July 1951, 20.

empathy; it seems to have instead created a shared space of mutual recognition. As Morrow remembers, “I would occasionally see him when my company was back there in reserve. He would always stop whatever he was doing, smile, and salute me. Likewise, I would do the same and return his salute. I still see him sometimes in my dreams.”<sup>119</sup>

The spaces of empathy created across racial, national, and wartime boundaries were the subject of the first Hollywood film made about (and during) the Korean War, Samuel Fuller’s 1951 *The Steel Helmet*. Fuller, a World War II veteran and a former newspaper boy and crime reporter, was drawn throughout his career to hard-boiled heroes and underclass characters, American race relations, and an unsentimental view of war. Shot on an extremely low budget in Los Angeles’ Griffith Park, *The Steel Helmet*, written, directed, and produced by Fuller, tells the story of a motley composite squad of American GIs, anchored by Sgt. Zack (Gene Evans), an embittered and gruff infantryman.<sup>120</sup> The film opens when Zack—the rest of his squad killed—is found and rescued by a young Korean boy (William Chun), and their relationship provides the film with its moral center. “You talk more like a dogface than a gook!” Zack tells the kid. “I am no gook, I am KOREAN!” the boy replies angrily, forcing Zack to backtrack, “All right all right, so you’re not a gook.” Nicknamed Short Round, the boy follows Zack—who never again says “gook”—as they meet with the remnants of another lost squad and continue on a mission to hold a nearby Buddhist temple as an outpost.

The squad of GIs is a racial and ethical composite that served as both an acceptance and a critique of the harmonious integration vision. In addition to Zack and Short Round, there is Corporal Thompson (James Edwards), a black medic; Sergeant

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<sup>119</sup> Morrow, *What’s a Commie Ever Done*, 17–19.

<sup>120</sup> *The Steel Helmet*, directed by Sam Fuller (Lippert Studios, 1951).

Tanaka (Richard Loo), a Nisei veteran of the 442<sup>nd</sup>; Conchie (Robert Hutton), a white conscientious objector; Silent Joe (Sid Melton), a soldier who talks only to animals; Lieutenant Driscoll (Steve Brodie), the career officer devoted to military protocol; and Private Baldy (Richard Monahan), a scared and shy white soldier. With the exception of Lieutenant Driscoll, none of the soldiers seem concerned with the mission, but only with their own private battles and commitments. When Driscoll commands the men to try to bury a booby-trapped GI's body, against Zack's advice, it kills one of the soldiers, and the unit's allegiance shifts from Driscoll to Zack, from Army mission to each other.

At the temple, the men capture a North Korean Major (Harold Fong), and his needling of Tanaka and Thompson gives the film a chance to explore the complicated racial landscape of the war. As prisoners of war reported, Chinese and North Koreans often tried to aggravate American racial tensions to win over the loyalty of nonwhite soldiers.<sup>121</sup> In the film, the Major interrogates Thompson as Thompson dresses his wounds, saying "I just don't understand you. You can't eat with them unless there's a war, and even then it's difficult. Isn't that so?" Thompson assents, but tells him "There's some things you just can't rush, buster." As the North Korean Major and Tanaka sit beneath the temple's looming Buddha statue, the Major tries to engage Tanaka: "You got the same kinda eyes I have . . . . They threw Japanese Americans in the prison camps in the last war, didn't they? Perhaps even your parents. Perhaps even you!" Like Thompson,

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<sup>121</sup> Chinese and North Korean prison camps often segregated those "reactionary" (ie, non-cooperative) prisoners from the "progressives" (ie, cooperative) ones, a winnowing defined after interrogation and indoctrination, and black and nonwhite soldiers were seen to be more potentially progressive. Radio and loudspeaker broadcasts by "Seoul City Sue," the "Tokyo Rose" of the Korean War, also routinely emphasized American racism in order to undermine morale of nonwhite U.S. soldiers. See Ducksworth, "What Hour of Night," 154–156; and Daniel Widener, "Seoul City Sue and the Bugout Blues: Black American Narratives of the Forgotten War," in *Afro Asia: Revolutionary Political and Cultural Connections between African Americans and Asian Americans*, eds. Fred Ho and Bill V. Mullen (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 55–87.

Tanaka assents to this characterization of American racism—he was indeed in the camps—but brushes off the North Korean. “Major,” Tanaka tells him, “You’re getting sloppy as a con artist.” Referencing his service in the 442<sup>nd</sup>, Tanaka tells him, “I’m not a dirty Jap rat, I’m an American, and even if we do get pushed around back home, well, that’s our business.” Emphasizing his claim to Americanness by employing one Asian stereotype from WWII, Tanaka tells the Major, “knock off, before I forget the articles of war and slap those rabbit teeth of yours out one at a time.”

In the North Korean major, Fuller articulated all the tensions of the United States’ wartime mobilization and domestic white supremacy; in Tanaka and Thompson’s characters, he validates that critique yet leaves the ending unresolved. Though Tanaka and Thompson both argue that the American racial code is somehow intimate, familiar, and separate from wartime commitments, they are also unable to directly answer his questions without telling him “ah, knock off!” As Black Arts Movement artist and activist LeRoi Jones wrote a decade later, the major’s questions still resonate and “James Edwards’ answer” as Corporal Thompson “was pitifully inadequate.”<sup>122</sup>

The squad unifies in the final firefight, as Conchie learns to use his gun, Driscoll defers to Zack, and all the men bend their efforts toward staying alive. In this sense, the diversity of the men is assured through combat, as harmonious integration proposed. But the unity is not nationalistic, and has a dark undercurrent, for what they are fighting for is to keep each other alive and to assuage past traumas of war and race: in the midst of combat, Zack experiences a traumatic flashback to the D-Day landings at Normandy.

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<sup>122</sup> LeRoi Jones, *Blues People: Negro Music in White America* (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1963), 214–215.

Short Round is killed, and when the North Korean major ridicules the dead boy for his allegiance to Zack, Zack shoots him in grief and fury.

This scene made the movie the subject of an Army inquiry, and Fuller was summoned to a conference to explain why he showed an American soldier shooting an unarmed prisoner of war. As Fuller argued later, the inquiry into the film was also because of its critique of American racism: “I brought out the fact that Germany was not the only country that had concentration camps. We didn’t gas people, we didn’t burn them or starve them to death, but we had concentration camps . . . . Well, the shit hit the fan! Truman or someone in the White House, and the Pentagon, raised hell with it!”<sup>123</sup> Fuller’s film, a critical success at the time and a large moneymaker for Lippert Studios, positioned harmonious integration as both a success and a failure, and proposed war as a total arena of life or death, one that could unify men around a cause but also exposed the continual racial tensions inherent within it.

### ***Unwelcome remembering***

Military desegregation during the war was lauded as a major success, a story that in many ways came to shadow both the specific violence of the war and Korean politics, but also the continued divisions of race that were extended and reworked through desegregation policy. Journalist Lee Nichols’s 1954 popular account of military desegregation, *Breakthrough on the Color Front*, relied partially on Project Clear’s findings to argue that the military’s breaching of the “color barrier” was “one of the most

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<sup>123</sup> Samuel Fuller, interview, printed in Lee Server, *Sam Fuller: Film is a Battleground: A Critical Study, with Interviews, a Filmography, and a Bibliography* (Jefferson, NC: MacFarland and Co., 1994), 27; Robert J. Lenz, *Korean War Filmography: 91 English-Language Features through 2000* (Jefferson, NC: MacFarland and Co., 2003), 331–338.

dramatic success stories in modern American history.” It was a story of “men of courage and foresight who were able to see that military efficiency and democratic ideals could go hand in hand,” of overcoming “tradition encrusted ‘brass and braid,’” and of the “coming of age of the American Negro.” This American story of social progress heralded a new age, in which white and black soldiers went to church and movies together, drank beer together in the canteen, and whose wives could share gossip over neighboring clotheslines.<sup>124</sup>

Nichols’s vision of utopian integration was belied by the experiences of returning veterans. Curtis Morrow returned to the United States and became an active member in the black radical artists’ scene in New York, before “saying goodbye to his soul brothers” in New York and leaving to seek a home in Ghana in a search for personal and political liberation.<sup>125</sup> For Ivory Perry, the war in Korea was likewise a haunting experience of violence, racism, and anxiety, one that helped commit him to a “life in the struggle” for black freedom.<sup>126</sup> For Morrow and Perry, killing had not led them to feel at home in America, to forget the Koreans and Chinese they had killed, or to accept the vision of suburban national and racial belonging that Nichols proposed. Forty-four years after the war ended, Morrow published his memoir because he lived “daily and eternally with the memories of that horrifying time.” War and killing affect all soldiers, but Morrow’s fight was inextricable from that against the confines of white supremacy. As he wrote in 1997, “It is my hope that this book will serve as an exorcism of sorts, for myself and my fellow veterans, to free us from nights of troubled sleep and days of unwelcome

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<sup>124</sup> Nichols, *Breakthrough on the Color Front*, 8–10.

<sup>125</sup> Curtis J. Morrow, *Return of the African American* (1983; Huntington, NY: Kroshka Books, 2000), 1–3. Morrow self-published this account in Chicago in 1983; it was later republished in 1999–2000, and again by Morrow in a 2011 second edition, retitled *My Sankofa*.

<sup>126</sup> Lipsitz, *Ivory Perry*.

remembering.”<sup>127</sup> Nichols’s triumphant story proposed an overcoming of race through the violent space of war, and in so doing forgot the continued existence of racial violence in the crucible of American empire. We ought to wish Morrow peace, but to force the nation into an “unwelcome remembering” of all that has been disavowed.

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<sup>127</sup> Morrow, *What’s a Commie Ever Done*, 1.

## Chapter Six

### *In Battle for Peace*

In 1951, black activist and intellectual W. E. B. Du Bois proposed that “Peace is dangerous; not to all folk, but certainly to those whose standard of living depend on war.” Writing in the midst of the Korean War, and under indictment for disseminating peace literature and petitions, Du Bois proposed “peace” as a path of action away from the colonialism, inequality, and racial structures of the “American way.” “The great silence on America’s soul can be broken,” he argued, through the invigoration and formation of a movement for peace.<sup>1</sup>

I have discussed at length President Truman’s concept of a “war for peace,” and for those on the right and the left, the concept of “peace” became a discursive battleground for a set of politics. “Peace” at once signified “war,” “sedition,” “communism,” “anti-imperialism,” “pacifism,” “revolution,” or the internationalism of the United Nations. For Dwight D. Eisenhower’s presidential campaign, it was a winning electoral strategy that capitalized on war-weariness. Yet “peace” could also, as with the federal indictment of peace activists, be a crime and a concept “foreign” to the United States.

In order to understand Du Bois’ vision of peace in a study of antiwar sentiment during the Korean War, we need to develop new political cartographies and expand historical periodization. Opposition to the war flowed from global networks,

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<sup>1</sup> The pamphlet is taken from a speech Du Bois gave on 28 Sept., 1951, reprinted as *Peace is Dangerous* (New York: National Guardian, 1951), held in Folder “Du Bois, WEB: Peace is Dangerous, 1951,” Box 4, Series 22/Accretion, W. E. B. Du Bois Papers (MS 312), Special Collections and University Archives (SCUA), W. E. B. Du Bois Library, University of Massachusetts-Amherst.

organizations, and politics developed in the 1930s and 1940s. During the war, small, vibrant coalitions of red and black feminists, anticolonialists, pacifists, and journalists worked against the narrowing of cold war politics and proposed a very different kind of peace in Korea. Though they were not successful in wrenching political narratives away from a nationalist cold war trajectory, their story was more than a story of declension, of the reduction of the left to “a strange half-life.”<sup>2</sup> The convergences and solidarities formed by activists in this moment produced radical networks that continued throughout the early cold war. Even more, in their struggles we can better gauge the mechanisms of anticommunist repression and understand early cold war political culture not as a blanketing of repression and conformity, but as a constant battle.

In 1952, Du Bois described his Korean War antiwar work and subsequent indictment, handcuffing, and trial as the condition of being “in battle for peace.”<sup>3</sup> This chapter interrogates the battle over peace during the Korean War, and in so doing,

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<sup>2</sup> This is the phrase of Lawrence S. Wittner, who saw American pacifism reduced in 1950 to “the remnants of the historic movement . . . serving as prophets in the Cold War wilderness.” Lawrence S. Wittner, *Rebels Against War: The American Peace Movement, 1941–1960* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), 213. Many cultural studies of the Cold War, even when studying social movements, followed this narrative of declension, arguing that the freedoms of the 1940s were confined in the 1950s suburban ideal: see, for example, Lary May, ed., *Recasting America: Culture and Politics in the Age of the Cold War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989); and Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988). Others, like Mary Dudziak, have argued that the cold war provided narrow openings for advancing protest around civil rights issues: Mary Dudziak, *Mary, Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000). I depart from both these readings to situate this chapter’s social history within scholarship that attends to the ways in which the triumph of cold war politics and anticommunism was an ongoing contestation, a reworking of the left. See for example: Dorothy Sue Cobble, *The Other Women’s Movement: Workplace Justice and Social Rights in Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); Daniel Horowitz, *Betty Friedan and the Making of The Feminine Mystique: The American Left, The Cold War, and Modern Feminism* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998); Scott Kurashige, *The Shifting Grounds of Race: Black and Japanese Americans in the Making of Multiethnic Los Angeles* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2008). I also draw from scholars who have explicitly argued for this contestation as a global, not national, story: for example, Penny M. Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire: Black Americans and Anticolonialism, 1937–1957* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997); Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

<sup>3</sup> W. E. B. Du Bois, *In Battle for Peace: The Story of my 83<sup>rd</sup> Birthday* (New York: Masses and Mainstream, 1952).

chronicles the mutually constitutive development of anticommunist repression and the solidarities, actions, and desires of the radical left. In this contestation over peace, I argue that anticommunist repression worked as one mechanism of forgetting. After 1945, many currents on the liberal-left saw a moment brimming with possibilities for global labor-based anticolonial organizing, for new international bodies like the United Nations, and for a world movement against nuclear weapons. The Korean War was one of several key moments in the development of cold war politics that deflected most, if not all, of these possibilities, allowing the United States to enforce the national and militarist frames of wartime policy and to restrict the boundaries of dissent. And yet, as I will argue in this chapter, radical activists during the Korean War sought to maintain connections to the international left and to hold to a worldwide vision. How this adamantly global story became subsumed into a nation-based frame is the story of this chapter.

In this chapter, I trace the radical left's global visions and expansive definition of "peace," and argue that anticommunism served as a technology of obscuring and marginalizing global ideas into a national frame, and disavowing a "peace" that did not include war. Anticommunism also actively prevented a reckoning with the wartime violence in Korea and prevented journalists' and activists' writings on it to circulate widely. In this way, anticommunism was a technology of forgetting the United States' wartime violence, instead locating threats to the cold war peace in American "subversives" and world communism. In all these ways, anticommunist repression advanced U.S. empire and elided its violence.

***“To all men and women of goodwill”***

By the end of World War II, leftist activists in the United States had built international networks and cultivated diasporic political imaginaries, premised on the experience of the recent war and the wave of postwar decolonization movements. This work took place in two main arenas, the newly formed United Nations and a series of communist-led world peace congresses, bringing together many disparate parts of the left, from liberal pacifists who believed peace would come through “collective security” and great power blocs to radical feminists who saw antiwar work as a necessary precondition to gender equality. For radicals, anticolonialists, and feminists in the United States—many of them Communist Party members and fellow travelers—their work was facilitated by the Party but went far beyond the influence and direction of the U.S.S.R. In different ways, radical activists working for peace in the United States between 1945 and 1950 understood the concept as a political philosophy to address an interconnected constellation of colonialism, racism, sexism, and militarism.

Concurrently, the post-1945 era saw the rise of a widespread and multifaceted wave of anticommunist political repression in the United States, known by the name of one of its most visible proponents, Joseph McCarthy. Through the work of federal agencies, bureaucrats, politicians, and anticommunist activists, McCarthyism came to structure American politics and culture and define the bounds of dissent.<sup>4</sup> McCarthyism was the domestic component of American foreign policy after 1945, as the United States stockpiled atomic bombs, supported reactionary movements in Greece and China, and

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<sup>4</sup> My reading of anticommunism begins from Ellen Schrecker’s contention that there were “many McCarthyisms,” from the ultra-conservative and opportunist to the liberal and anti-Stalinist, and that McCarthyism was neither an aberration nor a kind of mass hysteria, but the evolution of a network of conservative organizing. Ellen Schrecker, *Many Are the Crimes: McCarthyism in America* (Boston and New York: Little, Brown and Co., 1998).

spread its influence through postwar aid programs and occupations in Western Europe and Asia in response to the U.S.S.R.'s aggressive bloc-building in Eastern Europe. With Truman's election and his 1947 "Truman Doctrine" outlining a policy of anticommunist containment, militarization was celebrated as the method of democracy's export, making the peace movement—especially with its communist ties and roots—suspect.

Anticommunism was one aspect of defining what postwar peace would entail. If radicals hoped for an expansive vision of peace, anticommunism proposed that peace most properly meant war: war to define a sphere of Western influence in Asia and a war on radicals and potential subversives in the United States.

For many on the left, the rise of fascism, World War II, and the atomic bomb made clear the necessity of international unity and exposed the narrowness of nation-bound politics. Historian Penny Von Eschen has best described the development of "diasporic anticolonial politics" among African Americans in the late 1930s and 1940s that linked struggles against Jim Crow to anticolonial movements in Africa and Asia, and rooted critiques of American racism and colonialism in the history of capitalism and slavery. Bolstered by a dynamic African American press and the powerful social unionism of the 1930s, this "creative political project" reached its peak in the immediate postwar era. Through international labor solidarity work, radicals like W. E. B. Du Bois and Paul Robeson and organizations like the Council on African Affairs (CAA) built connections to decolonizing nations in Africa, and connected this vision to their activism against Jim Crow institutions in the United States.<sup>5</sup>

The rise of fascism in Europe had thrown the American pacifist movement, largely based in churches and liberal institutions, into theoretical disarray, for it was

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<sup>5</sup> Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire*.

unclear to many if pacifism was a moral absolute, or if fascism was the greater evil. The experience of American pacifist conscientious objectors in government labor camps during World War II had led to the formation of a militant core of radical pacifists focused on individual direct actions against militarization. The end of the war allowed for a resurgence among pacifist groups, which coalesced into a fragile alliance of radical and direct action pacifists, concerned atomic scientists, and liberal internationalists who believed in strengthening world government in the interests of “collective security,” giving the peace movement a broader base of support than it had enjoyed in the wartime years.<sup>6</sup>

Though pacifist organizing was largely separate from the diasporic anticolonial politics of the same period, there were significant overlaps. The founding of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) in 1941 in Chicago, fostered by Bayard Rustin, James Farmer, A. J. Muste, and other members of the pacifist Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR), led to the further development of nonviolent direct action strategies—like the sit-in and boycott—that would be employed by CORE’s interracial members in the North and South throughout the 1940s and 1950s.<sup>7</sup> Amongst the left-wing of pacifist politics, organizations like FOR, the War Resisters’ League (WRL), and the Catholic Worker movement, and, in 1948, the militant cells of the Peacemakers, understood pacifism as a revolutionary vision that connected critiques of militarism, state power, economic equality, and race and gender-based oppression. For many in this left current, the

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<sup>6</sup> Wittner, *Rebels Against War*, chs. 3, 6, 7.

<sup>7</sup> Wittner, *Rebels Against War*, esp. ch. 6. For discussion of the founding of CORE and FOR’s emphasis on challenging racial segregation, see 63–69; for its continued work throughout the late 1940s, see 160.

strategies flowing from this political vision included direct actions to destroy or block military endeavors, or personal refusals to serve in the military or to pay taxes.<sup>8</sup>

Socialist, communist, and other leftist feminists also proposed a global politics in this moment, as symbolized by the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF), one of the largest and perhaps most influential feminist groups of this period.<sup>9</sup> The WIDF was founded in Paris in November 1945, out of more than a decade of transnational antifascist, socialist, and feminist organizing by women in Europe. The first conference, attended by a multiracial delegation of 850 women from 40 countries, defined the WIDF's mission to work against fascism, for women's legal and social rights, the facilitation of public health for children and families, and international camaraderie. The WIDF leveraged women's position as mothers to argue for their special interest in peace work, as did many women's peace groups at the time. Yet their vision moved beyond a kind of vague maternalism and toward an articulation of what a lasting peace might look like: from its founding, the WIDF saw international solidarity, antifascism, and antimilitarism as a necessary precondition to any stable world. The WIDF involved socialists, communists, fellow travelers, and former antifascist resistance fighters from France and Spain. Unlike other contemporaneous international women's organizations, the WIDF was also explicitly anticolonial.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Wittner, *Rebels Against War*, ch. 6.

<sup>9</sup> This is the assertion of Francisca de Haan, who has done the most extensive work on WIDF to date: Francisca de Haan, "The Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF): History, Main Agenda, and Contributions, 1945–1991," in *Women and Social Movements, International, 1840–Present*, eds. Kathryn Kish Sklar and Thomas Dublin, eds, website by Alexander Street Press, [http://wasi.alexanderstreet.com/help/view/the\\_womens\\_international\\_democratic\\_federation\\_widf\\_history\\_main\\_agenda\\_and\\_contributions\\_19451991](http://wasi.alexanderstreet.com/help/view/the_womens_international_democratic_federation_widf_history_main_agenda_and_contributions_19451991). Note that the WIDF is still active.

<sup>10</sup> de Haan, "WIDF", 4–5, 6–8. De Haan makes the larger argument that the cold war framing of the WIDF as a Communist "front group" has narrowed historians' understanding of the WIDF and global feminism in this period: see Francisca de Haan, "Continuing Cold War Paradigms in Western Historiography of Transnational Women's Organisations: The Case of the Women's International Democratic Federation

The WIDF functioned as an umbrella group for a network of global affiliates in Western and Eastern Europe, Africa, Asia, Australasia, the Caribbean, and the Americas. In the United States, the WIDF's U.S. affiliate, the Congress of American Women (CAW), was formed by the thirteen U.S. delegates to the initial Paris conference, who had been greatly impressed by the WIDF's vision. After a year of organizing, CAW claimed a multiracial membership of 250,000 women, active in trade union, civil rights, and progressive struggles around the United States, benefitting from the labor and civil-rights based radicalism and feminism of the Great Depression years as well as the legacy of the nineteenth-century suffrage movement.<sup>11</sup>

Like the WIDF more broadly, CAW included a vast range of political affiliations, and its leading members included communists Claudia Jones and Elizabeth Gurley Flynn alongside upper-class businesswomen, leftist academics like anthropologist Gene Weltfish, neighborhood housewives and working mothers, and prominent African American community leaders.<sup>12</sup> Various local chapters did strike support work and campaigned against rising food costs, housing evictions and rising rents, lynchings and racial segregation. The domestic agenda was linked to a global vision, for with the escalation of the cold war, work against the atomic bomb and the Truman Doctrine

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(WIDF), *Women's History Review* 19, no. 4 (2010): 547–573. A WIDF application to the U.N. for consultative status lists 40 member nations and explicitly states an interest in the social rights of women of colonial nations and “minorities of color” around the world. WIDF, “Reponse au questionnaire ci-joint par ordre numerique”, n.d. yet likely 1947, Folder 8: Non-governmental organizations, Consultative Status with Economic & Social Council – Women's International Democratic Federation, 4 Oct. 1946–10 April 1953 (A), Box: S-0441-0016, Registry Section/Archives and Records Service/OGS, Branch Registries – Volume I–IV, 1946–1959, United Nations Archives and Records Management Section (ARMS).

<sup>11</sup> CAW's leading members included Susan B. Anthony II, the grandniece of Susan B. Anthony, and Nora Stanton Blatch, granddaughter of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, both of whom often referenced their famous foremothers. Pioneering historians of U.S. women's history, Eleanor Flexner and Gerda Lerner, were also CAW members. Amy Swerdlow, “The Congress of American Women: Left-Feminist Peace Politics in the Cold War,” in *U.S. History as Women's History: New Feminist Essays*, eds. Linda K. Kerber, Alice Kessler-Harris, and Kathryn Kish Sklar (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press), 302.

<sup>12</sup> Swerdlow, “CAW,” 301–302, 306.

became the primary focus of CAW as part of working toward a peaceful world that could provide women and families the services and opportunities they envisioned.<sup>13</sup> According to one historian, CAW “seemed to have the potential to mobilize hundreds of thousands more for peace and a progressive interracial feminist social agenda unlike that of any previous women’s peace organization.”<sup>14</sup>

The fluidity of the immediate post-1945 moment offered a place for these multiple left movements to advance their work in the new international institutions of the post-1945 period, chief among them the United Nations. Though most activists were very skeptical of the U.N.’s orientation and permanent skew toward the “big five” nations (the United States, the Soviet Union, France, China, and the United Kingdom), most also hoped that the emphasis on human rights might provide an arena for international political debates and actions around decolonization, militarism, feminism, and racism.<sup>15</sup> Throughout the late 1940s and early 1950s, the United Nations was continually petitioned by the American black freedom movement as a way to focus world attention on American racial violence and to warn against the export of American racial regimes abroad, in contravention of the stated ideals of the United Nations.<sup>16</sup> Du Bois himself was adamant about the U.N.’s inability to address colonialism except through a “trusteeship council” run in part by colonial powers; nonetheless, he sought throughout the late 1940s

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<sup>13</sup> Swerdlow, “CAW,” 308.

<sup>14</sup> Swerdlow, “CAW,” 299.

<sup>15</sup> One survey in August 1945 found that 54% of Americans believed the U.N. was too weak, and ought to be strengthened into a world government that could control all national militaries, including that of the United States. Poll cited in Wittner, *Rebels Against War*, 142. For more on activists’ skepticism about the U.N. see Wittner, *Rebels Against War*, 138; Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire*, 78–85; Charles DeBenedetti, *The Peace Reform in American History* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1980), ch. 7.

<sup>16</sup> In 1946, the National Negro Congress, led by Max Yergan and Revels Cayton, sent *A Petition on Behalf of 13 Million Negro Citizens of the United States* to the U.N. Economic and Social Council; in 1947, Du Bois led the drafting of the NAACP’s *Appeal to the World*; and in 1951, William Patterson of the Civil Rights Congress facilitated the drafting of *We Charge Genocide*, calling on the United Nations to indict the United States under the 1948 Genocide Convention for historical crimes against black Americans.

and early 1950s to push the U.N. in the direction of a true global forum on race and empire.<sup>17</sup> For the WIDF, the U.N. provided a body that could endorse their vision of global feminist, antiwar politics, and in 1947, gained “consultative” status to the U.N.’s Economic and Social Council and its Commission on the Status of Women as a non-governmental organization.<sup>18</sup>

Parallel to the U.N.’s nation-based internationalism, the international left, led by the world affiliates of the Communist Party and the U.S.S.R.’s new postwar forum for international communism (the Cominform), sponsored a series of postwar peace conferences around the world. The first such conference, held in Poland in late August 1948, proposed the establishment of worldwide affiliates and continued meetings, followed by the first World Peace Congress (also known as the World Congress of the Partisans of Peace) in Paris and Prague, April 20–24, 1949, with over 1,700 delegates representing 72 countries. Out of the Paris/Prague conference, held concurrently due to last-minute visa restrictions by the French government, the delegates set up a permanent committee with representatives from fifty countries, and adopted French Communist Party member Pablo Picasso’s drawing of a dove as their symbol. Throughout 1949 and

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<sup>17</sup> Du Bois, *In Battle for Peace*, 25. In a speech given to the American-Soviet Congress on Dec. 4, 1949, Du Bois argued that “It is thus made certain by the Charter of the United Nations, that the imperialists cannot lose . . . . Until the voices of the colonial peoples can freely be expressed on this rostrum, and until thorough investigation reveals colonial conditions, there is little hope for improvement.” W. E. B. Du Bois, “Trusteeship and Colonialism,” Speech at American-Soviet Congress, Dec 4, 1949, Folder 7: “Trusteeship and Colonialism” [the US and the USSR in the UN], December 4 1949, Box 200, Series 2/Speeches, Du Bois Papers, SCUA. During his Senatorial campaign in fall 1950, Du Bois would argue that the U.N. was being “subverted” from its principles and “taken over” by the major powers; and his sponsorship of the “We Charge Genocide” petition in 1951 is another such example: Peace and Civil Rights, WMCA Radio Broadcast, NY, Nov 11, 1950, Folder 6: “Peace and Civil Rights” November 11, 1950, Box 201, Series 2/Speeches, Du Bois Papers, SCUA.

<sup>18</sup> de Haan, “WIDF”, 8. The WIDF’s founding document described their participation in the newly formed U.N. as necessary: WIDF, “Status adoptés au Congrès Constitutif au Palais de la Mutualité à Paris le 29 Novembre 1945,” p. 13, in Folder 9: Branch Registry (10/062) Non-governmental organizations – consultative status with economic and social council – women’s international democratic federation (B) 27 Jan. 1954 – 18 Oct 1955, Box: S-0441-0016, Registry Section/Archives and Records Service/OGS, Branch Registries – Volume I–IV, 1946–1959, ARMS.

1950, regional conferences in Moscow, Havana, Rome, New York, Mexico City, and Melbourne were held, and the Congress movement was solidified during the second World Peace Congress in Sheffield and Poland in April 1950.<sup>19</sup> The world peace congresses brought together activists from many parts of the left, including Du Bois of the CAA and NAACP; Ada B. Jackson, Gene Weltfish, and Muriel Draper of CAW; and Communists Herbert Aptheker and labor leader Harry Bridges.

“Peace,” in these conferences, was specifically framed as stopping the nuclear arms race, the wars of intervention, and anticommunist repression, and proposed international negotiations and a great power “peace pact.” For the Cominform, “peace” was a rubric under which the U.S.S.R. could work against the belligerence of the Western bloc. However, the foreign policy aims of the U.S.S.R.—which had long sent worldwide Communist parties into confusing policy zigzags—was not always the foremost concern of participants, and the world peace congress movement held a massive appeal, particularly for those who saw the Soviet Union as representative of a better global ideal.

For Du Bois, much of American peace activism seemed to be involved in “arbitration treaties and international law.” He saw the world peace congresses as an opportunity to tackle colonial aggression and imperial expansion, the motors of what Du Bois saw as a looming Third World War.<sup>20</sup> Speaking in Paris in 1949 at the World Congress of the Partisans of the Peace, Du Bois argued:

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<sup>19</sup> The full name of the Cominform was the Information Bureau of the Communist and Workers’ Parties, and was founded in 1947 to replace the Communist International (Comintern). For more on the conferences and delegates, see House Committee of Un-American Activities (HUAC), *Report on the Communist “Peace” Offensive: A Campaign to Disarm and Defeat the United States* 82<sup>nd</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1 April 1951), 12, 16, 22; Peace Information Center (PIC), “The People of the World Want Peace” brochure, Folder 23: “Peace Information Center, 1950”, Box 2, Abbott Simon Papers (TAM 346), Tamiment Library (TL), New York University (NYU).

<sup>20</sup> Du Bois, *In Battle for Peace*, 25, 28.

The real cause of the differences which threaten world war is not the spread of socialism or even of the complete socialism which Communism envisages. Socialism is spreading all over the world and even in the United States . . . . Against this spread of socialism, one modern institution is working desperately, and that is colonialism and colonialism has been and is and ever will be one of the chief causes of war . . . . Drunk with power we [the United States] are leading the world to hell in a new colonialism with the same old human slavery which once ruined us; and to a Third World War which will ruin the world.<sup>21</sup>

However, Du Bois also argued that “peace” must be a movement with mass appeal; if for him it signified a possibility for anticolonial work, that was not a prerequisite. At the New York regional conference one month earlier, he proposed that the peace movement was “not called to defend communism nor socialism nor the American way of life . . . . It simply insists that force is not reason and beliefs cannot be changed by suppression.”<sup>22</sup> Despite this argument, though, many pacifist organizations were very wary of communists and the peace congresses. The FOR and WRL, for example, considered the Soviet peace campaigns to be “insincere” and inattentive to the militarized expansion of the U.S.S.R., though some of the more militant activists left these organizations because of concern over their growing anticommunist climate. For the permutations of American Trotskyists, most of whom condemned the belligerency and expansion of both Moscow and Washington, the peace congress movement was much too one-sided and too blind to Stalinist policy.<sup>23</sup>

Most significantly, though, “peace” in the years after 1945 meant halting the production of atomic (and later, hydrogen) bombs, and it was the circulation of a world

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<sup>21</sup> Quoted in a document compiled by the Peace Information Center geared toward showing the continual emphasis of Du Bois’ political and rhetorical interest in peace, “W. E. B. Du Bois Speaks for Peace, 1900–1950,” Folder 1: “Du Bois, WEB: speeches re: Peace”, Box 2, TAM 346, TL, NYU.

<sup>22</sup> “W. E. B. Du Bois Speaks for Peace,” Folder 1, Box 2, TAM 346, TL, NYU.

<sup>23</sup> On the pacifists, see Wittner, *Rebels Against War*, 203–207; on Trotskyism, see Matthew Mantell’s discussion of “third force socialism,” in Matthew Edwin Mantell, “Opposition to the Korean War: A Study in American Dissent” (PhD diss., New York University, 1973), 43–45.

petition against atomic weapons that marked the potential for organizing antimilitarist peace on a global scale. Drafted in mid-March 1950 by the permanent committee of the Peace Congresses the petition against atomic weapons—known as the World Peace Appeal or “Stockholm Appeal”—became one of the clearest markers of global dissent to early cold war politics. Its circulation and signatures can be used to map the global left in the orbit of, but far beyond, the official Communist parties. A simple statement against atomic weapons, the Stockholm Appeal was designed both as an organizing tool and as an international forum in its own right. Addressed to “all men and women of good will,” the petition read:

- We demand the outlawing of atomic weapons as instruments of intimidation and mass murder of peoples. We demand strict international control to enforce this measure.
- We believe that any government which first uses atomic weapons against any other country whatsoever will be committing a crime against humanity and should be dealt with as a war criminal.
- We call on all men and women of good will thruout [sic] the world to sign this appeal.

Hundreds of millions of people signed the petition all over the world, from East Asia and Australasia to Eastern Europe and Latin America, making it perhaps the most widely circulated petition in modern history—by summer of 1950, reportedly 100 million had signed it. There were “mass signing” events, like the one held by Australian students and faculty at the University of Melbourne, and campaigns through organs of the Catholic church in Western and Eastern Europe, while leftist labor unions all over the world circulated the Stockholm Appeal to their members. Copies of the petition were printed in multiple languages, and targeted brochures were developed for labor, religious, and ethnic/racial groups. In French Equatorial Africa, 10,000 “peasants” from the Ivory

Coast, “summoned by tribal drum,” heard a description of the petition and signed en masse by inking their thumbprints, while more remote villages sent bamboo sticks with notches delineating signatures from their tribe.<sup>24</sup>

To publicize world peace work in the United States, and to disseminate the Stockholm Appeal nationally, American delegates from the world peace congresses formed the short-lived Peace Information Center (PIC) at a private meeting in New York City on April 3, 1950. Chaired by Du Bois and staffed in part by former CAW activist and U.S. Communist Party (CP) member Elizabeth Moos and American Youth Congress leader Abbott Simon, PIC aimed to “aid and stimulate the peace movement in the United States” through the publication and dissemination about national and international peace activities and the organization of programs of “cultural exchange” amongst international activists.<sup>25</sup>

By the following month, PIC was receiving letters asking for advice on how to set up peace councils, and mailing out 5,000 copies of their bulletin, *PeaceGram*, alongside

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<sup>24</sup> PIC press release, July 13 1950, Folder 23: “Peace Information Center, 1950”, Box 2, TAM 346, TL, NYU; PIC, “The People of the World Want Peace” brochure, Folder 23: “Peace Information Center, 1950”, Box 2, TAM 346, TL, NYU; Information Bulletin of the World Congress of the Defenders of Peace, 32 (28 Sept. 1950), Paris, page 1, in Folder 7: “World Peace Congress: (2nd: 1950: Warsaw, Poland), Sep-Dec 1950” Box 4, TAM 346, TL, NYU; Peace Information Center press releases, 1950, Folder 28, “Peace Information Center - Press Releases, 1950”, Box 2, TAM 346, TL, NYU; *PeaceGram* 1:1 (12 May 1950), Folder 30: “Peace-Gram (Peace Information Center), May-Jun 1950”, Box 2, TAM 346, TL, NYU; Gerald Horne, *Black and Red: W. E. B. Du Bois and the Afro-American Response to the Cold War, 1944–1963* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986), 126–131. For reports on the Ivory Coast, see: Letter from Ouezzin Coulibaly, Deputy of the Ivory Coast, to President of the World Peace Congress Frédéric Joliot-Curie, 29 May 1950, reprinted in Peace Information Center press release, “Campaign for Prohibition of the Atomic Bomb,” n.d., in Folder 28: “Peace Information Center - Press Releases, 1950”, Box 2, TAM 346, TL, NYU; and a reprint from “They Sign for Peace,” *Daily Worker* (New York), 24 Aug 1950, 4, printed in HUAC, *Communist “Peace Offensive*, 35.

<sup>25</sup> Letter to invitees from Provisional Committee, Americans for World Peace, 25 March 1950, and Provisional Committee of Americans for World Peace meeting minutes, 3 April 1950, both in Folder 26: “Peace Information Center, 1950 – Minutes”, Box 2, TAM 346, TL, NYU. Du Bois also gives an account of the PIC’s founding in *In Battle for Peace*, ch. 5. That Moos was a member of the CP is not mentioned by Du Bois nor in much of the PIC writing, but she was assuredly so, as revealed by the research of her granddaughter Kathy Moos Campbell and Amy Swerdlow around women’s organizing in the 1940s: Swerdlow, “CAW”, 307–308, 311–312, 433n42.

copies of the Stockholm Appeal. Throughout the spring, *PeaceGram* reported on prominent world figures who signed the Stockholm Appeal, and on the millions of signatures pouring in from around the world. Acting as a clearinghouse for information, by late June 1950, PIC had heard from thirty-five states, from isolated towns to big cities, including San Francisco; Seattle; Chicago; Philadelphia; Baltimore; Nashville; Detroit; York and Akron, PA; Boulder, CO; Elgin, IL; Carteret, Newark, and South Amboy, NJ; and Hampshire County, MA. Unitarian and Protestant church groups in Baltimore held peace meetings, while the Annual Conference of the Methodist Church and the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church both called for the prohibition of atomic bombs. The New York City-based National Labor Conference for Peace collected 25,000 signatures in Brooklyn's shops and docks and during noon rallies of Manhattan's garment workers, while union locals throughout the city were reportedly setting up peace committees. Two thousand signatures were collected in Omaha, Nebraska, while three thousand "youth" on the Washington-Canadian border pledged their commitment to peace. As of July 13, 1950, the PIC reported that one million Americans had signed the Stockholm Appeal and "pledged themselves to peace."<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> PIC Advisory Council meeting minutes, 11 May 1950 and 26 June 1950, Folder 26: "Peace Information Center, 1950 – Minutes", Box 2, TAM 346, TL, NYU; *PeaceGram* 1:1 (12 May 1950), Folder 30: "Peace-Gram (Peace Information Center), May-Jun 1950", Box 2, TAM 346, TL, NYU; *PeaceGram* 1:2 (31 May 1950), held in Folder 30: "Peace-Gram (Peace Information Cent) May-Jun 1950", Box 2, TAM 346, TL, NYU; PIC memo, 28 June 1950, Folder 28: "Peace Information Center - Press Releases, 1950", Box 2, TAM 346, TL, NYU; *PeaceGram* 1:3 (June 1950), held in Folder 30: "Peace-Gram (Peace Information Cent) May-Jun 1950", Box 2, TAM 346, TL, NYU; "Peace Activities in the U.S.A.," n.d. yet likely 1950, Folder 22: "Peace Activism (Korean War, Nuclear Weapons), Aug 1950-March 1953", Box 2, TAM 346, TL, NYU; "Incomplete list of peace organizations," Folder 8: "Illinois Peace Assembly (American Peace Crusade), 1950-52", Box 2, TAM 346, TL, NYU; PIC press release, 13 July 1950, Folder 23: "Peace Information Center, 1950", Box 2, TAM 346, TL, NYU.

***“The most dangerous hoax ever designed”***

Despite the global coalescence around a nuclear-free peace, in the United States “peace” was indelibly becoming linked to “subversion” through the rise of anticommunism in the late 1940s.<sup>27</sup> A network of citizen-activists, federal agencies, legislation, and congressional committees had been working against the perceived threat of communism since the 1930s. After the end of World War II, and with the rise of cold war policies—particularly with Truman’s 1947 containment doctrine—these professional anticommunists were able to legitimize themselves through official politics. Two weeks after publicizing his containment doctrine, Truman’s Executive Order 9835 established “loyalty boards” to review individual government workers’ subversive potential, and two weeks later, the Attorney General formalized a list of “Subversive Organizations” to inform the work of the boards.<sup>28</sup>

The House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) was formed in 1938 as a way to track communist and Nazi sympathizers in the U.S. and it quickly developed into an instrument of countersubversive politics. HUAC became a permanent congressional committee in early 1945, and by 1947 had begun conducting investigations of alleged Soviet espionage in Hollywood’s film industry and in the Truman and Roosevelt administrations, fueled by documents funneled to them by J. Edgar Hoover’s

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<sup>27</sup> The Communist peace offensive in the late 1940s has been much debated by historians, with many hewing close to the anticommunist line and arguing that the Communists, activists, and fellow travelers working under these auspices were either not serious about peace or perhaps duped by Moscow. For example, eminent peace studies scholar Charles DeBenedetti believed that it this work “devalued the political urgency of the peace cause.” DeBenedetti, *Peace Reform*, 155. Francisca de Haan has argued that historians’ understandings of the WIDF and international feminist organizing has been confined by the cold war frame that assumes WIDF women were dupes of Moscow: de Haan, “Continuing Paradigms.” Nikhil Pal Singh also makes this historiographical point vis-à-vis black Marxists: Nikhil Pal Singh, “Retracing the Black-Red Thread,” *American Literary History* 15, no. 4 (Winter 2003): 830–840, esp. 832.

<sup>28</sup> Landon R. Y. Storrs, *The Second Red Scare and the Unmaking of the New Deal Left* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 287. Ellen Schrecker’s work suggests that anticommunism was largely an elite-driven movement, in *Many Are the Crimes*.

Federal Bureau of Investigation.<sup>29</sup> By the late 1940s, HUAC's investigations were churning out scores of reports, including a 1949 report on CAW that led to the group's blacklisting and subsequent disbanding, and a 1951 report on the "Communist 'peace' offensive."<sup>30</sup>

Public investigations, criminal prosecutions, and political trials made the threat of a Moscow conspiracy seem more concrete, as did populist Senator Joseph McCarthy's continuing declarations after February 1950 that he had lists of 205 (or 57, depending on the speech) card-carrying Communists active in the State Department.<sup>31</sup> Anticommunism was largely a character drama, for the real emphasis of the trials was the evil and potential existence of communism, not specific crimes. The cultural construction of a communist threat "contaminating," "invading," and "subverting" American values and families quickly became a powerful cultural and political narrative, drawing on metaphors of disease, misogynist ideas of sexual predation and cloying motherhood, or the mutant space invaders of cold war science fiction.<sup>32</sup> When HUAC published a 1948

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<sup>29</sup> "House Committee on Un-American Activities," William K. Klingaman (ed.), *Encyclopedia of the McCarthy Era* (New York: Facts on File, 1996), 183–187; Schrecker, *Many Are the Crimes*, 215.

<sup>30</sup> HUAC's first chairman, Martin Dies, used the Committee to attack Roosevelt's New Deal programs, the CIO, and any radicals he didn't personally care for. HUAC, *Report on the Congress of American Women* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 23 Oct. 1949); HUAC, *Communist "Peace" Offensive*. "Countersubversive tradition" is the phrase of Ellen Schrecker, following Michael Rogin's concept of political demonology: Schrecker, *Many Are the Crimes*, 46–47.

<sup>31</sup> McCarthy's initial speech was given on February 9, 1950 to the Republican Women's Club in Wheeling, West Virginia.

<sup>32</sup> A review of anticommunist films in the 1950s reveals this narrative quite well, in particular: *Panic in the Streets*, directed by Elia Kazan, (20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox, 1950); *I Was a Communist for the FBI*, directed by Gordon Douglas (Warner Brothers, 1951); *My Son John*, directed by Leo McCary (Paramount, 1952); *On the Waterfront*, directed by Elia Kazan, (Columbia, 1954); *Suddenly*, directed by Lewis Allen (United Artists, 1954); *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, directed by Don Siegel (Allied Artists, 1956). The severe anti-mother misogyny of Cold War culture has been explored best by Ruth Feldstein, *Motherhood in Black and White: Race and Sex in American Liberalism, 1930–1965* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000). See also Matthew Frye Jacobson and Gaspar González, *What Have They Built You to Do? The Manchurian Candidate and Cold War America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), ch. 3; Schrecker, *Many Are the Crimes*, ch. 4.

pamphlet entitled *100 Things You Should Know About Communism*, over a million copies were distributed and sold.<sup>33</sup>

Thus, peace activists were arrested, picketed, harassed, and suspected of being communists. Some were, others were not, but it was not the fact of Communist Party membership that mattered but rather the linkage of social activism to a conspiratorial threat that needed to be isolated and purged. At the New York World Peace Congress in 1949, sponsored by elites of the liberal-left “cultural front” of the 1930s and 1940s, individual sessions were picketed, Picasso was denied a visa to attend, and the New York press vilified the conference.<sup>34</sup> Distributors of the Stockholm Appeal were arrested, harassed, and in some cases attacked. Four women in Philadelphia, ranging in age from teenager to grandmother, were indicted on a charge of treason by the District Attorney, as they went door-to-door canvassing with the Stockholm Appeal, two also holding copies of the CP’s *Daily Worker* paper.<sup>35</sup> As the Korean War began, attacks on activists circulating peace pamphlets and the Stockholm Appeal heightened and intensified into legal and sometimes mob violence.

By the first weeks of the Korean War, “peace”—not just the world peace congresses, but the idea of it—had become subversive in anticommunist political discourse. On July 5, 1950, John Foster Dulles, the Republican advisor to the State Department, testified before the Senate Foreign Relations subcommittee that “the leaders

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<sup>33</sup> Klingaman, *Encyclopedia*, 187; HUAC, *100 Things You Should Know About Communism* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1948).

<sup>34</sup> “The Cultural Front” is the term used by Michael Denning in *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Verso, 1996). The New York conference was organized by the National Council of the Arts, Sciences, and Professions: HUAC, *Communist “Peace” Offensive*, 12. Du Bois cites a sociologist’s survey of the press coverage of the New York conference, who found that there were 468 statements opposing the congress and only 28 in favor, and 344 false charges were printed by the New York press between March 23–30: Du Bois, *In Battle for Peace*, 27.

<sup>35</sup> Augusta Strong, “Four Women whose “Crime” is Wanting World Peace,” *Daily Worker* (New York), 3 June 1951, 8.

of communism” were “trying to create a public opinion of the world to believe that they are the nations that stand for peace” as a prelude to “an open war.” And in their 1951 report on the “Communist ‘Peace’ Offensive,” a Senate committee argued that this “conspiracy” was “the most dangerous hoax ever devised.” In what was perhaps true of both the Soviet Union as well as the United States, HUAC went on to argued that the “Communist military machine has boldly seized upon the word ‘peace’ in an effort to secure moral sanction for its own aggressive designs.”<sup>36</sup>

### ***War against peace***

The start of war in Korea in late June of 1950 split apart left/liberal coalitions across the landscape of the U.S. left, from labor activists and electoral third parties to pacifist coalitions and civil rights organizations. At its outbreak, 81% of the American public supported the war, according to a national Gallup poll, and the editorial board of the *New York Herald Tribune* spoke for mainstream opinion by saying that Truman’s war was “a basic contribution toward genuine peace.”<sup>37</sup> For the American left, the war served as a litmus test for organizations and individuals to ally themselves with anticommunism or against it.

As war became a path to an anticommunist peace in the formulation of the Truman Doctrine and U.N. Security Council, sections of the peace movement most interested in collective security and world government broke with their old allies to support the war. The formerly pacifist Federal Council of Churches, *Progressive*

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<sup>36</sup> HUAC, *Communist “Peace” Offensive*, epigraph, 1–2.

<sup>37</sup> Poll cited in Steven Casey, *Selling the Korean War: Propaganda, Politics, and Public Opinion in the United States, 1950–1953* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 35–6; Editorial cited in Mantell, “Opposition,” 26. The editorial is from the *New York Herald Tribune*, 28 June 1950.

magazine, and the AFL and CIO labor federations enthusiastically supported the war. The NAACP board of directors, who had long been suspicious of W. E. B. Du Bois's anticolonial and communist-affiliated peace activism, voted to support the war, as did A. Philip Randolph and the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, citing a fear of the Soviet Union's treatment of racial minorities.<sup>38</sup> Within the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), a longtime Quaker peace group, opinions split among the semi-autonomous chapters, and so the Philadelphia AFSC supported intervention while the New York City branch did not.<sup>39</sup> Henry Wallace, third-party presidential candidate for the Progressive Party, came out in support of the war (despite having campaigned against the Truman Doctrine in 1948), and left the Progressive Party so as not to have to "work with communists." Socialist Party leader Norman Thomas turned into an ardent cold warrior with the Korean War when he began advocating a policy of nuclear deterrence, prompting a split in the Socialist Party when antiwar members left en masse.<sup>40</sup>

In the growing anticommunist climate, fueled by wartime nationalism, antiwar protest came only from the radical left. On June 27<sup>th</sup>, the same day the U.N. Security Council voted to authorize member states to go to war in South Korea's defense, Congressman Vito Marcantonio of the American Labor Party-NY, put his opposition to the war in the *Congressional Record*.<sup>41</sup> Two days later, Marcantonio spoke at the first antiwar protest at New York City's Madison Square Garden, alongside Gus Hall of the CP and William Patterson of the African American-led legal defense organization, the Civil Rights Congress (CRC). The following week, the San Francisco branch of the

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<sup>38</sup> Mantell, "Opposition," 27–28; Wittner, *Rebels Against War*, 202. On the tensions between Du Bois and the NAACP board during his position there from 1944–1948, see Horne, *Black and Red*, chs. 7, 10.

<sup>39</sup> Mantell, "Opposition," 35.

<sup>40</sup> Mantell, "Opposition," 39–41.

<sup>41</sup> Mantell, "Opposition," 29–30.

National Union of Marine Cooks and Stewards—a union known for its radical, interracial, and communist-influenced politics—issued a statement demanding the end of American intervention in Korea, causing the CIO to place the local on probation. Black radicals staged a “hands-off Korea” rally sponsored by the CAA, the Harlem Trade Union Council, and the Provisional Harlem Committee for Peace and Freedom.<sup>42</sup>

Throughout July, August, and September protest from the war emanated from most sections of the radical left, even as the war itself split many liberal groups and activists away from their radical allies. For many pacifists, the new war seemed to inaugurate the coming of “World War III,” and their protests signify an attempt to shift public rhetoric and policy away from a militarized future. In early July, the AFSC issued a national statement calling for withdrawal from Korea, while radical pacifists Dave Dellinger and A. J. Muste held an emergency FOR meeting in New York to draft a statement to the U.N. strongly condemning the policy of containment. Moral and liberal pacifists hotly debated the question of whether a “police action”—Truman’s term for the war—counted as a war, and whether or not the threat of Soviet expansion could justify armed intervention.<sup>43</sup>

For radical pacifists like Muste, Dellinger, and *Catholic Worker* editor Robert Ludlow, this was not the question: fighting for peace was inextricable from fighting American militarism and denouncing the limited political frames of cold war politics. As Ludlow wrote in early 1951,

The question has been asked me if my only objection to war in Korea is because I believe all wars to be unchristian. If, in other words, I regard the American aims

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<sup>42</sup> Mantell, “Opposition,” 56 and 86. For more on the radicalism of the Marine Cooks and Stewards, see the “Marine Cooks and Stewards,” Waterfront Workers History Project, University of Washington, [http://depts.washington.edu/dock/marine\\_cooks.shtml](http://depts.washington.edu/dock/marine_cooks.shtml).

<sup>43</sup> Mantell, “Opposition,” 31–32.

to be just and good, but only object to the method by which they are being realized. My answer is definitely no. Apart entirely from the question of pacifism I am opposed to American armies in Korea or anywhere else in the world because I am opposed to that political and economic system called “the American way.”<sup>44</sup>

On July 12, PIC hosted a meeting in New York on “Korea, the Far East and World Peace,” where Du Bois argued that “Foreign intervention in the Korean civil war should be stopped immediately and arbitration by honest persons of world standing offered with the clear understanding that if Koreans prefer socialism or communism they must be free to choose.” Articulating the war as evidence of imperial aggression delineated by race, Du Bois framed the Korean War within the trajectory of decolonization, and pledged, “Against the action we Negroes of America solemnly protest and call to our support the peoples of all Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, South America, and the Seven Seas. We call the world to emancipate mankind.”<sup>45</sup>

Despite the isolation of radicals voicing explicitly antiwar views, the flare-up of war in Korea and the real possibility of atomic warfare served as endorsement for more Americans to sign the Stockholm Appeal. As the PIC happily reported on July 13, “signatures are coming from all over the country . . . because there is no part of America where the people do not want peace and do not want to avert the possibility of catastrophe.” Hundreds and thousands of signatures were gathered outside of larger cities with leftist traditions, but also in the deep South and far West: the PIC reported 3,000 signatures gathered in Texas, 350 in Georgia, 3,000 in North Carolina, 1,000 in Alabama, 1,000 in Utah, and 350 in Montana. “Petitions come folded in small envelopes from

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<sup>44</sup> *Catholic Worker* 17, Jan. 1951, quoted in Mantell, “Opposition,” 34.

<sup>45</sup> Statement by Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois at PIC meeting on Korea, the Far East and World Peace, 12 July 1950, New York City, held in Folder 28: “Peace Information Center - Press Releases, 1950”, Box 2, TAM 346, TL, NYU.

Texas,” the PIC reported, “packed in brown wrapping paper from Seattle, rolling in from Butte, Montana, Portland, Oregon, Atlanta, Ga., New Orleans, La., Pittsburgh, Pa., from farmers in Minnesota and Nebraska, from ministers in Ohio.” 400,000 of these had been collected since the start of the Korean War.<sup>46</sup>

### *Peace is foreign to the body politic*

The drive to war in Korea, and the splitting of liberal/left alliances fueled anticommunists’ desires to eradicate an embattled and isolated radical left. The anticommunist drive was particularly vicious in labor unions, where both radical politics and countersubversive violence had long existed in mutual tension. In late July, workers at the Nash automobile plant in Milwaukee handing out the Stockholm Appeal and protesting the Korean War were ordered to leave the plant by UAW and CIO officials, while several of their coworkers staged a wildcat strike, refusing to keep working until the protesters were removed. The next day, 55-year-old autoworker Ray Webb, who had signed the Stockholm Appeal, was carried from the factory and dropped from a third-story window, fracturing his back. In Detroit, police had to come to the rescue of a couple attempting to circulate the Stockholm Appeal amongst a group of hostile workers, while activists in Los Angeles had to be rescued by security guards after attempting to disseminate peace flyers at a construction site.<sup>47</sup> That same summer, Louis Fischer and Calvin De Fillipis, UAW members at a plant in Linden, NJ, were beaten and chased by fellow workers for handing out peace pamphlets. Fischer and De Fillipis were held at a combined \$40,000 bail, while their attackers were released on \$1,000 bail. De Fillipis’s

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<sup>46</sup> PIC press release, 13 July 1950, Folder 23: “Peace Information Center, 1950”, Box 2, TAM 346, TL, NYU.

<sup>47</sup> Mantell, “Opposition,” 92–93.

own union local dismissed him “for being loyal to a political ideology rather than a union,” and he was later indicted by a New Jersey Grand Jury, not to be exonerated until March 10, 1952.<sup>48</sup>

Indeed, as labor federations and union internationals turned toward anticommunism during the Korean War, they were able to isolate and neutralize radical elements that had long advocated labor-based black freedom politics. The Korean War thwarted the development of this civil rights unionism, particularly in the South. In Memphis, members of the black-led, left-wing Local 19 of the National Maritime Union were arrested for circulating the Stockholm Appeal. Though the local sought to support its own members, the CIO and Memphis Industrial Union Council did not, using the excuse of the Korean War and the event of the Stockholm Appeal to undermine leftist locals.<sup>49</sup> When Communist International Longshore and Warehouse Union leader Harry Bridges sought to pass a union-wide resolution opposing the Korean War, and advocated an antiwar strike amongst dockworkers to refuse to load ships headed to Korea, he was ordered to jail. More conservative locals, instead, passed resolutions in support of the war effort.<sup>50</sup>

By August of 1950, 65% of respondents to a national poll agreed that the United States had acted correctly by intervening in Korea.<sup>51</sup> National agreement around the war legitimated legal and police repression of antiwar work, a process eased by anticommunist repression. On August 2, five activists were jailed by the Kings County

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<sup>48</sup> Mantell, “Opposition,” 90.

<sup>49</sup> Michael K. Honey, *Southern Labor and Black Civil Rights: Organizing Memphis Workers* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), ch. 9, esp. 264–5. I want to thank Mike Honey for initially suggesting that I look into the Stockholm Appeal as a way to gauge antiwar sentiment and anticommunist repression.

<sup>50</sup> Mantell, “Opposition,” 87. Local 19 in Seattle and Local 10 in San Francisco both passed pro-war resolutions. I thank George Robertson for looking into the ILWU’s wartime stance for me.

<sup>51</sup> American Institute of Public Opinion poll, quoted in Mantell, “Opposition,” 163.

Court for six months for painting “Peace” and “No Hydrogen Bombs” in Prospect Park, Brooklyn. When the New York City Labor Conference for Peace applied for a permit to hold an antiwar rally in New York’s Union Square, the police department, then the Mayor, then the state Supreme Court declined their request. When they held the rally anyway, on August 2<sup>nd</sup>, the crowd of between 2,000 (the police estimate) and 15,000 (the organizers’ estimate) was charged by mounted police swinging clubs. The liberal/leftist New York *Daily Compass* reported on the “screams of agony” from protesters, with journalist Sid Cline writing, “I am not a radical . . . . My intellect has rejected the doctrine of Communism . . . . Today, . . . . my intellect and emotions must reject the policies of the United States as well.”<sup>52</sup>

Anticommunism as a cultural program, a political discourse, and a legislative and judicial reality sought to sever “subversives” from the body politic, rendering them available for violence, jailing, and public shaming. In linking “communism” to “subversion” and “peace” to “communism,” all peace activists, no matter their political affiliation, were suspect. This version of politics always hinged on potentialities and suspicions, an approach that intersected with racial, sexual, and moral definitions of what might or might not be “secure” in the United States. On August 16, 1950, Public Law 733 authorized state and military agencies to immediately dismiss workers who were deemed a “security risk,” which led mostly to the dismissal of those suspected of being homosexuals, alcoholics, or family members of communists.<sup>53</sup>

Anticommunism was reinforced by white supremacy, and black radicals were subjected to particular repressions and vitriol, as structures of American racism and

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<sup>52</sup> Mantell, “Opposition,” 104–107, 107n50.

<sup>53</sup> Storrs, *Second Red Scare*, 288; David K. Johnson, *The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

McCarthyism overlapped to isolate and silence them. The relationship of black Americans to the left has been, as Nikhil Pal Singh has written, “vexed and intertwined from the start,” but throughout the 1930s and 1940s in particular, communism had been an important “temporary home” for thinking the relationship between race and capital, freedom and social transformation.<sup>54</sup> Protests against lynching, segregation, and U.S. racial restrictions all became tied to the radical left in the political taxonomy of government surveillance. As peace became subversive in the 1950s, so too did any African American progressive or radical politics. Already existing racism within the United States made black activists particularly vulnerable to McCarthyist attacks. Anticommunist repression isolated black radicals from previous allies and institutions in the white left, who were afraid of being tinged with “communism” and from larger global networks of which they had been a part. Paul Robeson, Claudia Jones, and Du Bois all faced passport and travel restrictions, keeping them from traveling within the transnational alliances of anticolonial activists they worked within, while the Memphis unionists found themselves abandoned by their union international. The isolation of black radicals was made easier by the acceptance of many liberal civil rights organizations of anticommunist rhetoric: Du Bois, indeed, was available for forming the PIC only after being hounded out of the NAACP in 1948 for his insistence on anticolonial politics and his refusal to renounce communism.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> These are the insightful formulations of Nikhil Pal Singh, “Retracing the Black-Red Thread,” 836 and 838.

<sup>55</sup> Gerald Horne details Du Bois’s cold war career and makes this point explicit in *Black and Red*. See also Nikhil Pal Singh, *Black is A Country: Race and the Unfinished Struggle for Democracy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 115–116, 164–165; Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire*, ch. 7; and Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*, 61–78.

The McCarran Internal Security Act, passed on September 23, 1950, required Communist agencies to register with the U.S. Attorney General. The McCarran Act served as the legal instrument for arresting and deporting foreign-born black radicals who had been formative in the creation of diasporic anticolonial politics in the 1930s and 1940s, among them C. L. R. James and Claudia Jones.<sup>56</sup> Singer, Communist, and black freedom activist Paul Robeson—perhaps one of the most famous global ambassadors for diasporic, anticolonial, and communist politics—found his passport revoked entirely in 1950, and was even prohibited from traveling to Canada, leading him to stage a series of protest concerts at the Washington–British Columbia border.<sup>57</sup> Entertainer Josephine Baker, who became an outspoken critic of American racism during the Korean War era, found her concerts cancelled, her travel restricted, and her person excluded from the United States, through years of efforts by the State Department and U.S. Information Services.<sup>58</sup> Du Bois found that his mail consistently went awry or arrived opened because of constant FBI surveillance, prompting him to complain to the Postmaster General.<sup>59</sup> From 1952 until 1960, Du Bois and his wife and fellow activist Shirley Graham Du Bois found their passport applications denied, cutting them off from the world peace congresses and, most importantly, from relationships with leaders and movements in the decolonizing nations of Africa.<sup>60</sup> In restricting travel and deporting and excluding activists, the containment of global radical networks was literally forced into a national frame.

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<sup>56</sup> Singh, *Black is a Country*, 164; Storrs, *Second Red Scare*, 288.

<sup>57</sup> Laurel Sefton MacDowell, “Paul Robeson in Canada: A Border Story,” *Labour/Le Travail* 51 (Spring 2003): 171–221. The Seattle chapter of the Civil Rights Congress defended his case.

<sup>58</sup> Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*, 67–77.

<sup>59</sup> Horne, *Black and Red*, 210–211.

<sup>60</sup> Horne, *Black and Red*, 213–221, 331.

Outside of the very public repression of visible figures like the Du Boises, Robeson, and Baker, rank-and-file activists found the forces of white supremacy and anticommunism embodied together in vigilante groups like the Ku Klux Klan. Writing to the PIC in August 1950 from “a Georgia country town,” an anonymous activist described the experience of most antiracist, antiwar activists in this moment:

I have some signatures for you. I collected them in a small town. This letter was mailed out of town, for I do not want to expose these people in a Georgia country town. The law would like to get such names so they could kill them. A friend of mine and I had our pictures in the newspapers. Last week a group of KKK came over to us. They came over and said: “You’re both Communists. We’ve got a great mind to kill you both.” They held us for twenty minutes or more. My friend broke away and called a taxi. All the KKK ran after him and knocked him down. I was running, screaming, hollering blue murder, calling for help. We jumped into the taxi, but the thugs were still fighting him. We went to our home and I gave him first aid. He put [up] a good fight. We plan to work until victory is won. I talk to the people here daily and all people here want to sign the petition. Some of them are so afraid of the KKK they are chilled. The day will come soon when we people have the rights that our fathers fought and died for. I am unemployed and hope to do better in the future. I enclose \$3, maybe that will help a little.<sup>61</sup>

On July 13, 1950, several weeks after the war’s beginning, Secretary of State Dean Acheson publicly targeted the PIC for distributing the Stockholm Appeal, though they had been doing so since March, alleging that the Stockholm Appeal was “a propaganda trick in the spurious ‘peace offensive’ of the Soviet Union.”<sup>62</sup> Du Bois replied immediately in turn, drawing attention to the wartime threats of nuclear violence and anticommunist discourse:

There is in your statement no intimation of a desire for peace, of a realization of the horror of another World War, or of sympathy with the crippled, impoverished and dead who pay for fighting . . . Today in this country it is becoming standard reaction to call anything “communist” and therefore subversive and unpatriotic, which anybody for any reason dislikes. We feel strongly that this tactic has

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<sup>61</sup> “From Our Mail,” 14 September 1950, Folder 23: “Peace Information Center, 1950”, Box 2, TAM 346, TL, NYU.

<sup>62</sup> Acheson’s statement was reprinted in the *New York Times*, 13 July 1950, 7.

already gone too far; that it is not sufficient today to trace a proposal to a communist stance in order to dismiss it with contempt.<sup>63</sup>

On August 25, the PIC was directed by the Department of Justice to register as “agents of a foreign principal” under the 1938 Foreign Agents Registration Act, alleging that the PIC were acting on behalf of the U.S.S.R. After retaining legal counsel, Abbott Simon and Du Bois both refused to comply on the grounds that they could not do so, the PIC being wholly American in origin. As their attorney, Gloria Agrin wrote, this request seemed to enforce not just national loyalty, but a parochialism in intellectual discourse and political thought.

The inference which you and Department [of Justice] have made seems to be founded only on the fact that there are people throughout the world who may have, and be expressing, ideas and concepts similar to those expressed by the Peace Information Center . . . . It would seem, therefore, to be a startlingly new pattern of reasoning that any idea or activity which is not indigenous to, and confined to, the United States, will subject its holder to the inference that he acts for some person abroad. Concomitantly, such a concept would limit the thought processes of American citizens to the four corners of the United States boundaries.<sup>64</sup>

Facing a costly legal battle, the PIC voted to disband on October 12, but “letters kept pouring in asking for petitions, asking about further peace congresses, asking what anyone could do to help,” so the office retained its staff to conclude business through the end of the year. Regardless, on February 9, 1951, PIC was notified that a grand jury in Washington, D.C. had indicted the PIC and its officers, Du Bois, Simon, Elizabeth Moos, stenographer Sylvia Sokoloff, and treasurer Kyrle Elkin.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Du Bois discusses Acheson’s allegations and reprints his own response to Acheson in *In Battle for Peace*, 37–40.

<sup>64</sup> Agrin’s letter is reprinted by Du Bois, *In Battle for Peace*, 52–53.

<sup>65</sup> Du Bois, *In Battle for Peace*, 56.

At the arraignment on February 16 in Washington, D.C., the 83-year-old Du Bois, was fingerprinted, examined for concealed weapons, and handcuffed, drawing outrage from around the world.<sup>66</sup> Though the prosecution's case fell apart during the trial in November 1951 and Du Bois and his colleagues were cleared, the support campaign around the defense took considerable time and effort.<sup>67</sup> And despite the PIC's eventual victory, the initial indictment signified one version of anticommunist peace proposed to the U.S. judiciary: unthinkable except as a description of war and alleged to be, quite literally, a "foreign" concept.

### *Sojourners and mothers*

In Korea, General Douglas MacArthur's promise to send troops "home by Christmas" of 1950 and to retake the entire peninsula was soon shattered by the entrance of the PRC into the war and the routing of U.S., ROK, and U.N. forces southward. At a press conference on November 30, President Truman argued that the entrance of the Chinese into the war signified a new phase of Communist aggression, and promised to use atomic weapons, if necessary, to protect a "just and peaceful world order."<sup>68</sup> Asian delegates to the U.N. immediately protested, as did the U.S. allies in the Security Council, France and the United Kingdom.<sup>69</sup>

Truman's threat of nuclear weapons re-energized the embattled peace movement, as liberal journalists and moral pacifists who had been initially pro-intervention made

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<sup>66</sup> Du Bois, *In Battle for Peace*, 71.

<sup>67</sup> Du Bois' *In Battle for Peace* is a chronicle of this effort.

<sup>68</sup> "Truman Statement on Korea," *New York Times*, 1 Dec. 1950, 3.

<sup>69</sup> A.M. Rosenthal, "U.N. Circles Wary of Atom Bomb Use," *New York Times*, 1 Dec. 1950, 5; Harold Callender, "Paris is Opposed to Atom Bomb Use," *New York Times*, 1 Dec. 1950, 4; "Britons Dismayed by Truman's Talk," *New York Times*, 1 Dec. 1950, 8.

their way toward more radical antiwar positions around atomic weapons, racial politics, and U.S. power. The most radical of black newspapers, like Charlotta Bass's *California Eagle* and the New York periodical *Masses and Mainstream* had already been arguing that the Korean War was "a white man's war" and urging black people to "identify their own cause with the cause of colonial liberation."<sup>70</sup> After Truman's speech, however, the *Pittsburgh Courier* and *Baltimore Afro-American* followed suit.<sup>71</sup> Dissent was legitimized even further by the rise of a conservative antiwar argument during the November congressional elections, as Republicans criticized the Korean War as "an unnecessary crisis" in order to gain inroads into the Democratic congressional majority.<sup>72</sup>

In response to Truman's threats of nuclear war, on December 1, 1950, Paul Robeson led a sit-in of 150 teenagers at the United Nations headquarters at Lake Success to call for an immediate cease-fire in Korea. In the afternoon, twenty-one busloads of women and children from New York City unloaded at the U.N., and demanded to be heard in the Economic and Social Council meeting. As reported by the *New York Times*, "Housewives from all five boroughs of New York City, the majority of them Brooklynites, clustered about the curved council table, filled every seat and packed the aisle," while "[c]hildren holding colored balloons stamped 'Peace' chased one another." Though the women were denied a meeting with chief U.S. delegate Warren Austin or Secretary General Trygve Lie, they nonetheless stated their claim to a voice at the U.N.

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<sup>70</sup> Mantell, "Opposition," 53.

<sup>71</sup> Mantell, "Opposition," 77. The *Courier* and *Afro-American* would become two of the best news sources writing about racism in the wartime military; see this dissertation's previous chapter five.

<sup>72</sup> Mantell calls this the rise of "pragmatic dissent." Mantell, "Opposition," 61–66. Both Vito Marcantonio and Du Bois ran for New York state Congressman and Senator (respectively) on the American Labor Party ticket, and received a marginal share of the vote. Du Bois was running to publicize an antiwar stance; Marcantonio, subjected to a vicious wave of redbaiting, lost his long-held congressional seat.

through a petition to Austin, declaring, “We will fight for peace no matter how difficult that fight may be, in the name of our children we pledge it.”<sup>73</sup>

This protest was the work of American Women for Peace (AWP), formed in the previous August by former CAW activists and women from the radical black left. The AWP reframed CAW’s expansive, global, rights and labor-based feminism and melded it more closely to a maternalist argument against the Korean War, atomic weapons, and the cold war emphasis on “preventive war.”<sup>74</sup> The interracial AWP and black women’s organizations, like the Harriet Tubman Association in Harlem, symbolized a demographic trend of antiwar and anti-cold war opposition. Of the populations polled throughout the war, black women were the most consistently antiwar voice; overall, white women also opposed the war in greater numbers than white men, particularly as discontent mounted over the draft and the lingering and seemingly pointless battles during the drawn-out negotiations. By the spring of 1951, national Gallup polls showed that over 50% of black women and 40% of white women polled believed the war to be a mistake (see Appendix C).<sup>75</sup>

These figures suggested not a story of political conformity and of leftist declension, but rather, a politics emerging from the embodied subjectivities of black and

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<sup>73</sup> David Anderson, “Youthful ‘Peace’ Gathering Stages a Protest Sit-Down at Lake Success,” *New York Times*, 1 Dec. 1950, 7.

<sup>74</sup> Harriet Hyman Alonso, “Mayhem and Moderation: Women Peace Activists During the McCarthy Era,” in Joanne Meyerowitz (ed.), *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945–1960* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), 146; AWP Declaration of Principles, n.d. yet likely 1950, Folder 7: “American Women for Peace, 1951”, Box 1, American Veterans for Peace papers (TAM 246), TL, NYU.

<sup>75</sup> In addition to the poll sources cited in the tables, both Daniel Widener and Gerald Gill have relied on this poll data to examine the wartime attitudes of black Americans, and black women in particular. Daniel Widener, “Seoul City Sue and the Bugout Blues: Black American Narratives of the Forgotten War,” in *Afro Asia: Revolutionary Political and Cultural Connections between African Americans and Asian Americans*, ed. Fred Ho and Bill V. Mullen (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 55–87; Gerald Robert Gill, “Afro-American Opposition to the United States’ Wars of the Twentieth Century: Dissent, Discontent and Disinterest,” (unpublished PhD dissertation, Howard University, 1985), 294–318.

white women. The wartime opposition reflected in these surveys was guided and shaped by small but vibrant communities of communist-affiliated black and white women radicals. This red and black feminism of the early 1950s was the continuation of a set of radical and sometimes intersectional politics centered around the shared visions and tensions in communist-affiliated black and white women's protests during the early cold war.<sup>76</sup>

Leftist black women's organizing drew on networks and solidarities developed through the 1930s and 1940s. Though this work suffered under anticommunist repression, a small, New York-based community remained through the 1950s. Many women were affiliated with the Communist Party and associated organizations but, as with Du Bois, also organized outside and beyond Party ideas and structures. Rather than serving as wives and supporters, these women were, in the words of historian Dayo F. Gore, "intellectual architects" of a black-led feminism, instrumental in "the articulation of an expansive political vision that engaged the black freedom struggle and women's rights organizing" in the context of the early cold war.<sup>77</sup> The AWP involved a number of prominent African American women activists, like labor activist Halois Moorhead and Thelma Dale Perkins, who had most forcefully made an argument in the WIDF for the organization to focus on the struggles of black women.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> "Red feminism" is the concept of Kate Weigand, and I follow her in terming these struggles a kind of "feminism," reflecting our contemporary understanding of the term and the way gendered subjectivity was central to their work. Communists at the time sought to distance themselves from "feminism" as embodied by the white, middle-class National Women's Party. Kate Weigand, *Red Feminism: American Communism and the Making of Women's Liberation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001). See also Dayo F. Gore, *Radicalism at the Crossroads: African American Women Activists in the Cold War* (New York: New York University Press, 2011). Importantly, red and black feminists challenged much of the Communist Party and Old Left positions on "the woman question" and the "Negro question."

<sup>77</sup> Gore, *Radicalism at the Crossroads*, 6, 9.

<sup>78</sup> Gore, *Radicalism at the Crossroads*, 59–60.

Black women radicals became leading figures in leftist women's organizations like the WIDF, CAW, and AWP, and were central in theorizing the gains and limits of interracial solidarity within women's organizing and fusing women's peace activism to global colonialism and American racism.<sup>79</sup> At the AWP-sponsored women's workshop meeting of the Chicago Peace Congress in 1951, African American poet Beulah Richardson (Beah Richards) delivered her poem "A Black Woman Speaks . . . of White Womanhood, of White Supremacy, of Peace" and received a standing ovation from the mostly white audience. As historian Dayo F. Gore has noted, the "boundaries of interracial solidarity were most forcefully tested" in women's organizations like the AWP, as black women like Richardson delivered both a vision of shared struggle and a gendered understanding of white supremacy that saw white womanhood as central to American racial formation. In this sense, Richardson called on white women not to see black women's activism as adding knowledge about race into their struggle, but for white women to investigate their own position vis-à-vis white supremacy. Though these politics were vexed and challenged, the AWP did, notably, draft this statement into their first anniversary document:

We seek unity of all American women regardless of political or religious beliefs or national origin; we especially call for unity between white and Negro women, recognizing that the Negro women's struggle for first class citizenship is inseparable from the fight for peace. Moreover, without the strength and courage of our Negro sisters peace cannot be obtained. A lasting peace must necessarily include justice and full equality for the Negro people in the United States as well as the darker peoples living in colonial subjection.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Gore, *Radicalism at the Crossroads*, chs. 2, 3.

<sup>80</sup> AWP, "Peace is the Only Victory," (1951: New York), held in Folder 7: "American Women for Peace, 1951", Box 1, TAM 246, TL, NYU; Gore, *Radicalism at the Crossroads*, 46–47, 58–64, esp. 61.

Beyond the United States, the AWP sought to maintain an international feminist solidarity, particularly important in the midst of national wartime discourse that only attended to the violence against U.S. soldiers. In its literature, the AWP argued that antiwar work could not be limited to grief over losing American men, but that American women's "hearts go out to Korean women whose loss of their sons, husbands and brothers has been no less to bear."<sup>81</sup> The AWP also sought and exchanged greetings with the Women's Democratic Club in Tokyo, and pledged support for working against the proliferation of nuclear weapons.<sup>82</sup>

As had CAW and many women's pacifist groups before them, the AWP argued for women's particular stake in peace through their function as mothers and potential mothers. Though this relied on an essentialist reading of all women as "mothers," it also allowed AWP to reappropriate mainstream discourse about women and motherhood, which saw women as the guardians (and potential violators) of white American manhood.<sup>83</sup> Instead, the AWP argued that motherhood gave them custodianship over the future, above and beyond the one being determined by cold war policies. In its declaration of principles, AWP argued, "Because the life-giving function of women uniquely belongs to women, there is evinced a natural desire to fulfill the responsibility to preserve life and especially to protect it from the dangers of useless and criminal warfare." For the AWP, then, peace was also an issue of militarization, class, and social welfare, for "every penny spent for war preparations and atom bomb stockpiling means food and shelter and adequate schools taken from our children." "Mothers!" AWP

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<sup>81</sup> AWP, "Peace is the Only Victory," (1951: New York), held in Folder 7: "American Women for Peace, 1951", Box 1, TAM 246, TL, NYU.

<sup>82</sup> AWP press release, 7 Sept. 1951, Folder 7: "American Women for Peace, 1951", Box 1, TAM 246, TL, NYU.

<sup>83</sup> For more on early cold war discourse about motherhood, see Feldstein, *Motherhood in Black and White*.

literature called, “dog tags are death tags!”, and urged women to send the President “Mother’s Day postcards” lobbying for an end to the war in Korea and the stockpiling of bombs, and to call city officials and ask them to spend money on homes, schools, and hospitals instead of civil preparedness drills.<sup>84</sup>

AWP’s adherence to motherhood as a political identity was perhaps calculated to draw in larger and larger groups of women in a moment of rising anticommunism. It also resonated with women across the country, as mothers of Korean GIs (including 100 women in Akron, Ohio) sent individual petitions to President Truman urging the immediate withdrawal of troops.<sup>85</sup> Though the AWP was based in the leftist culture of New York City, it spread at a grassroots level across the country, serving as a larger umbrella organization under which local women’s peace groups could connect and find resources. By the middle of the Korean War, AWP had branches in Chicago, Salt Lake City, Miami, Boston, Los Angeles, suburban Connecticut, and in the predominantly black and Puerto Rican neighborhoods of New York City and its boroughs, including the East Bronx, Harlem, Yorkville, Tremont, and the Interborough.<sup>86</sup> Indeed, trailblazing Trinidadian Communist Claudia Jones—secretary of the CP’s Women’s Commission, and a previous affiliate of CAW and the WIDF—noted in June of 1951 that there was an

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<sup>84</sup> Flyers, n.d. but likely 1951, Folder 7: “American Women for Peace, 1951”, Box 1, TAM 246, TL, NYU; American Peace Crusade Bulletin, 29 April 1952, Folder 3: “American Peace Crusade, 1950-1953”, Box 1, TAM 246, TL, NYU.

<sup>85</sup> Mantell, “Opposition,” 70.

<sup>86</sup> Alonso, “Mayhem and Moderation,” 147; “American Women for Peace Celebrate First Anniversary,” *Peace Crusader* 2:2 (14 Sept. 1951), Folder 3: “American Peace Crusade, 1950–1953”, Box 1, TAM 246, TL, NYU. The AWP explicitly endorsed the grassroots, neighborhood organizing approach: see their 1951 organizing pamphlet “We Must Wage Peace,” Folder 7: “American Women for Peace, 1951”, Box 1, TAM 246, TL, NYU.

upswell of antiwar and political action amongst a broad swath of women's organizations, from black radicals to the white middle-class mainstream.<sup>87</sup>

But at other moments, motherhood made women activists particularly vulnerable to anticommunist repression. Jean Field, an outspoken peace activist in Los Angeles who had called the Korean War an imperialist adventure, was denied custody of her two children by court order because Judge Harold B. Schweitzer believed that Field's "leanings toward communism [made her] unfit to raise children." The AWP helped organize defense rallies and panels for Field's cause.<sup>88</sup> In a similar case several months later, Margaret Fanning Donaldson, a Communist Party member, former union activist, and peace activist in Seattle sought a divorce from her husband on the grounds of drinking and excessive cruelty. The court initially denied Donaldson permanent custody of her then one-year-old son because of her political beliefs and the fear that her son would not be brought up as "a loyal American." The decision was only partially overturned two years later when the court nullified her estranged husband's claims.<sup>89</sup>

Poet Beulah Richardson was also a leading member of the Harriet Tubman Association, a black women's antiwar and racial justice organization based in Harlem. Alongside other prominent black activists and cultural workers like Shirley Graham, Eslanda Robeson, Charlotta Bass, Louise Patterson, Bessie Mitchell, Alice Childress, and Rosalie McGee, the Harriet Tubman Association sought to solidify a "historic move on

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<sup>87</sup> Claudia Jones, "The Rising Peace Demand at Women's Conventions," *Daily Worker* (New York), 15 June 1951, 7–8.

<sup>88</sup> "Jean Field Fights," *Peacemaker* 2, no. 8 (Sept. 1951), Folder 7: "American Women for Peace, 1951", Box 1, TAM 246, TL, NYU. Importantly, Field and the AWP connected Field's custody struggle to the "legal lynchings" of black men falsely accused of murder and rape, and Field spoke alongside Velma Washington, wife of Paul Washington, whose imprisonment on charge of raping a white woman was being fought by the Civil Rights Congress in Louisiana; and Bessie Mitchell, sister of Collin English, one of the Trenton Six falsely accused of murdering a white New Jersey shopkeeper, and whose defense was undertaken by the NAACP and CP.

<sup>89</sup> Betty Feldman, "A Mother's Fight for her 3-Year-Old Child," *Daily Worker* (New York), 8 July 1951, 8.

the part of Negro women who in this period must give special leadership in the interest of freedom and justice.”<sup>90</sup> Centrally, these black women activists understood the United States racial regime as a battlefield reflected on the hills of Korea, and sold thousands of buttons reading “Bring the boys home to fight Jim Crow.” Association activists also hosted vigils honoring “the Negro People’s martyred dead,” killed through legal lynchings, police brutality, and mob violence.<sup>91</sup> In September of 1951, the Tubman Association organized a three-day “Sojourn for Truth and Justice” to protest racial policies and the war in Washington, D.C., sending 130 black women to demand redress “for race hatred” from the U.S. Department of Justice.<sup>92</sup> The Sojourn led to the formation of Sojourners for Truth and Justice, a black women-led civil rights organization that drew from the lived experiences of black women as workers, mothers, and targets of racial and sexual violence.<sup>93</sup>

In this sense, the battle for peace was an effort to define a peace that would address the lived experiences of black and white women. Though there was no one feminist or leftist consensus on that question, the Korean War highlighted a number of relevant issues that drew linkages between black women’s lives and cold war battlefields.

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<sup>90</sup> Shirley Graham was a world peace congress participant and second wife of W. E. B. Du Bois; Eslanda Robeson was a lifelong writer, activist, and intellectual, married to Paul Robeson; Charlotta Bass published the consistently antiwar African American newspaper the *California Eagle*; Louise Patterson was a writer and close colleague of Langston Hughes, as well as wife of Civil Rights Congress leader William Patterson; Alice Childress was a celebrated playwright, and the first black writer to have work professionally staged in New York City; Rosalie McGee was the widow of Willie McGee, executed in 1951 under the false charges of raping a white woman, whose case was taken up by the Civil Rights Congress and became an international cause célèbre; and Bessie Mitchell was the sister of one of the Trenton Six (see previous note 88). Letter to supporters about the Sojourn for Truth and Justice from Harriet Tubman Center, 19 Sept. 1951, Folder 18: “Leaflets, Miscellaneous, 1950–54”, Box 1, TAM 246, TL, NYU.

<sup>91</sup> “Across the Country,” and “Editorial”, *Peacemaker* 2, no. 5 (June 1951), Folder 7: “American Women for Peace, 1951”, Box 1, TAM 246, TL, NYU.

<sup>92</sup> Letter to supporters about the Sojourn for Truth and Justice from Harriet Tubman Center, 19 Sept. 1951, Folder 18: “Leaflets, Miscellaneous, 1950–54”, Box 1, TAM 246, TL, NYU; Gore, *Radicalism at the Crossroads*, 1, 85–89.

<sup>93</sup> Gore, *Radicalism at the Crossroads*, 85–89.

As the AWP argued in the *Peacemaker*, “the sentiments of Negro women” merged “with the over-all demand for peace” in their doubled exposure to wartime racial violence, as “Negro women . . . have seen their sons, husbands and brothers made expendable on the Korean front simultaneously with the growing racist brutalities against the Negro people at home.” As the *Peacemaker* reported, “One elderly Negro woman, when polled on the Korean War, said ‘Young woman, you need not ask me how I feel about peace. Why, we Negro people have been at war all the time.’”<sup>94</sup>

### ***“The absence of protest against the orgy of agony”***

What had peace come to mean by 1951? National polls showed a general public war-weariness: by February 1951, 73% of respondents wanted to simply reclaim South Korea and then withdraw, if the Communists followed suit; the following month, 50% of respondents said they believed American intervention had been a mistake.<sup>95</sup> To some extent, this was reflected in the breadth of peace organizing beyond the radical left. Though there were less peace rallies, they were better attended, and pulled a wider geographical and class representation, while elsewhere, organizers reported a lessening of “baiting and antagonism” and more interest in discussion when they circulated the Stockholm Appeal and antiwar literature.<sup>96</sup>

In early 1951, pacifist preacher Dr. Willard Uphaus helped to form the American Peace Crusade (APC) to serve as a clearinghouse for all of the left peace organizations, and continued where PIC had left off (even hiring Abbott Simon as executive secretary).

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<sup>94</sup> “Editorial”, *Peacemaker* 2:5 (June 1951), Folder 7: “American Women for Peace, 1951”, Box 1, TAM 246, TL, NYU.

<sup>95</sup> Cited in Mantell, “Opposition,” 162–163.

<sup>96</sup> Betty Millard, “This Month’s Peacemaker,” *Peacemaker* 2, no. 8 (Sept. 1951), page 2, Folder 7: “American Women for Peace, 1951”, Box 1, TAM 246, TL, NYU; Mantell, “Opposition,” 174.

APC organized a protest-defense campaign for Du Bois, Simon, and their compatriots in the PIC, and published *The Peace Crusader* newspaper to report on global and national peace work. Trying to expand the growing sense of war-weariness into a protest movement, APC adopted the slogan “Let the People Speak for Peace!” and launched a national petition campaign for a five-power peace pact. Activists hoped that these low-stakes actions might serve as an organizing tool for local chapters as well as publicize popular dissatisfaction with the war.<sup>97</sup> Yet peace sentiment never really blossomed into a true protest movement the way organizers hoped, and remained—as it had in 1950—dozens and hundreds of people in cities across the country, not thousands and millions. In another effort to try and organize war-weariness into a unified movement, APC initiated a “straw poll” on ending the Korean War, hoping that canvassing, balloting, and petitioning with the poll would force the issue into the 1952 presidential election and broaden antiwar activism beyond the radical left.<sup>98</sup> Hoping to receive five million responses by election day and to present the results in a “massive peace pilgrimage” to Washington, D.C., APC sent ballots across the country, receiving affirmative responses from places as diverse as Oxford, MS; Ardmore, OK; Ojai, CA; and Denison, IA.<sup>99</sup>

APC’s own political urgency flowed from “the genocidal aspect of the destruction of the Korean people,” a violence they saw partially reflected in the threat of nuclear war, anticommunist repression of figures like Du Bois at home, attacks on labor union rights,

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<sup>97</sup> *Peace Crusader* 2:1 (2 Aug 1951), Folder 1: “American Peace Crusade, 1951–53”, Box 1, TAM 346, TL, NYU; APC internal memo, “Organizing a Campaign for Major Power Peace Agreement,” 23 Nov. 1951, Folder 1: “American Peace Crusade, 1951–53”, Box 1, TAM 346, TL, NYU.

<sup>98</sup> APC position document, 15 July 1952, Los Angeles, Folder 1: “American Peace Crusade, 1951–53”, Box 1, TAM 346, TL, NYU.

<sup>99</sup> Form letter to supporters, APC to Dr. Irving Crain, 29 Sept. 1952, Folder 1: “American Peace Crusade, 1951–53”, Box 1, TAM 346, TL, NYU; APC internal memo, untitled, n.d. yet likely 1952, Folder 1: “American Peace Crusade, 1951–53”, Box 1, TAM 346, TL, NYU; APC internal memo, “National Peace Referendum – Draft Statement,” Folder 22: “Peace Activism (Korean War, Nuclear Weapons), Aug 1950-March 1953”, Box 2, TAM 346, TL, NYU.

and “growing jim-crow.”<sup>100</sup> As APC argued in a letter to their supporters in August 1952, “We have a responsibility to humanity” to end the Korean War, a responsibility “increased in view of the announced plan of the Air Force to bomb 78 towns in North Korea, an extension of death and destruction that has no bearing on the one remaining issue at Panmunjom.”<sup>101</sup>

Leftist, independent journalist I. F. Stone spent much of 1950–1951 dissecting mainstream news reports, official military communiqués, press conferences, and official speeches to write his muckraking analysis, *The Hidden History of the Korean War*. Meticulously analyzing the discrepancies, digressions, and omissions in official reports, Stone argued that the story of the Korean War was one of “keeping the peace from breaking out,” one in which the American military and government avidly pursued war to contain communist China and fuel an American economic and military “postwar” buildup. In *Hidden History*, Stone argues that the things obscured in much American news reporting—the destruction of Korea through napalm and saturation bombing, the near-criminal continuation of the war—were always there in plain sight. Stone’s method emphasized the presence of absence, for it was in the spaces between official statements—the ellipses in a military communiqué, the published body counts that did not add up, the leads and reports unsubstantiated or under-reported—that he found his story. Stone’s argument would, however, remain as hidden as his subject: published in 1952 by the independent Marxist Monthly Review press, Stone’s book faced a complete

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<sup>100</sup> APC press release, 13 Nov. 1951, Abbott Simon Papers, TAM 346, Folder 1: “American Peace Crusade, 1951–53”, Box 1, TAM 346, TL, NYU; APC, untitled draft statement, 1952, Folder 29: “Peace Referendum (Korean War), nd 1952”, Box 2, TAM 346, TL, NYU.

<sup>101</sup> APC letter to supporters, 12 Aug. 1952, Folder 1: “American Peace Crusade, 1951–53”, Box 1, TAM 346, TL, NYU.

press blackout and boycott in the United States and abroad. Che Guevara later alleged that the U.S. embassy in Mexico destroyed all copies of the Spanish translation.<sup>102</sup>

Stone's methodology could be applied to the visibility of wartime violence within United States war stories and public discourse. The destruction of Korea and the war's racial and sexual violence were present in varied reports, petitions, protests, and Senate resolutions, yet overlooked, disavowed, or actively silenced through press blackout and anticommunist repression. By insisting that the primary violence of the war was borne by Korean civilians, American journalists, war photographers, activists, and Senators insisted that the Korean War was not a defensive one of anticommunist containment but rather a warped version of democracy and liberation wrought through death. As with Stone's book, anticommunist repression was instrumental in silencing a story of the war's violence and this alternate reading of the meaning of cold war containment. Explaining the inability of wartime violence to cohere a viable American protest movement, editor and writer Freda Kirchwey of *The Nation* proposed that "the repression of pity and the attempt to off-load all responsibility onto the enemy" explained "the absence of protest against the orgy of agony and destruction now in progress in Korea."<sup>103</sup> That a discontent with American deaths in Korea was largely unconnected from a sense of empathy or responsibility about Korean casualties was a product of the calculated silence and repression of these voices.

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<sup>102</sup> I. F. Stone, *The Hidden History of the Korean War* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1952). The 1969 republished edition includes a publishers' foreword on the fate of the book in 1952.

<sup>103</sup> Freda Kirchwey, "Liberation by Death," *The Nation* 172, no. 10, 10 March 1951, 215–216.

When “atrocities” were referenced in wartime, Americans were usually referring to the killings and beatings of American prisoners of war in Chinese camps.<sup>104</sup> In popular news and photography magazines like the high-circulation *Life*, the Korean War was consistently portrayed as an American, not Korean, military tragedy, a just war seeking to save the world from communism.<sup>105</sup> Thus, the majority of letters written to President Truman about the war from 1950 to 1952 condemn the violence being visited on American troops. Mothers asked why Truman “let the boys die” in Korea, while others castigated him for not using the atomic bomb, for not being straightforward about casualty figures for prisoners of war, and for firing MacArthur.<sup>106</sup>

Only a few letter-writers phrased their protest against the violence being done in their name. Mrs. E. G. (Clara) Wilson, from Bronxville, NY, wrote “We have no right to denounce the Communists, for our hands are not clean either,” citing “the way our airmen set fire to thousands of women and children, including babies” and “sprayed napalm.” Wilson further castigated Truman for supporting Syngman Rhee’s regime, known for its “torture,” “executions,” and lack of democracy. “I do not wonder about the atrocities of the Communists, much as I deplore them. They have every reason to hate us, beginning

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<sup>104</sup> This popular understanding has informed and structured bureaucracies and archival holdings: in both U.S. Army papers and the Truman presidential files, any folder designated as “war atrocities” contains nearly only things about the treatment of American prisoners of war. Archival organization, then, is one more form of bureaucratic disavowal, in which Korean civilians are unseen and American violence is never “atrocious.”

<sup>105</sup> See Sun-A Kim’s comprehensive content analysis of *Life* during the war: Sun-A Kim, “Life and War in Korea: Photographic Portrayals of the Korean War in *Life* Magazine, July 1950–August 1953” (PhD diss., University of Missouri-Columbia, 2008).

<sup>106</sup> See full letter file, Folder 4: “Korea,” Box 1007, Official File (OF): 325, Harry S. Truman Papers (HSTP), Harry S. Truman Presidential Library. A search through this file, which categorizes letters sent relating to “atrocities” during the war, reveals a general pattern of writers who hated the violence visited on American troops as much as they hate Koreans, and many blame Truman. Of about 38 letters, 4 condemn the war and discuss violence against Korean civilians.

with the joint occupation of their country.”<sup>107</sup> Repeating some of the CP critiques of the war, which linked its fighting to Wall Street capitalists, Mrs. Ruby Heck, of Morrowville, Kansas, similarly wrote to Truman, “Our boys are being slaughtered and are committing some of the most horrible atrocities ever committed in history so big business can keep on. . . . The Koreans never hurt us nor interfered with us. We are the aggressors.”<sup>108</sup>

Peace activists working in the PIC and APC consistently drew attention to the “combined casualties on Korea’s bloodsoaked soil” and the “bitter racial hatred” the war bred against Asians. Du Bois used his many speaking engagements not just to analyze the war as part of a process of imperial aggression but to draw attention to this “war to preserve democracy” as one that preserved, instead, American violence: “In Korea,” he contended, “the United States has committed every atrocity that man ever did to man.”<sup>109</sup> Increasingly after 1951, journalists and senators added to activists’ work in an effort to make the violence of the war visible in the United States. By centering the violence of the war and the experience of Korean civilians, these liberals and non-communist leftists separated themselves from an identification with anticommunism and instead began to argue that the spreading of American democracy was instead “liberation by death.”

Writing again in *The Nation* in December, 1950, Kirchwey pushed the liberal magazine toward an analysis of the Korean War that centered on American violence in Korea. The war was not a defensive one against North Korean attack, but rather, an “act of civil war and revolution” whose “roots lay in the political conflict that dominated

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<sup>107</sup> Mrs. Clara Wilson, Bronxville, NY, 14 Nov. 1951, Folder 4: “Korea,” Box 1007, Official File (OF): 325, Harry S. Truman Papers (HSTP), Harry S. Truman Presidential Library.

<sup>108</sup> Mrs. Ruby G. Heck, Morrowville, KS, 15 Nov. 1951, Folder 4: “Korea,” Box 1007, OF: 325, HSTP.

<sup>109</sup> APC, National Sponsors’ Meeting, “Statement on Korean War,” 2–5 June 1951, Folder 3: “American Peace Crusade, 1950-1953,” Box 1, TAM 246, TL, NYU; Du Bois, “Keynote Address,” Progressive Party Convention, 4 July 1952, draft in Folder 22: “‘Key Note Address,’ July 4, 1952, contd #1,” Box 202, Series 2/Speeches, Du Bois Papers, SCUA.

Korea's whole existence." Kirchwey rejected the cold war framing of a battle between communism and anticommunism, arguing instead that "we must accept revolution as the dominant, inescapable fact of our time." The "collapse of the American case in Asia," Kirchwey argued, was due to the United States' reactionary war, one in which the United Nations had permitted "itself to be used as an instrument of counter-revolution." The most "damaging" feature of this counter-revolutionary war, for Kirchwey, was racial violence, "the idea that small brown or yellow people are objects of contempt, or, at best, of humorous benevolence; in a word—Gooks."<sup>110</sup> Three months later, Kirchwey asked "What does this undifferentiated warfare, this blasting of an entire country, do to the idea of 'collective security'? What does it do to the concept of 'liberation'?"<sup>111</sup>

John Osborne's widely circulated article in *Life* and *Time* in August 1950, had argued that counterinsurgent violence was the character of the war and of American democracy, though he himself argued that "this ugly war" was a "magnificent" effort, a kind of necessary yet distasteful burden.<sup>112</sup> Throughout 1951, other liberal journalists and war correspondents began to argue that American liberation was equal to American violence in Korea. In March, 1951, *The New Republic* reprinted a United Press dispatch from January that they felt had not been given "the widespread publicity it deserves." Describing the strafing of Korean refugee lines—"presumably South Koreans to whom the United Nations is supposed to be restoring liberty"—Harold Ickes wrote: "We were

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<sup>110</sup> Freda Kirchwey, "Democracy's Way Out," *The Nation* 171, no. 25, 16 Dec. 1950, 622–625, 645.

<sup>111</sup> Freda Kirchwey, "Liberation by Death," *The Nation* 172, no. 10, 10 March 1951, 215–216.

<sup>112</sup> John Osborne, "Report from the Orient: Guns are Not Enough" *Life*, 21 Aug. 1950, 76–78, 81–82, 84–85. See this dissertation's chapter two for further discussion.

deliverers, bringing aid and comfort and unity. Apparently we were bringing other things—wounds and dismemberment and death.”<sup>113</sup>

On May 17, 1951, Senator Edwin C. Johnson, a Democrat from Colorado, introduced a resolution into the U.S. Senate arguing for immediate withdrawal from Korea, arguing that the only “tangible result” of the war thus far was “the indescribable misery which has been heaped upon the Korean people.” Johnson refused to accept the cold war framing of the war as well, arguing that it was a war of unjust intervention into Korean affairs that violated the “inherent right” of “every people” to “be left free to determine its own form of government and its own way of life, unhindered, unthreatened, unafraid.”<sup>114</sup> Despite some support in the Senate, Johnson’s resolution was never debated on the Senate floor, nor did the news media cover it, though activist groups like the APC, AWP, and CP published copies of the resolution and proposed write-in support campaigns.<sup>115</sup> (See Appendix D for full text.)

The international Communist parties did much of the attending to violence against Korean civilians. This can be seen as a U.S.S.R. propaganda attempt to gather world opinion against the Western bloc, for North Korea and China were never responsible for violence in these tellings. But it was for many communists and fellow travelers a gesture of solidarity among colonial nations and oppressed peoples, and for a non-militarized

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<sup>113</sup> Ickes used the dispatch of United Press staff correspondent Gene Symonds. Harold L. Ickes, “Sherman’s Hell; Korea’s Hell,” *The New Republic* 124, no. 10, 5 March 1951, 18.

<sup>114</sup> S. Res. 140, 82<sup>nd</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session.

<sup>115</sup> “Statement issued by American Peace Crusade on Resolution introduced by Senator Edwin C. Johnson (D) Colo. to End the Korean War,” 21 May, 1951, Folder 3: “American Peace Crusade, 1950-1953”, Box 1, TAM 246, TL, NYU; Copy of resolution held in American Veterans for Peace, Folder 18: “Leaflets, Miscellaneous, 1950–54”, Box 1, TAM 246, TL, NYU; *Peacemaker* 2, no. 5 (June 1951), Folder 7: “American Women for Peace, 1951”, Box 1, TAM 246, TL, NYU; *Daily Worker* (New York), 4 June 1951. For discussion of the silence around the resolution, see Mantell, “Opposition,” 160.

future, the furthering of the diasporic anticolonial politics espoused by fellow travelers like Du Bois.<sup>116</sup>

This is perhaps best portrayed through two reigning Communist artists at mid-century, Pablo Picasso and Diego Rivera, who spent their careers deconstructing the modern world and reassembling its pieces into alternative visions of personhood and sociality. In 1951, Picasso completed one of the most evocative representations of the war in his painting *Massacre en Corée* (Massacre in Korea), which depicts the green hills and valleys of Korea as a landscape of industrialized warfare, arraying grieving Korean woman and children against ranks of mechanized soldiers. Rivera painted the mural *Nightmare of War, Dream of Peace* in 1952, which shows the international gathering of signatures for peace and “crucified and gibbeted” Koreans under a giant mushroom cloud. Though Rivera contended that it was “the best thing I have ever done,” the Mexican government refused to exhibit it abroad, fearful of the American reaction.<sup>117</sup> In the United States, the CP’s *Daily Worker* reported consistently on Korean casualties and reprinted foreign war correspondents’ dispatches describing the devastation. For all its one-sided reporting, the *Daily Worker* was consistent about making Korean lives (or rather, deaths) central to their war writing: editorials always beginning with the scale of destruction in Korea and only later moved to discuss the deaths of American soldiers.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> The example of the massive protests organized by the French Communist Party is one indication, blending together an anti-American sentiment with the Communist Parties’ emphases on American atrocities. Richard F. Kuisel, *Seducing the French: The Dilemma of Americanization* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993), 40, 48.

<sup>117</sup> Rivera’s work has since gone missing, and has not been recovered—it is believed to be somewhere in Beijing. “Art: Diego Stays Home,” *Time* 59, no. 11 (17 March 1952), 64; Hugh Dellios, “Missing mural ignites Mexico’s imagination,” *Chicago Tribune* (1 June 2004).

<sup>118</sup> See, for example, Editorial, “3,000,000 have died already,” *Daily Worker* (New York), 11 June 1951, 7; Editorial, “Let’s Stop the Killing,” *Daily Worker* (Sunday ed., New York), 24 June 1951, section 3; Editorial, “We Must Save Ourselves,” *Daily Worker* (New York), clipping undated, likely late 1952/early

### ***“We Accuse!”***

It was the leftist, feminist WIDF, however, whose work most centrally illustrated attempts by activists to highlight wartime violence in Korea, as well as and the use of anticommunism to erase their work from public discussion. Since the war began, the WIDF had continually protested the use of the United Nations as a “cover” for the intervention.<sup>119</sup> In May 1951, WIDF sent a delegation of twenty women to North Korea to investigate the atrocities committed against Korean civilians (particularly women and children) by American and ROK troops. As British delegate Monica Felton later wrote, “In going to Korea I had one aim, and one aim only: to discover the truth and, having discovered it, to make it known.”<sup>120</sup> Traveling by air and train through North China, the delegation visited regions across North Korea from May 16–27, 1951, including Sinŭiju, Pyongyang, Namp’o, and Wŏnsan, recording the destruction of the American occupation of North Korea between October and December 1950. The delegates found evidence of the systematic use of torture and sexual torture, the destruction of food supplies and stores, targeted destruction of towns, hospitals, and schools, and the use of banned weapons. As the commission declared, “the people of Korea are subjected by American occupants to a merciless and methodical campaign of extermination which is in

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1953, held in Folder: “SF Korean War (unnumbered)”, Box 7, Printed Ephemera Collection on Subjects (PECS), TL, NYU.

<sup>119</sup> In their continual applications for consultative status at the UN, the WIDF gave long lists of their activities, including outlining their past activities, including work on the Korean War. For example: “Cooperation de la Fédération Démocratique Internationale des Femmes avec l’Organisation des Nations-Unies,” enclosed in letter from Marie-Claude Valliant Couturier to Charles Hogan, 31 Jan. 1953, Folder 8: “Non-governmental organizations, Consultative Status with Economic & Social Council – Women’s International Democratic Federation, 4 Oct. 1946–10 April 1953 (A)”, Box: “S-0441-0016, Registry Section/Archives and Records Service/OGS, Branch Registries – Volume I–IV, 1946–1959”, ARMS.

<sup>120</sup> The delegates were from Austria, the U.S.S.R., Algeria, China, the German Democratic Republic, Denmark, Belgium, Cuba, the Netherlands, Italy, Czechoslovakia, the Federal Republic of Germany, France, Viet Nam, Canada, Korea, England, and Tunisia. Felton quoted in Dora Russell, *The Tamarisk Tree*, vol. 3 (London: Virago Press, 1985), 145.

contradiction not only with the principles of humanity, but also with the rules of warfare as laid down, for instance, in the Hague and Geneva Conventions.”<sup>121</sup> The WIDF asked that their report, *We Accuse!*, be circulated to all governments, and sent it themselves to the U.N. in June 1951.

The commission’s report was presented as a series of chapters, signed and dated by each member of the delegation, and included photographs of the delegates inspecting mass graves, talking via interpreter with respondents, and of destroyed landscapes. In the report from each town, city, or village, the commission recorded the name and age of their informants. Written like a clinical litany of violence, the report stood as some of the only testimony of Korean protest that reached into Western public discourse. The commission described how, upon hearing of their mission, scores of people approached the delegates to testify and tell their stories, stopping the delegates’ vehicles, and re-performing the violence visited to dramatize their stories. People used their bodies and their homes as proof of pain, showing delegates their scars and bullet wounds as well as graves, destroyed houses, bombed villages, and the caves that they now lived in.<sup>122</sup> Delegates were shown scalps, blood stains, and the marks of burning upon walls, noted the “strong odor of decaying flesh,” and recorded the markings on bomb casings found in the remains of buildings (“Amm. Lot RN 14–29 shell MJ For M 2 a MFL 1 Lot-GL-2-116 1944 MJBCA 2 ACT 464”).<sup>123</sup>

If writers like I. F. Stone and journalists like Osborne and Ickes had been writing about the widespread use of napalm, the sustained bombing campaigns, and the torture of political dissidents, the WIDF report argued that the use of sexual torture and the targeted

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<sup>121</sup> WIDF, *We Accuse!*, 6.

<sup>122</sup> See, for example, WIDF, *We Accuse!*, 22, 30.

<sup>123</sup> WIDF, *We Accuse!*, 9, 25.

destruction of families were central to the production of the war. In all the regions, Korean interlocutors reported that officials of North Korean women's organizations were raped, paraded in the streets by the Americans, and sometimes killed by having red-hot irons shoved into their vaginas. Young women described watching their husbands killed in front of them, their babies "trampled by soldiers" or cut, unborn, out of their bellies, and themselves being raped and tortured by American soldiers. Young women described hiding from American soldiers by smearing ash on their faces and dressing like old women. In the village of Mih Yen Ri in the region of An-pyen, three women who fought their rapists had their breasts cut off and were killed by the use of a red-hot iron.<sup>124</sup> In Pyongyang, women and men reported that Americans turned the Opera House into an Army brothel and stocked it with women and girls captured in the street. The daughter of L\_\_\_ watched these captures and "as she feared a similar fate, she did not leave her dugout for 40 days."<sup>125</sup>

As I have argued, sexual violence and various systems of prostitution were a central component of the American occupation and war in Korea, and though the commission's report is more sadistic and specific than any other American and English-language document I have seen, its claims illustrated the landscape of racial and sexual violence I have previously outlined in chapter three. Even more, unlike some of the reports of atrocities produced out of American soldiers' "confessions" in prisoner of war camps, there was nothing about the WIDF commission that was coercive, nor was the WIDF directed by the U.S.S.R. or PRC. The report, like much of American left organizing, was one-sided, for it investigated the crimes of only one side of the war—

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<sup>124</sup> Names, ages, and regions are given for each testimony in the WIDF report, but I do not include them here for reasons of historical privacy. WIDF, *We Accuse!*, 16, 25, 35, 38, 42, passim.

<sup>125</sup> WIDF, *We Accuse!*, 16.

those of the U.S., U.N., and ROKA forces. Yet this was the violence being called “peace” by its perpetrators under the approval of the only existing international governmental body. Scholars have not, as yet, sought to verify each individual account given here—an enormous task, given the destruction of evidence, partial reporting, and particular modes of military record-keeping—but I believe the report can be taken as direct evidence of the scope and scale of wartime violence in Korea. Indeed, the report’s careful documentation, attention to transcription, and listing of the identifying details of informants, locations, and events suggest this as one of the most incisive documents for understanding the character of the Korean War, and for seeking to make visible its violent landscape.

To publicize the testimony and protest of Korean civilians, though, was not a project without repressive consequences. Upon their return home, the delegates faced various forms of repression from their home governments: the German delegates were imprisoned, while Felton lost her job with the British Labour government.<sup>126</sup> In their status as a consultative non-governmental organization to the United Nations, the WIDF sent *We Accuse!* to the presidents of the U.N. General Assembly, Security Council, and the General Secretariat on June 11, 1951, demanding an immediate end to bombing in Korea by U.N. forces, the withdrawal of all foreign troops, and the granting of “self-determination for the Korean people” without foreign intervention.<sup>127</sup> Soviet delegate to the Security Council Jacob Malik asked that it be considered and issued as a Security Council document. The United States was furious. In response, the U.S. delegation to the U.N. called the report “part of the Communist propaganda apparatus,” and alleged that

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<sup>126</sup> Russell, *Tamarisk Tree*, vol. 3, 145–146.

<sup>127</sup> Letter printed in WIDF, *We Accuse!*, 48.

this “type of propaganda” served to “conceal rather than to reveal the truth.”<sup>128</sup> Though the report was published in twenty languages and circulated widely outside the United States, it barely entered public discourse in the U.S.

Surprisingly, it was hardly visible in the American radical left. This was perhaps due to the lack of an American delegate on the commission, given the demise of CAW and AWP’s lack of formal affiliation with WIDF. The WIDF also continually lodged their protests within the United Nations and world government organizations, outside of the grassroots organizing orbit of most American peace organizations. Though it was mentioned in the *Daily Worker*, the report was given the most attention by a small revolutionary Korean American organization opposing American imperialism in Asia, the Korean National Revolutionary Party (KNRP). Centered around the *Korean Independence* newspaper in Los Angeles, the KNRP serialized the full text of the WIDF report throughout their August 1951 issues.<sup>129</sup>

The WIDF continued their protest of the Korean War within the United Nations, in May 1952 charging that the United States and U.N. forces had used bacteriological weapons against the Korean civilian population.<sup>130</sup> Eleanor Roosevelt, in her capacity as

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<sup>128</sup> The original letter to the General Assembly is printed in WIDF, *We Accuse!*; “Malik pushes report on Korea ‘atrocities’,” *New York Times*, 23 June 1951, 2; “U.S. replies to reds,” *New York Times*, 6 July 1951, 5; US Mission to the United Nations, press release no. 1224, 22 June 1951, Folder 8: “Non-governmental organizations, Consultative Status with Economic & Social Council – Women’s International Democratic Federation, 4 Oct. 1946–10 April 1953 (A)”, Box: “S-0441-0016, Registry Section/Archives and Records Service/OGS, Branch Registries – Volume I–IV, 1946–1959”, ARMS.

<sup>129</sup> Some KNRP members were subject to U.S. surveillance and deportation. See Bong-youn Choy, *Koreans in America* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1979), 183; issues of *Korean Independence* (Los Angeles) 9, no. 31, 1 Aug 1951; 9, no. 32, 8 Aug 1951; and 9, no. 33, 11 Aug 1951. See also de Haan, “WIDF,” electronic page 8. For more on Korean American activism during the war, see also Harold Sunoo, *Search for Freedom: A Story of a Korean American* (Self-published: Xlibris, 2004), 246.

<sup>130</sup> This was a hotly debated charge by the Chinese, North Korean, and Soviet governments during the war, one flatly denied by the U.S. at the time and still subject to heated historical debate as new documents come to light. The charge can be understood here as a cold war debate, and a hardening of U.S. opposition to the WIDF’s communist-leaning politics. For some of the most recent additions to the debate, see: Kathryn Weathersby, “Deceiving the Deceivers: Moscow, Beijing, Pyongyang, and the Allegations of

U.S. official to the U.N., wrote a scathing denial of the charges and accused the WIDF of being directed by the Communist Party. “We want peace and are working for peace in every possible way,” Roosevelt wrote, and her letter was widely distributed to women’s organizations around the world and to the American media. As a result of their continued protests, the WIDF came under surveillance by the CIA and lost its consultative status at the U.N. in April 1954 at the initiative of the United States. In their expulsion, the committee on non-governmental organizations argued that the WIDF “had in recent years engaged in nothing but political propaganda unrelated to the economic and social objectives of the United Nations.”<sup>131</sup> In this way, attending to the Korean War’s violence was made into illegitimate propaganda, and a definition of peace that centered on Korean women’s wartime lives was nullified in the United States.

### ***The cold war peace and the peace yet to come***

From June 29 to July 1, 1951, APC sponsored a Peace Congress at the Chicago Coliseum, drawing 4,500 delegates from 36 states, including unionists, war veterans, nonwhite activists, women, academics, students, and farmers. The Chicago conference

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Bacteriological Weapons Use in Korea” and Milton Leiterberg, “New Russian Evidence on the Korean War Biological Warfare Allegations: Background and Analysis,” both in the Cold War International History Project *Bulletin* 11 (Winter 1998): 176–185, 185–199. Leiterberg gives a helpful historiographical account of the debate in English-language histories of the war.

<sup>131</sup> The WIDF would not regain consultative status (despite continued appeals and applications) until 1967, through the support of newly decolonized countries. Letter from Marie-Claude Vaillant-Couturier to supporters, 15 Sept. 1951, enclosing open letter from WIDF to Eleanor Roosevelt, 5 Sept. 1952, CIA’s online FOIA documents, [http://www.foia.ucia.gov/sites/default/files/document\\_conversions/5829/CIA-RDP80R01731R003100020009-1.pdf](http://www.foia.ucia.gov/sites/default/files/document_conversions/5829/CIA-RDP80R01731R003100020009-1.pdf), accessed 8 March 2014; de Haan, “WIDF,” electronic page 9; “American women deny germ charge,” *New York Times*, 28 July 1952, 2; WIDF, Statement on expulsion to the 17<sup>th</sup> Session of the Economic and Security Council and to the Council Committee of Non-Governmental Organisations, 2 April 1954, Folder 10: “Brach Registry (10/062(2)) Non-Governmental Organizations – Committee Status with Economic and Social Council – Women’s International Democratic Federation – Protests re: withdrawal of Status, 26 Feb 1954– 3 April 1956”, Box: “S-0441-0016, Registry Section/Archives and Records Service/OGS, Branch Registries – Volume I–IV, 1946–1959”, ARMS. I am grateful to Trevor Griffey for bringing the CIA-collected letters to my attention.

marked the apex of the peace movement's wartime visibility. Though organizations kept protesting, rallying, and—in many cases—seeking to link the violence against Korean civilians to the violence of Jim Crow and McCarthyism at home, antiwar dissent became subsumed into the “peace” platform of Eisenhower's 1952 presidential campaign.

Running on a platform that criticized Truman's handling of the war and promising to “go to Korea” himself to finish it up, Eisenhower's version of pragmatic, cold warrior peace won overwhelmingly and overcame the Democratic majority in Congress. Eisenhower's victory was the beneficiary of public weariness with an unpopular war: 46.2% of those who voted for him believed the United States should not have intervened in Korea in the first place, while nearly 66% of his supporters thought the U.S. was “too interested in other nations' problems.”<sup>132</sup>

The radical left splintered in the face of Eisenhower's victory, running a series of third party candidates or falling behind Eisenhower's version of “peace,” as did independent journalist I. F. Stone. Though the peace activism of the left continued, the number of peace demonstrations declined, and radical candidates for president, running on platforms of immediate withdrawal, received barely 0.5% of the vote altogether.<sup>133</sup> After his election in November 1952, President Eisenhower began a tour of Korea under a severe news blackout, continually pledging to bring “peace” as armistice negotiations continued at Panmunjom. Eisenhower's version of a negotiated peace continued to draw sections of the liberal-left, and this understanding of a cold war peace subsumed radicals' voices. Much of activists' time was also been taken up fighting anticommunist repression. In addition to Du Bois and his colleagues at the PIC, the CAA found itself

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<sup>132</sup> Polls quoted in Mantell, “Opposition,” 227.

<sup>133</sup> Mantell, “Opposition,” 233.

listed as one of the “subversive organizations” on the Attorney General’s list—almost solely due to its views on the Korean War, as Von Eschen notes—and was also asked to register as a foreign agent, leading to a series of legal battles that would weaken the organization to the point of dissolution in 1955.<sup>134</sup>

In early 1953, APC was also required to register as a foreign agent, and voted to disband instead of paying for a lengthy legal trial. “Subversive” individuals like Robeson, Du Bois, Jones, and the international feminist delegates to the U.N. were denied travel visas, severely limiting the amount of global organizing that was possible.<sup>135</sup> When the armistice was signed on July 27, 1953, polls showed massive relief, but newspapers reported little public celebration or popular enthusiasm. The ending of the war became a national story, a moment when American soldiers headed home, and where national figures had negotiated a kind of “peace.”<sup>136</sup>

Activists were unable to substantially shift public narratives of the war, and so by one political calculus this made them marginal, isolated, failures. Yet as I have argued, this framing is reductive and limiting for thinking about protest politics and the linkages and convergences of radical thought after 1945. Out of the flux and convergence of different parts of the left, there were indeed alternatives to Truman and Eisenhower’s cold war peace, visions that sought to center cold war violence against Korean civilians and connect it to the violence of white supremacy and anticommunism within the United States. And from this moment of flux and war-weariness came voices that would inform

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<sup>134</sup> Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire*, 124, 140–144.

<sup>135</sup> Mantell, “Opposition,” 103. The WIDF delegates had trouble getting visas to enter the U.S. to attend sessions, as did Canadian delegate Mrs. Rae Luckok. See extended correspondence about Mrs. Luckok’s visa in Folder 8 “Non-governmental organizations, Consultative Status with Economic & Social Council – Women’s International Democratic Federation, 4 Oct. 1946–10 April 1953 (A),” Box “S-0441-0016, Registry Section/Archives and Records Service/OGS, Branch Registries – Volume I–IV, 1946–1959,” ARMS.

<sup>136</sup> Mantell, “Opposition,” 258.

the peace to come. A young Malcolm X refused to register for the draft during the Korean War, and alleged that he was a “crazy” Communist, a conscientious objector, and that his country of citizenship was Asia, professions that first brought him to the attention of the FBI.<sup>137</sup> As Malcolm’s example shows, black internationalism deepened during the Korean War period in the U.S. Black intellectuals like Du Bois, Jones, and Robeson were forced to engage with the rest of the world because of the repression and exclusion they faced in the United States—indeed, W. E. B. and Shirley Graham Du Bois moved to Ghana in 1963, where W. E. B. would spend the rest of his life.<sup>138</sup> Individual activists from the Harriet Tubman Center and CAW, like Beah Richardson and Dale Perkins, would help define the character of black radical feminism throughout the 1960s and 1970s, while pacifists like Dave Dellinger would connect their work to the next version of a “war for peace” in Vietnam.<sup>139</sup>

Attending to this alternative history of what was made by the left—not on what was destroyed—allows for a deeper understanding of the scale of forgetting and disavowal at work during the Korean War. Organizationally, theoretically, and practically, the American radical left sought to envision the battlefield in Korea as an eruption of a global battle over colonialism, reliant on interlocking logics of race and gender. Anticommunism was successful in sundering much of the left’s power and ability to form global networks, and actively silenced discussion of the war’s violence against

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<sup>137</sup> Ferruccio Gambino, “The Transgression of a Laborer: Malcolm X in the Wilderness of America,” *Radical History Review* 55 (1993): 7–31, esp. 11; Manning Marable, *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention* (New York: Viking, 2011), 95, 103. I thank Robin Kelley for bringing this to my attention.

<sup>138</sup> Robin D. G. Kelley, “‘But a Local Phase of a World Problem’: Black History’s Global Vision, 1883–1950,” *Journal of American History* 86:3 (Dec. 1999): 1075. Gerald Horne makes this point in particular for Du Bois, *Black and Red*. See also George Lipsitz, “‘Frantic to Join . . . the Japanese Army’: The Asia Pacific War in the Lives of African American Soldiers and Civilians,” in *The Politics of Culture in the Shadow of Capital*, eds. Lisa Lowe and David Lloyd (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997): 324–353.

<sup>139</sup> Gore, *Radicalism at the Crossroads*, ch. 5.

Koreans. In this way, anticommunism served as a primary mechanism of forgetting and disavowal, making possible the triumph of a definition of “peace” as one reliant on war. What this counter-history of the battle over peace shows, however, is how much the “war for peace” was a process of containment, and how much had to be erased, repressed, or ignored in order for its triumph.

## Conclusion

### *It is the innocence which constitutes the crime*

“And I know, which is much worse, and this is the crime of which I accuse my country and my countrymen, and for which neither I nor time nor history will ever forgive them, that they have destroyed and are destroying hundreds of thousands of lives and do not know it and do not want to know it. One can be, indeed one must strive to become, tough and philosophical concerning destruction and death, for this is what most of mankind has been best at since we have heard of man. (But remember: *most* of mankind is not *all* mankind.) But it is not permissible that the authors of devastation should also be innocent. It is the innocence which constitutes the crime.”  
— James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time*<sup>1</sup>

Writing in 1962, James Baldwin argued that the United States was willfully blind to its own racial violence and to the “hundreds of thousands of lives” being destroyed. It was, Baldwin argued, the willful blindness, the enforced forgetting that marked this as cruel and criminal. As he so eloquently argued, “But it is not permissible that the authors of devastation should also be innocent. It is the innocence which constitutes the crime.” I want to extend Baldwin’s critique to thinking of wartime violence, for as I have argued, this was (and is) of a piece with U.S. racial formations.

I have asked throughout this dissertation how “the authors of devastation” have been made “innocent,” that is: how communist containment policy, U.S. empire in East Asia, and racial formation in the United States have relied on and disavowed wartime violence. The innocence has been made, I have argued, through a historical and cultural process of forgetting. Forgetting rendered occupation and counterinsurgent war as a kind of liberation and democracy, sexual violence as normal and unseeable, U.S. racial integration as harmonious, and antiwar protest as subversive. The point of this work is to

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<sup>1</sup> James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time* (1962; New York: Vintage, 1990), 5–6. This essay, “My Dungeon Shook: Letter to My Nephew on the One Hundredth Anniversary of the Emancipation,” initially appeared in *The Progressive* (Madison, WI) in December 1962.

argue that this innocence is indeed a kind of crime, and to retell the history of the Korean War as it has been told is only to remember to forget U.S. imperial violence.<sup>2</sup>

In large part, U.S. war stories have made American innocence through reading Korea as placeless and forgettable, with internal politics that did not matter to American policy-makers and people whose lives need not be mourned. This forgetting has shaped U.S. policy and cultural imaginings of Korea since 1871, understood as a dispute between the “civilized” and the “heathen,” and transformed throughout the early twentieth century in policies of “trusteeship” and the “benevolent” guidance of Korea out of Japanese colonialism. After 1945, enacting violence on Korean bodies was a form of occupation, liberation, and communist containment in East Asia. Racial and gendered ideas—making Koreans seem to be always-suspect or always sexually available—were central to this process. Other more complicated stories of the racial politics of the war were largely erased by making the Korean War story a national, domestic one of racial integration’s success in the U.S. military, overlooking the continuance of white supremacy in the United States and the ways the war had relied on racial violence against Koreans. Within the United States, the anticommunist repression of antiwar, pacifist, and feminist radical activists helped to secure the definition of a cold war peace as continued military intervention.

Forgetting the violence of the Korean War and the violence inherent in communist containment policy continued after the war, worked out in the arena of

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<sup>2</sup> “Remembering to forget” is Barbie Zelizer’s perfect phrase, writing about another moment of wartime violence: Barbie Zelizer, *Remembering to Forget: Holocaust Memory through the Camera’s Eye* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

culture.<sup>3</sup> Stories told in the United States about the Korean War throughout the 1950s and early 1960s used Korea as a cipher to tell stories about U.S. power in the world. From a survey of films—the most popular and widely accessible medium of storytelling at the time—it is clear that Korea was remembered only in order to learn to forget its violence and erect a vision of U.S. empire as necessary to keeping the world safe for democracy.

In these films, the commitment to fight communism anywhere became a kind of moral force, and the good intentions of the soldier-heroes in film plots stood in for the moral character—what Baldwin called the “innocence”—of American power. Securing American innocence in these stories relied on forgetting that U.S. power in East Asia had been enacted through deploying physical violence against Asian bodies. The wartime violence I have detailed throughout this dissertation was partially seen in these film plots—Korean families are killed, racial epithets are used against the Chinese army, black GIs protest their second-class treatment. Yet this violence is always explained away—or forgotten—through the larger story arc which proposes that containing communism is heroic and necessary. The afterlife of the Korean War-era forgetting I have explored in this dissertation is marked in these films through these cultural narratives of disavowal.

### ***The necessary burden: the afterlife of forgetting, 1954–1970***

Between Sam Fuller’s *Steel Helmet* (1951) and John Frankenheimer’s *The Manchurian Candidate* (1962), Hollywood produced nearly fifty films that relied on the Korean War as a backdrop or central subject. In two of the most widely-viewed and

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<sup>3</sup> I find it useful, here, to think with Tom Engelhardt’s elucidation of the American war story, a “cult” of “victory culture” worked out in the cultural arena and structuring visions of American policy. Engelhardt argues that the war story was ruptured with the atomic bomb, and that post-1945 war stories have been aiming to reconstruct and refashion a structuring American war story. Tom Engelhardt, *The End of Victory Culture: Cold War America and the Disillusioning of a Generation* (New York: Basic Books, 1995).

critically lauded films about the war from the 1950s, Korea itself was variously referred to as a “stinking little garbage heap,” a “smelly ditch,” a “stinkin’ hill,” and a “poker chip” in a much larger game. Why did Americans seem to so hate a place they had purportedly been fighting for? Culturally dismissing Korea as a “garbage heap” marked the centrality of forgetting in cultural narratives of U.S. power.

Many of these films aimed to reappraise the war in retrospect, after its drawn-out armistice negotiations, its high body count, and the lack of public enthusiasm for the policy of cold war containment in East Asia. As many historians of cold war cinema have noted, post-1945 plotlines were defined by contradictions, ambiguities, and anxieties. War films, in particular, sought to draw on the familiar tropes and symbols of World War II in which American soldiers were peace-loving, decent men; the fight was for loved ones at home; combat was a quintessential expression of manhood and patriotism; the purpose of the war was clearly understood; and the military produced a strong sense of camaraderie. Historian Christian Appy calls this genre “sentimental militarism,” and notes that the genre became strained and defensive as it moved beyond 1945.<sup>4</sup>

In writing stories about the Korean War, cultural workers sought to define the new character of American superpower in the mid-1950s. Fusing discontent over the war with an insistence on the infallibility of containment logic, films, comic books, and popular war stories used the Korean War as a vehicle to propose anticommunist

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<sup>4</sup> Matthew Frye Jacobson and Gaspar González, *What Have They Built You to Do? The Manchurian Candidate and Cold War America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006). For “sentimental militarism,” see Christian G. Appy, “‘We’ll Follow the Old Man’: The Strains of Sentimental Militarism in Popular Films of the Fifties,” in *Rethinking Cold War Culture*, eds. Peter J. Kuznick and James Gilbert (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001), 74–105.

containment as an arduous but necessary burden that Americans needed to accept.<sup>5</sup> This story of American power proposed the necessary burden as an individual, emotional commitment to an abstract idea of “duty,” and in so doing, erased the historical context and physical place of Korea as well as Korean people themselves. The development of the necessary burden narrative culturally reinforced the process of forgetting, which can be seen by exploring two of the most popular Korean War films, *The Bridges at Toko-Ri* (1954/1955) and *Pork Chop Hill* (1959).

*The Bridges at Toko-Ri*, a full-color Paramount feature starring William Holden and Grace Kelly, was far and away the most popular and profitable of the Korean War films, finished in 1954 just after the war’s armistice and available in wide-release by 1955. Based on James Michener’s best-selling 1953 novella, which was serialized in the pages of *Life* magazine in July of that year, the film was one of the top-grossing box office movies of 1955 and was nominated for two Academy Awards.<sup>6</sup> The first true Korean War blockbuster, the film was a hit with critics, who applauded its postwar message and its dazzling visual display of Navy jets and aircraft carriers.

Michener’s popular novella was based on his own research upon Navy carrier ships in 1951–1952, which he drew on for a series of celebratory journalism articles about wartime Navy pilots. When the novella was picked up by Paramount as the basis

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<sup>5</sup> Comic book scholar Leonard Rifas points out this omnipresent narrative of heroism with heroics in his thorough study of Korean War comic-book storylines. Leonard Rifas, “Forgotten War Comics: The Korean War and American Comic Books,” (MA thesis, University of Washington, Seattle, 1991).

<sup>6</sup> The film was nominated for awards in Film Editing and Special Effects, winning the latter. *Bridges at Toko-Ri*, directed by Mark Robson (Paramount, 1954). For histories of the film, see Robert J. Lenz, *Korean War Filmography: 91 English-Language Features through 2000* (Jefferson, NC: MacFarland and Co., 2003), 63–69; Rick Worland, “The Korean War Film as Family Melodrama: ‘The Bridges at Toko-Ri’ (1954)” *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 19, no. 3: 360. For reviews, see “The Bridges at Toko-Ri,” *Look* 19:3 (8 Feb 1955), 92, 94; “The Bridges at Toko-Ri,” *Time* 65:4 (24 Jan. 1955), 75 “One for the Navy,” *Newsweek* 45:3 (17 Jan. 1955), 86; Bosley Crowther, “The Screen in Review: ‘Bridges at Toko-Ri’ is Fine Film of War,” *New York Times*, 21 Jan 1955, 20; Delmore Schwartz, “Films: ‘The Bridges at Toko-Ri,’” *The New Republic* 132:11 (14 March 1955), 28–29.

for a film, the producers received full cooperation from the U.S. Navy and Department of Defense, which allowed the screenwriter to stay aboard a Navy vessel for research and lent Paramount free access to Navy planes and ships for filming purposes. Indeed, the Pentagon was so pleased with the final movie that the Chief of the Pentagon's Motion Picture Section wrote a congratulatory message to Paramount after the film's completion, and Hollywood reciprocated by treating the film's Navy stunt pilots and their wives to a celebrity-studded Hollywood tour.<sup>7</sup> More than any other film, *Bridges at Toko-Ri* illustrated how cultural workers, journalists, and military strategists collaborated to use the Korean War as a way to discuss the role of American power in the Pacific after World War II.

*Bridges at Toko-Ri* tells the story of the reluctant Lieutenant Harry Brubaker (William Holden), a jet pilot for the U.S. Navy who is scheduled to fly in a highly dangerous mission to destroy a series of Korean bridges north of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. Brubaker hates the war, and tells his Admiral so; a veteran of World War II in the Pacific, Brubaker had become a lawyer in Denver, married, and had two children before he was pulled back into service. Brubaker's commitment to his World War II service and his misgivings about the Korean War mark this story as a different genre in which the plotlines and heroics of past war narratives will not fit: Brubaker does not understand his position in this new, post-1945 world. The Admiral serves as the voice of Korean War-time logic, telling Brubaker that despite his "bitter" misgivings, the "dirty job" of this war was too important to lose sight of. Knocking out "even the bridges at Toko-Ri," the

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<sup>7</sup> Quoted in Worland, "Korean War Film as Family Melodrama," 361; and for Navy-Hollywood cooperation, see David Sears, *Such Men As These: The Story of the Navy Pilots Who Flew the Deadly Skies Over Korea* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo, 2010), 322–3.

Admiral passionately argues, will convince the communists that “we’ll never stop, never weaken in our purpose!”

The movie’s intermezzo provides a vision of Brubaker’s domestic life—the life he was loathe to leave for Korean War service—when the beautiful, blonde Nancy Brubaker (Grace Kelly) and the children come to visit during the Lieutenant’s shore leave. The Brubakers’ domestic idyll is set in American-occupied Japan, in a luxury hotel on the slopes of Mt. Fuji. But the war intrudes on the Brubakers even here, for the Admiral uses the hotel’s cocktail hour as an opportunity to warn Nancy that she, too, must come to understand the significant weight of the bridges at Toko-Ri. If she doesn’t, the Admiral warns, she might end up like his widowed daughter-in-law, driven to nervous breakdown and nymphomania by her inability to deal with wartime loss. By talking with her husband, Nancy “faces those bridges too” and is thus, we assume, mentally stable after her husband is downed in Korea and killed after successfully bombing the bridges at the end of the film. *Bridges at Toko-Ri* suggests that Brubaker’s greatest achievement is not destroying the actual bridges, but rather overcoming the mental “bridges” of bitterness and disquiet with the Korean War. Just before his death in a Western-style shoot-out with communist soldiers, Brubaker rallies himself with this realization: “Wrong war in the wrong place and that’s what I’m stuck with . . . you fight simply because you’re here.”

The film’s message, so endorsed by the Pentagon and voiced by the Admiral’s character, is that containment policy was an arduous yet necessary duty, a bitterly undertaken politics that were ultimately proven in practice. But the specifics of the Korean War and the longer history of American intervention there are fuzzy and vague:

indeed, the film never explains *why* the bridges at Toko-Ri are so strategically important; the point perhaps is that it doesn't matter why. In neither Michener's novella nor the film do we ever truly understand the war, for it is collapsed into a sort of existential version of containment policy: Americans fight because they happen to find themselves in Korea, and both servicemen and civilians must vanquish their own "bridges" by accepting this duty.<sup>8</sup>

In this elaboration of the American war story, forgetting and erasure were central, displacing both Korea as a physical place as well as the brutal violence that the Korean War entailed. Korea as a country was quite unimportant to the film and its story, serving only as the backdrop for Brubaker's final, doomed acceptance of containment logic. "Korea," here, was just a marker for the particular psychic space in which the acceptance of containment logic became possible.

The erasure of Korea, here, illustrates the politics of American power after 1945: it is occupied Japan, not Korea, that is the location of greatest importance. Japan serves as the graceful backdrop for Harry and Nancy's domestic reunion, and signifies the larger domesticated union of the United States and Japan.<sup>9</sup> In one particularly famous scene, the Brubakers meet a Japanese family in the hotel's public baths and overcome their initial reluctance of nude bathing by relating to the Japanese family—two daughters, smiling mother, and polite father—as a charming family just like them. This scene proposes

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<sup>8</sup> The bridges as "Toko-Ri" were based on a series of actual bridges at Samdong-Ni, north of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. During his time researching with the U.S. Navy carrier ship *Valley Forge*, Michener witnessed the reaction to the death of Ensign Marvin S. Broomhead in the attack on the Samdong-Ni bridges, who fatally crashed during the bombing mission. The events and characters in the film and novella, though, are more amalgams of figures and incidents Michener witnessed on the *Valley Forge* and the *Essex* than straight depictions. See Sears, *Such Men as These*.

<sup>9</sup> Worland discusses the domestic discourse of the film in "Korean War Film as Family Melodrama." See this dissertation's chapter three for further discussion of the gendered relationship of the U.S. military to occupied Japan, as well as Naoko Shibusawa, *America's Geisha Ally: Reimagining the Japanese Enemy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006).

Japan as a domesticated, semi-Americanized retreat from the unknowable threat in Korea. The idyllic Japan the Brubakers visit is one illustration of the spaces made pleasant and domestic for American families by post-1945 American empire: one example of what containment policy could produce and what it meant to protect.

The forgetting and erasure of Korea from this narrative of American power as a necessary burden also obscured the brutal violence of the war, as well as Korean people, their many political desires, and the country's vexed twentieth-century colonial history. In fact, violence toward Koreans was excised from the film, and appeared only briefly in Michener's novella. In Michener's story, as Brubaker is shot down in the Korean countryside, he abandons his plane and hides in a ditch, hoping to defend himself against communist soldiers until the rescue crew can arrive. He sees a Korean "family from the nearest farm" approach the clearing, "a mother, father and two children, dressed in discarded uniforms." As Michener writes, Brubaker "saw them not as Koreans but as the Japanese family that had intruded upon his sulphur bath that morning in the Fuji-san and an unbearable longing for his own wife and children possessed him."<sup>10</sup> Brubaker watches, horrified, as American planes try to protect him by strafing the area, shooting down the entire Korean family in front of his eyes. In Michener's novella, these are the only Koreans that appear in the story as more than faceless communist soldiers; but even they are transposed, through Brubaker, into first the Japanese family and then Brubaker's American family. Koreans, like Korea the physical place, are important inasmuch as they can signify an empathetic identification and political partnership with occupied Japan and American domesticity.

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<sup>10</sup> James A. Michener, *The Bridges at Toko-Ri* (New York: Random House, 1953), 116.

Later in the decade, this “arduous burden” narrative was still useful, as the United States’ foreign policy involved quietly backing the overthrow of popular governments in Iran (1953) and Guatemala (1954) and the funneling of money first to the French in Indochina and then to the autocratic anticommunist state the United States had installed in Vietnam.<sup>11</sup> Yet as another Korean War film illustrated, the stress placed on containment logic was increasingly absurd, and the anxieties and doubts that the film expresses trouble the straightforward “necessary burden” narrative proposed by *Bridges at Toko-Ri*.

In 1959, United Artists released *Pork Chop Hill*, starring Gregory Peck as Army Lieutenant Joe Clemons.<sup>12</sup> Shot in black and white, *Pork Chop Hill* had a documentary-realist aesthetic about it drawn from director Lewis Milestone’s previous war film work. This aesthetic added to the veracity of the film’s plot, which based itself on S. L. A. Marshall’s account of the real battle of Pork Chop Hill in 1953.<sup>13</sup> The film tells the story of the Army’s King Company, ordered to retake “Pork Chop Hill” in order to bolster the American negotiators’ argument at the armistice talks taking place in nearby Panmunjom. From the beginning, the soldiers believe that an armistice is imminent, and jokingly but uncomprehendingly follow Clemons up the ridge and into what seems like the last battle. Clemons unknowingly leads his company into a near-slaughter, and support companies sent to bolster his attack are also decimated. Army command does not send reinforcements or support, but instead orders Clemons and the twenty-five or so

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<sup>11</sup> Marilyn Young, *The Vietnam Wars: 1945–1990* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1991).

<sup>12</sup> *Pork Chop Hill*, directed by Lewis Milestone (United Artists, 1959).

<sup>13</sup> Lenz, *Korean War Filmography*, 276–284; S. L. A. Marshall, *Pork Chop Hill: The American Fighting Man in Action, Korea, Spring, 1953* (New York: William Morrow, 1956).

remaining soldiers to “hold the hill” despite their lack of ammunition, food, water, or reinforcements.

Like the bridges at Toko-Ri, Clemons admits that the hill “has no military value.” “Doubt if any American’d give you a dollar for it,” he says. “Probably no Chinese would give you two bits.” The film switches between an exhausted Clemons and frustrated American negotiators at Panmunjom, and it is understood that Pork Chop Hill—strategically useless—is just a “poker chip” in the giant game being played at the armistice talks. As the exhausted Clemons grudgingly begins to accept, “we gotta convince ’em we’re not going to give up any more chips.” And like Brubaker, Clemons fully accepts this mission by the end of the film, musing, “I guess I want to hold this hill, more than I ever wanted anything. Stinking little garbage heap.”

The message of this film was similar to *Bridges at Toko-Ri*, and depicted the Korean War as a necessary burden and sacrifice in the “poker game” of containment politics. Understanding the importance of the hill, like the importance of the bridges before, was the real goal: containment was a psychic problem more than a political or strategic one. As an astute *New York Times* film critic put it, “The enemy is really the despondency that batters at the minds and spirits of the Americans clawing their way up Pork Chop Hill.”<sup>14</sup>

The last heavy-handed scene shows Clemons and his exhausted, injured men stumbling down the hill after the armistice is signed, to a voice-over of Gregory Peck emphasizing the film’s intended message:

Pork Chop Hill was held, bought and paid for at the same price we commemorate in monuments at Bunker Hill and Gettysburg. Yet you will find no monuments on

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<sup>14</sup> Bosley Crowther, “‘Pork Chop Hill’: War Drama directed by Lewis Milestone,” *New York Times*, 30 May 1959, 9.

Pork Chop. Victory is a fragile thing, and history does not linger long in our century. But those who fought there know what they did, and the meaning of it. Millions live in freedom today because of what they did.

Containment policy required individual emotional commitment, not celebration:

unwelcome, and burdensome, but necessary.

Yet unlike *Toko-Ri*, which never moved from tragedy or comedy to irony or satire, *Pork Chop Hill* implicitly proposed Clemons' situation as absurd and raised doubts about wartime politics that even this final voice-over could not fully quiet. Clemons reaches a breaking point when a naïve American officer shows up in his besieged bunker, not with reinforcements or ammunition, but with a photojournalist in order to record a "successful military action." The Orwellian, upside-down absurdity of military strategy is intense, and it is Gregory Peck's great good manners, or perhaps his character's military discipline, that prevent him from throwing the photographer out into the line of fire.

Even more disturbing to the film's message than the absurdity of American military command are the protests of Franklin, an African American soldier who refuses to participate in the fight and threatens to shoot Clemons. Franklin, played by Woodrow Wilson "Woody" Strode, voices the frustrations of black soldiers fighting for a government that cares little—politically, legally, socially—for them. "I don't want to die for Korea!" Franklin erupts in fury. "I don't care about this stinkin hill. You oughta see where I live at home—I'm not sure I'd die for that either." Franklin's protests have historical precedent, as I have argued in chapter six. Conscientious objectors, draft evasion, letter-writing campaigns, and political protest against the Korean War were significantly higher in African American communities, particularly in highly politicized

neighborhoods like Harlem. Franklin's character, indeed, spoke for a visible, public minority.<sup>15</sup>

In the film, though, Franklin's position as the troubled and troublesome black soldier is balanced by the presence of the Japanese American Lieutenant Tsugi Ohashi (George Shibata), Clemons' brave right-hand man, and Corporal Jurgens (James Edwards), another African American soldier who keeps an eye on Franklin because, he explains, holding up his dark wrist, "I have a special interest in everything you do." Franklin eventually accepts wartime camaraderie over his "racial" concerns, and fights alongside the rest of his embattled company. This subplot within the film marks the Korean War—the first war fought with an officially, though far from practically, desegregated military—as a racial equalizer, as I have discussed in chapter five. Indeed, Nisei Lieutenant Ohashi is a veteran of World War II's 442<sup>nd</sup> Regimental Combat Team, a volunteer Army unit of Japanese American enlisted men who sought to demonstrate their "loyalty" during Japanese American internment. Franklin's ultimate decision to fight alongside the rest of the company, and Lieutenant Ohashi's example, mark military camaraderie and the acceptance of the necessary burden as the ultimate route to racial equality.<sup>16</sup> Though the film's plot seeks to provide closure for Franklin's anger, this

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<sup>15</sup> See this dissertation's chapter six, as well as Daniel Widener, "Seoul City Sue and the Bugout Blues: Black American Narratives of the Forgotten War," in *Afro Asia: Revolutionary Political and Cultural Connections between African Americans and Asian Americans*, eds. Fred Ho and Bill V. Mullen (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 55–87.

<sup>16</sup> The depiction of Strode, James Edwards, and George Shibata in ethnic newspaper film reviews lauds this particular story of racial integration at the same time that it celebrates nonwhite actors in leading roles. The coverage of *Pork Chop Hill* in the *Chicago Defender*, for example, highlighted Strode's acting even as some journalists described Franklin's actions as "cowardly." The article about actor Woody Strode in the *Chicago Defender*, for example, praised his celebrity, blackness, and male virility alongside his example as a symbol of assimilation and racial integration. Strode, a former UCLA footballer and teammate of Jackie Robinson, was an athlete-turned-actor who portrayed a series of powerful and manly black soldiers in a number of Hollywood films in the late 1950s/early 1960s. See, for example, Hazel Washington, "this ... is Hollywood", *Chicago Daily Defender*, 2 Sept. 1958, 14; *Chicago Daily Defender*, 18 May 1959, A19;

closure failed in historical practice as Korean War veterans emerged in struggles for racial justice in the years to come.

As partially illustrated by these two films, the narrative of post-1945 American power was a contradictory and contested one that relied on erasures and forgettings—of Korea, of wartime violence, of American structural racism—in order to function. And as we see in the characters of Brubaker and Clemons, the acceptance of containment logic, the taking up of this arduous yet necessary “burden,” did not rely on a specific war or place but rather on an emotional commitment to the rightness and duty of American military power. This individualization of the war put a sort of existential gloss on American imperial ideology: accepting the bridges at Toko-Ri and the strategic value of Pork Chop Hill may be absurd, but it would guarantee “the freedom of millions.”

By 1962, the irony of *Pork Chop Hill* was turned into dark satire with John Frankenheimer’s adaptation of Richard Condon’s novel, *The Manchurian Candidate*.<sup>17</sup> The ways that the “necessary burden” narrative simultaneously erased actual places, histories, and specific violence in Korea and required an individual, semi-existential commitment to containment logic had made the Korean War available as a cultural symbol for psychic and political derangements. Much has been said about *The Manchurian Candidate* as the quintessential film of cold war anxieties, so I want to mark only that the Korean War served as the un-mappable, unknowable origin point of the film’s drama and violence, as Lieutenant Raymond Shaw and his comrades are captured in Korea and brainwashed into perfect communist agents. Cultural critic Greil Marcus

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“Woody Strode, James Edwards in Loop Film,” *Chicago Daily Defender*, 28 May 1959, 21; Al Monroe, “So They Say,” *Chicago Daily Defender*, 25 May 1959, 19.

<sup>17</sup> *The Manchurian Candidate*, directed by John Frankenheimer (United Artists, 1962); Richard Condon, *The Manchurian Candidate* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1959).

argues that in the film the Korean War is akin to a historically accurate prop, “a social fact it’s assumed everyone understands,” in order to mark that it was the 1950s and is now a bit later.<sup>18</sup> Yet the Korean War in *The Manchurian Candidate* is more than a historical reference, but rather an index of the ways in which narratives of American empire relied upon forgetting and erasure throughout the early cold war.

As the Korean War stood in for Vietnam in Robert Altman’s 1970 film *M\*A\*S\*H*, and currently serves as the occasion for Don Draper’s dramatic identity-change in the hit television series *Mad Men*, we see the afterlife of the “necessary burden” narrative.<sup>19</sup> Korea has become an unknowable heart of darkness, a useful plot device to mark a dark and dramatic shift in character, or to reference another, different war. What has been forgotten about the Korean War is both the war itself, but even more, the narratives and practices of forgetting and erasure that helped explain containment logic; what is left is only the forgetting. These war stories helped make coherent the following decades of overt and covert wars for “democracy,” as well as the textbook designation of U.S. history after 1945 as a “postwar” era.

### ***Reckoning***

As I have proposed, the central fact of violence has been the most visible absence in American histories of the Korean War, and imperial violence has structured U.S. politics and culture both through its presence and its absence. This dissertation has proposed a historical investigation into the ways that these losses have become

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<sup>18</sup> Greil Marcus, “A Dream of the Cold War: On the Manchurian Candidate,” in *The Dustbin of History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 203.

<sup>19</sup> *M\*A\*S\*H\**, directed by Robert Altman (20<sup>th</sup>-Century Fox, 1970); *Mad Men* television series, produced by Matthew Weiner (AMC/Lionsgate Television, 2007–2014).

ungrievable and remembered only as forgotten in American history. It is my argument that such forgetting makes American empire, and its continuance, possible. Yet, as I have also argued, the cultural and historical process of forgetting has been a contested one, and wartime violence has left material traces. It has been known and seen by Korean civilians and soldiers, by U.S. soldiers fighting in Korea, by photojournalists and war correspondents, by the reading public gazing at the cover of *Life* magazine, by peace activists, and by the African American press covering wartime racial segregation.

Susan Sontag once wrote that there was no ideological space in the American consciousness for photographs of death from the Korean War to trouble the public as they did during the Vietnam War era.<sup>20</sup> I think that Sontag was wrong; or rather, I think that from the fact of violence and death can be wrested a reckoning, a seeing, a troubling. I have demonstrated the partial recognition of the war's violence, and the ways that political and cultural narratives have relied on forgetting to write their own innocence, a story in which "war" became "peace," "democracy," and "freedom." But in the partial recognition of violence there is still the initial fact of recognition, and this leaves room for the development of counter-narratives, new ways of seeing, and different aesthetics. It leaves space for Korean lives to be seen as mournable and grievable. As Judith Butler has argued, the recognition of social interconnectedness makes space for a discussion not of whose life matters (and who can even be said to have a "life"), but how the conditions that make life livable constitute political questions of responsibility and ethics of the highest order.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1973), 18.

<sup>21</sup> Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* (New York: Verso, 2010), 22–23.

As James Baldwin argued, to propose one's own innocence is the crime, for to claim innocence is to claim separation from the responsibilities that bind us together. But innocence need not be claimed, and we need not forget. If, as I have argued, forgetting is a way to deny another's connection to yourself in the name of communist containment, to refuse to forget is to claim a shared sense of connection. In other words, it is to insist on collective mourning and collective struggle.

Refusing to forget is no easy project, for the historical violence of nations, wars, and empires is tremendous and will likely never be laid to rest: in a sense, we will always be mourning, always hold the memory of that violence with us and be unable to lay it down. Yet just to remember, to stop at witnessing, to say just *this was so bad*, is not enough, and would merely make the war's violence an exceptional event. Rather, I propose the concept of "reckoning": interrogating the historical process of forgetting as an entrance into deconstructing the structures of empire and the subjective and physical violence it entailed.

To reckon is to balance accounts, to count, to compute, to consider. The United States must count, compute, name, consider the multiple violences of its empire. But the etymology of "reckon" is also from the Old English word *gerecenian*, which means "to narrate." This dissertation has been one attempt at reckoning, for I have begun this work by allowing the voices of the No Gun Ri survivors to frame the way the story is told, not the Pentagon. We might call this reckoning "history" and see the archive of the Korean War not only in the Truman Library but equally in the memories of massacre survivors and haunted American soldiers, in snapshots stored in shoeboxes, and in the narrative structures and historical re-emergences of Korean War stories. We might understand

writing violence, and its reckoning, as the first step toward understanding and dismantling the structures of empire that give it rise.

## Appendices

## Appendices A–B

### *Rape in Army Crime Reports*

The U.S. military's Provost Marshal (PM) office in the Far East Command (FEC) and Eighth U.S. Army (the umbrella unit stationed in occupied Japan and then moved to Korea for the duration of the Korean War) kept detailed monthly crime reports. Because of the extreme unlikelihood that all rapes were reported by victims or victim's families, these reports can be read as partial accounts of much more widespread practices.

The PM category "rape" includes statutory rape but excludes other sex offenses like "sodomy" and "homosexuality." Impossible to determine is the rate of *attempted* rape by U.S. military personnel, as it was included, after December 1949, in the general category of "aggravated assault," defined as assault with the attempt to commit murder, rape, or other felonious offenses. My understanding of these rather complicated reports relies on the Army's own manual from December 1949.\*

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\* Circular 62, 30 Dec. 1949, Folder 250.1, Box 115, GC 1949, AG, FEC, RG 554, NACP.

## Appendix A

### *Rape by U.S. Military Personnel in Occupied Japan (1947–1949) and by U.S. Forces in Korea (1947–1949), as reported to U.S. Military sources*

	Japan: 1947	Japan: 1948	Japan: 1949	Korea: 1947	Korea: 1948	Korea: 1949
Rapes reported	144	140	171	42	13	0
Arrests on suspicion of charge of rape	77	83	146	38	7	0
Number of cases that went to trial	41	21	22	3	1	0
Convictions	24	8	12	3	1	0

These figures are taken from a general survey of rape statistics in the entire FEC, which also included commands in the Philippines, the Mariana-Bonias Islands, and the Ryukyus (Okinawa); “Japan” tabulates combined statistics for rape for the Eighth U.S. Army (stationed in Japan until transferred to Korea with the outbreak of the war in June 1950), the Far East Air Force, and the Headquarters and Service Group in Japan; “Korea” reports the figure for U.S. Armed Forces in Korea.

**Source:** The figures were tallied by the Provost Marshal office between 8–10 March 1950 at the specific request of the Army Staff Branch G-1, compiled from detailed monthly crime reports prepared for each command within the entire Far East Command. Numbers of trials and convictions were prepared by the Provost Marshal office from incomplete files of General Court-Martial orders from the Judge Advocate Section of FEC GHQ. Documents held in: “Statistics in re: Rape,” Folder 250.1 “Alleged Misconduct of Occupation Troops Against Japanese Nationals”, Box 199, GC 1950, AG, FEC, RG 554, NACP.

## Appendix B

### *Rape by U.S. Military Personnel in Korea during the Korean War, selected months*

#### *1951–1952, as reported to U.S. Military sources*

	New rape cases reported	Total monthly arrests on rape charges	Number of personnel committing offenses, per month
April 1951	20	59	45
May 1951	17	52	45
June 1951	11	41	56
July 1951	11	15	15
Aug. 1951	4	27	27
Nov. 1951	2	1	7
July 1952	0	1	0

These reports are taken from the Provost Marshal's monthly reports for the Eighth US Army in Korea (EUSAK). Because they are primarily designed to measure the workload of investigate staff, the reports are more interested in counting the number of total cases and total arrests on rape charges made each month, and it is impossible from these reports to correlate how many soldiers were arrested for each specific case charged. Thus, "total monthly arrests on rape charges" presumably includes arrests for cases pending from earlier months as well as, potentially, the new cases reported each month; and there is no mathematical relationship between the second and third column.

**Source:** Folders "Staff Section Report April 1951," Folder "Staff Section Report May 1951," Folder "Staff Section Report June 1951," Folder "Staff Section Report July 1951," Folder "Staff Section Report Aug. 1951," Folder "Staff Section Report Nov. 1951," Folder "Staff Section Report July 1952," Box 2174, Command Reports (CR) Dec 1950 to Dec. 1952, Provost Marshal Section (PM), Eighth Army, RG 338, NACP.

The Provost Marshal files at the National Archives (cited above) has file folders for the EUSAK crime reports for each of the following months, but no corresponding report within: September 1951; October 1951; Dec 1951; Jan 1952; Feb 1952; March 1952; April 1952; May 1952; June 1952; Aug 1952; Sept 1952; Oct 1952; Nov 1952; Dec 1952.

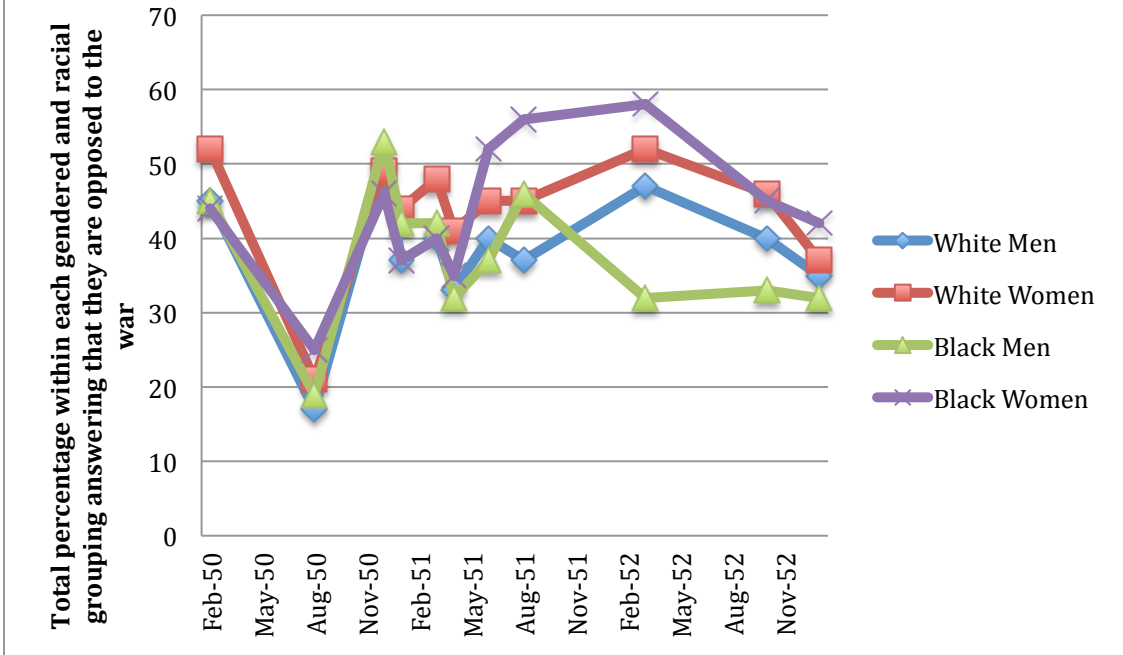
## Appendix C

### *Opposition to the Korean War, by gender and race, 1950–1952*

The American Institute of Public Opinion (Gallup) poll taken throughout the Korean War, and broken down by gender and two racial groupings indicates an overall trajectory of opposition to the Korean War. It also shows the high rate of opposition among black women, especially after June 1951, and the high rate of opposition among both black and white women. For all surveyed groups, opposition to the war dropped in late summer and fall 1950 when the war seemed “winnable,” and then spiked after December 1950, when Truman threatened to use atomic weapons.

The polls asked respondents to judge the relative wisdom of the war, not a particular policy prescription at any given moment. (“Do you think the United States made a mistake in going to war in Korea, or not?”) The two other categories that make up this poll are those supporting the war (or answering no, it’s not a mistake), and those with no opinion.

## Opposition to the Korean War by gender and race, 1950-1952 (AIPO)



Source: American Institute of Public Opinion (Gallup) polls, quoted in John E. Mueller, *War, Presidents, and Public Opinion* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1973), tables 3.1 and 5.5, pages 45 and 142.

## Appendix D

### *Senate Resolution 140, 82<sup>nd</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session,*

*introduced May 17, 1951 by Senator Edwin C. Johnson (D-Colorado)*

Whereas to permit civilization to be destroyed by World War III is utter insanity and unworthy of the men of this century; and

Whereas the Korean War has every appearance of being a hopeless conflict of attrition and indecisiveness and a breeder of bitter racial hatreds; and

Whereas a limited war, like a limited or smoldering fire, is gravely dangerous, for it may burst forth into a world-wide conflagration at any moment; and

Whereas the North and South Koreans, the Chinese, and the United Nations have suffered more than one million casualties, with the only tangible result, so far, the indescribable misery which has been heaped upon the Korean people; and

Whereas tremendous strides have been made in the development of hitherto unused lethal and destructive weapons of war with potentials of unbelievable fury and horror; and

Whereas by slaughtering additional millions of humans an uneasy peace might in time be forced upon the vanquished; and

Whereas the people of the United States traditionally have held the people of China in the highest esteem and affection and still do; and

Whereas the people of the United States have long recognized the wisdom of the principles of the Monroe Doctrine so eloquently portrayed by the slogan "Asia for Asiatics" if it were to be applied to Asia; and

Whereas it has long been the policy of the American people that no nation should seek to extend its form of government over any other nation or people, but that as an inherent right every people should be left free to determine its own form of government and its own way of life, unhindered, unthreatened, unafraid—the little along with the great and the powerful; and

Whereas the traditional policy and desire of the people of the United States of America is now and has been a just and enduring peace; and

Whereas it is never too early for God-fearing and peace-loving peoples to earnestly endeavor to stop needless human slaughter: Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved*, That it is the sense of the Senate that the United Nations call upon all nations and all groups now engaged in the war in Korea to cease fire and declare an armistice effective at 4 antemeridian (Korean time) June 25, 1951; and that prior thereto the United Nations forces retire to points south and the opposing forces retire to points north of the thirty-eighth parallel; and that before December 31, 1951, all prisoners of the Korean War shall be exchanged and all non-Korean persons, military and nonmilitary (except the ordinary diplomatic representatives), shall depart from North and South Korea.

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