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Dear Reader,

It is our great pleasure to introduce to you the first issue of the *Chicago Journal of History*. Primarily a student run publication, the journal was conceived as a platform for the publication of rigorous undergraduate scholarship in history. It aims at bringing together students from different fields and creating interdisciplinary dialogue. Papers included in this issue focus on a diverse set of scholarly debates and seek to navigate through historiographical complexities. It is our hope that you will find the ideas here interesting if not absolutely convincing.

Richard Deulofeut-Manzur's essay, "American Interior Design: How a new American sense of style changed class relations," looks at the transformation of interior design during late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He argues that gradually nearly all households moved from the baroque, European design to a new uniquely American style characterized by simplicity and utility. To this end, he analyzes contemporary advertisements and weekly magazines, challenging the idea that opulent and ornate interiors were the only choice of high and middle -income households.

The next essay is Amber Bailey's "Chicago's Engine Company 21: An Interracial vision in an Era of Reconstructions, 1872-1900." Amber examines an unexplored chapter in Chicago's turbulent history and shows how the first all African-American firefighting company reconfigured race relations in an era marked by interracial hostility. Examining newspaper reports and speeches of prominent officials, she demonstrates how the members of the firefighting company challenged the dominant perception that they were less capable than their white counterparts.

Lilliana Paratore's, "The History of What Was Once Unspoken: Legitimizing Female Experiences of Sexual Harassment through Language and Law," surveys how Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, despite never explicitly referencing sexual harassment, became the basis for arbitration in cases dealing with sexual harassment as a form of workplace discrimination. She traces the growth of the feminist movement during the 1970s and explores its contributions to a new legal lexicon.

Last in this issue is Ricardo Alvarez Pimentel's "Adopting the American Racial Lens: A History of Mexican Migration to Chicago from the Town of Arandas, Jalisco." Based on original study of the Paul S. Taylor Manuscript at the University of California, Berkeley, the essay argues that Mexican migrants were unfamiliar with the American black-white racial binary. It was only after coming to Chicago and experiencing racial prejudice that they adopted this attitude towards race. They sought to identify themselves with their white counterparts in an effort to avoid discrimination and advance socially and economically.

We hope that you will enjoy reading these essays and look forward to receiving your feedback. Please direct your questions and/or feedback to ughistoryjournal@gmail.com.

Sincerely,
Thomas Prendergast and Pranav Jain



American Interior Design: How a New American Sense of Style Changed Class Relations

By Richard Deulofeut-Manzur, University of Chicago '14

Introduction

In 1899, University of Chicago economist and sociologist Thorstein Veblen published his landmark work *The Theory of the Leisure Class*. With the tumultuous and sudden rise of retail mass consumerism and a new middle-class in America, Veblen was the first of many scholars attempting to make sense of the radical change in consumption patterns that took place in America from 1870 to 1914. Macy's, Wanamaker's, Lord & Taylor, Marshall Fields, and other major department stores introduced the American middle-class to a material world that many had never seen or experienced before, let alone been able to purchase.¹ To Veblen and other early observers

of this economic revolution, the advent of this new pattern of consumption represented a shift in the utility of purchased items. No longer were consumer goods simply useful in their practical utility in the home; the new value of purchased goods was found in what Pierre Bourdieu would later call their 'social capital.'² Consumer goods provided a means from which the non-elite classes, particularly the middle-class, could obtain social standing through displaying certain items of luxury and opulence. Fine china, finely crafted silverware, and other household trinkets became the envy of every class. Families bought more and more frivolous items in competition for a social standing near that of the "leisure class," a standing that

¹ Jan Whitaker, *Service and Style* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2006), 31.

² Pierre Bourdieu, *Practical Reason: On the Theory of Action* (Stanford: The Stanford University Press, 1998), 102.

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they could not possibly achieve. Veblen termed this new attitude towards purchasing goods “conspicuous consumption.”³

Since the introduction of Veblen’s theory, the idea of conspicuous consumption has been verified and embraced time and time again by historians looking for a means to understand the dynamic explosion in retail consumption that started in the 1870s and continued until the beginning of World War I. Historiography up to the late-20th century criticized conspicuous consumption as an elitist movement that promoted unattainable, ostentatious standards of living in an attempt to keep the non-Elite classes out of the social world of upper crust Americans.⁴ Modern historians did not branch out far from these earlier ideas. Historian Sven Beckert described conspicuous consumption as a tool used by the elite to define class lines through the acquisition of certain ‘necessary’ goods.⁵ William Leach in *Land of Desire* saw conspicuous consumption as a means of participating in a new conception of democracy based on the equal access of goods for all, but that not all could afford.⁶ Regardless of the conclusions drawn by individual historians, points of view on conspicuous consumption have followed several common threads, the most significant thread being the class dividing nature of unnecessary consuming.

The negative reputation of conspicuous consumption as a class dividing practice is all together not too surprising. A cyclical process of frivolous consumption in an attempt to gain social standing would naturally place those with more financial resources on the top of the social ladder. However, the view that class divisions arise from the social consumption of goods may be misplaced. Underlying historical analyses of fin de siècle consumer America is a presupposition that conspicuous consumption followed an extravagant style where greater quantity and quality were always desired. Leach defends the luxurious style dominating consumption by looking at the world of opulent displays and dazzling advertisements set up by department stores of the time period. In creating a consumer world far beyond the means of all but the wealthiest of Americans, the new retail giants were playing to tensions in class differences in an attempt to sell more ostentatious and unnecessary items.⁷ Other historians pinpoint evidence of opulent consumption in the Parisian fashions that dominated women’s clothing or the kleptomania craze that swept a nation of middle-class wives looking to gain social recognition through

stolen beauty items.⁸

In the process, historians have insufficiently examined the actual place where consumer goods are displayed – the home. Advertisers and retailers pushed to sell a certain sense of style that they thought was most profitable, but housewives, who acted as the primary consumers for the family, did not always follow these trends. Initially the new emerging middle-class housewives modeled their homes after those advertised by department stores and used by the American elite class. However, images of public areas in American homes during this time illustrate interior design styles very different from the extravagant fashions advertised. This occurred as housewives began to share their ideas through both word of mouth and women’s publications. Consequently, interior design changed from the opulent European model to a new ‘middle-class’ style based on principles that most middle and upper class Americans could follow. Simplicity, harmony, and utility were the core qualities every housewife, from both the middle- and upper-class, wanted in her house. From this new style in the home driven by consumer savvy housewives a redefinition of the effects of conspicuous consumption is in order. Tenable principles of style molded by the housewives acted as a mediatory force to the egregious standards of luxury displayed by the retailers. In so doing, conspicuous consumption blurred the lines between the Elite and middle-classes through the creation of a uniquely American style that catered to both groups.

Interior Design of the Elite Class:

Early Ideas of Interior Style

During the early years of middle-class consumerism, interior design was not the class-unifying, American sense of style described above. Initially, the home décor of those who had access to a wide range of home furnishings mimicked, to use Veblen’s own word, the “ostentation” of the Elite.⁹ During the post-bellum years of America when mass manufacturing was just starting to kick off, elites dictated what was fashionable and what was not. Edith Wharton in her design manual *The Decoration of Houses* commented on how “the bourgeois of one generation lives more like the aristocrats of a previous generation... and it is for this reason that the origin of modern house-planning should be sought rather in the prince’s mezzanine than in the small middle-class dwelling.”¹⁰ The newly emerging middle-class looked to the Elite to guide them to the newly opened world of interior design, particularly those public rooms of the home used to entertain and host guests: the parlor and dining room. In doing so, the extravagance that

3 Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1899), 75.

4 Andrew Tully, *Era of Elegance* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1947), 13.

5 Sven Beckert, *Monied Metropolis: New York City and the Consolidation of the American Bourgeoisie* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 273.

6 William Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 347.

7 Leach, *Land of Desire*, 90.

8 Elaine Abelson, *When Ladies Go A-Thieving* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 37.

9 In describing the styles of early American consumerism as a form of “ostentation,” Veblen was differentiating between the “useful purpose” of an object and the value given to it for the maximum possible purpose of decoration and display. Veblen, *Theory of the Leisure Class*, 69.

10 Edith Wharton and Ogden Codman Jr, *The Decoration of Houses* (New York: C. Scribner’s Sons, 1897), 7.

the American Elite had borrowed from Europe's aristocrats and the class-dividing conspicuous consumption that came with it became the style à la mode.

Parlors became the definitive focal point of consumer style in the post-bellum American home. As early as the 1850s, "the spread of parlor culture" put parlors into any house that could afford one.¹¹ Taken from the European tradition of the *salon de famille* and the *salon de campagne*, it was the center of public life, a room only to be opened on Sundays after church, holidays, or when host to special guests.¹² Regular family activities were kept in other rooms of the house in fear of ruining the cleanliness and delicate nature of the room, which was kept at the ready for any unexpected important visitors.¹³ With the sole exception of wives looking for sporadic refuge in the dimly lit enclosure, entrance to the parlor was strictly off limits, especially to the children who would be lucky to gain entrance more than a few times a year.¹⁴ Consequent to the parlor being *the* public room of the house, no costs were spared in decorating it with the largest quantity of the finest items each family could buy. An 1883 article from *The Decorator and Furnisher* noted, "the most popular view of a parlor is as a shrine into which is placed all that is most precious... this is really the most sensible view to take."¹⁵ Brass candelabras, glass dancer figurines and vases, carpeting, painted arras, silver tea sets, and a gilded china basket of violets are just some of the items listed in one interior design manual from 1882.¹⁶ The items that belonged in the parlor were not to be used; they were only to be displayed and adorned. Writers on interior design, recognizing the disuse of such a well-furnished room, went as far as calling it awesome, venerable, solemn, and even sacred in its limited use.¹⁷

As one might expect the elaborate decorations and sanctity of the parlor were also a source of great dread to any housewife. Housewives fretted over the possible unspoken judgment that guests made upon entering the parlor of their home. As one 1886 article from *Harper's Bazaar* put it, "your parlor is an expression of the high and low degree of art which your mind has reached."¹⁸ The extravagant nature of the parlor inevitably led to bitter class divisions on the basis of proper decoration and arrangement. An article by Mrs. E. B. Duffey in 1875 explained how families built parlors that were knowingly ugly, but they did so as a "result of necessity,"

in defense of their social standing. She finishes by criticizing the "parlor, considered as models of respectability by people of limited means."¹⁹ Mrs. Duffey was by no means alone in her lambasting of the opulent parlor that very few could afford to build, let alone furnish, properly. However, despite the inability of many to afford one, numerous parlors were built at very high expenses. The class divisions during this period ran deep even among people who could afford parlors. Interior design magazines took great pains in differentiating between the 'cozy' parlors of the countryside and apartments, and the 'brilliant' parlors of the Elite's houses.²⁰

The over-the-top affluence that dominated the interior décor of the parlor could also be seen in the other major public room of the house, the dining room. In conjunction with the parlor, whose sole purpose was that of the entertainment of guests, the dining room commanded the public sphere of the home. So important was this room where formal dinners and get-togethers took place that many called for luxurious decoration beyond even that of the parlor. A *Harper's Bazaar* article dating from March 1877 called on any suggestions of poverty to be eliminated from the dining room, stating, "if it is possible to have but one sumptuous room... the dining-room should be that one sumptuous one."²¹ In looking at the fashion suggested for dining rooms, Wharton and other early interior designers of the period suggested looking to the "grand French houses of the eighteenth century and to the same class of dwellings in England," when looking into how to decorate.²² Sure enough, much of the argument among early designers came along the lines of whether to follow the English-style of solemn grace or the French-style of jovial gaiety.²³ Paintings portraying light scenes, hardwood chairs and tables, finely crafted curtains, silverware, and an array of glass and china were all considered 'must haves' in putting together even the most modest dining rooms.²⁴ Agnes Bailey Ormsbee in an 1891 article accurately described the nature of many of the objects in the dining room as adding "largely to the comfort and tastefulness of the dining-room."²⁵

Needless to say, the dining room created equal amounts of class tension among the middle- and upper-classes through the high levels of décor expected. Unlike the parlor, most American families had some sort of area designated for dining within their households, so it is not surprising that so much stress was placed on decoration. The use of the dining room space and the items in it acted as one of the largest

11 Richard L. Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), 273.

12 Wharton, *Decoration of Houses*, 126.

13 Mary Gay Humphreys, "The Parlor," *The Decorator and Furnisher*, May 1883, 52.

14 "Are Parlors Useless?" *Boston Daily Globe*, March 29, 1877, 4.

15 Humphreys, "The Parlor," 52.

16 T.W. Dewing, *Beauty in the Household* (New York: Harper & Brothers, Franklin Square, 1882), 117.

17 Caroline Benedict Burrell, "The Decline and Fall of the Parlor," *Congregationalist and Christian World*, November 1, 1902, 622.

18 "Modest House Decoration," *Harper's Bazaar*, May 22, 1886, 1.

19 Mrs. E. B. Duffey, "Will You Walk Into My Parlor?" *Arthur's Illustrated Home Magazine*, June 1875, 386.

20 Dewing, *Beauty in the Household*, 121.

21 "Household Furnishings: The Dining-Room," *Harper's Bazaar*, March 24, 1877, 178.

22 Wharton, *Decoration of Houses*, 159.

23 Dewing, *Beauty in the Household*, 54.

24 *Ibid.*, 62.

25 Agnes Bailey Ormsbee, "The House Comfortable: The Dining-Room," *Harper's Bazaar*, September 5, 1891, 679.

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differentiations among the elite classes and the lower classes. In accord with the European tradition of the dining hall, the use of the room was very specific. The grand state dining rooms of Europe, used as the ideal model of what a dining room should look like, were far beyond the means of most middle-class Americans.²⁶ In fact, many Americans combined the dining space of the house with the library, den, and parlor, among other things.²⁷ Items such as bookshelves and extra seating were strongly looked down on as moving away from the contented atmosphere of the eating-place.²⁸ Smaller points of departure between the classes came from the quality of the goods used and the various accessories considered essential to the décor. The table and chairs of the dining room, while obviously being essential in nature, were expected to be of hardwood, and the older the furniture the better. The extension-table, a smaller table with a central support and attachable extensions on the sides, was, as Wharton put it, “ingenious but ugly... never [as] satisfactory to the eye as one of the old round or square tables, with four or six tapering legs such as were used in eighteenth-century dining-rooms.”²⁹ China plates, silverware, and glassware also played prominently in dividing the classes. In *Beauty in the Household*, Mrs. T.W. Dewing described the necessity of portraits, flowers, china, glass and silverware at any dinner table. The joyous and festive tone of the room leads her to suggest, “indeed, were we making a dining-room regardless of expense, the ornate style of the Renaissance would seem to us to add joyousness.”³⁰

Based on the class divisions that arose from these design trends, one could conclude that during this time period the retail consumerism of America followed Veblen’s idea of ‘conspicuous consumption’ to the letter. The middle-class, in an attempt to gain social standing, plodded along with the extravagant style already set out by the Elite class and found itself unable to meet the same standard. In Veblen’s own words, “but the derivative fact – the vicarious leisure and consumption rendered by the wide... remained in vogue as a conventionality which the demands of reputability will not suffer to be slighted.”³¹ In the race by the middle-class for a high place on the societal ladder, the class dividing consumption that was already in place before the rise of mass consumerism took hold early on.

Interior Design of the Middle-Class: An American Interior Style

Yet this ostentatious style of design was not to last long. As early as the 1870s, middle-class criticism of the glitzy fashions displayed by the elite began to surface. Spearheading the movement were women’s magazines and design books, which benefited from large circulations that rapidly broadened readership beyond elite families.³² An 1878 interior design manual titled *The House Beautiful* began its section on the living room by firmly declaring its “use of the word ‘living-room’ instead of ‘Parlor,’ because... as these chapters are not written for rich people’s reading, and as none but rich people can afford to have a room in their house set apart for the pleasures of idleness.”³³ A. B. Ramsey in an article for *The Ladies’ Home Journal and Practical Housekeeper* asserted, “what every parlor needs is to be used – carefully, and somewhat formally if you will – but still *used*, each and every day.”³⁴ Early challenges such as these were only the beginning of radical changes in the consumer fashions of the country soon to come, and the center of it all was the housewife. As wives began to realize the unreasonable nature of many of the elite interior design practices, they also began to develop new principles that would come to redefine what was culturally acceptable. In the process of this grassroots development, championed by the women of the home, would come a new American sense of fashion that blended both the ostentatious fashions of the 1800s with the utilitarian, harmonic, and simple style of the early 1900s.

In 1896, Candace Wheeler wrote a magazine article for *Outlook* detailing a luncheon conversation with several other housewives in which they discussed home decoration. Wheeler asserts, “the principles of interior design [were]... Individuality; Appropriateness; Harmony... Intelligent Application.”³⁵ This fashion, based on certain core principles conveniently outlined here by Wheeler, was the newly emerging middle-class fashion that rose up to challenge existing lavish styles rooted in elite culture. The new principles were by no means Wheeler’s creation, but it was women such as her in writing for publications such as *Outlook* that spread this burgeoning fashion beyond the home. Possibly even more audacious a claim than the challenging of traditional décor was Wheeler’s challenge of expense. In calling for an interior design style with appropriateness, she meant, “not only appropriateness to place and use, but to means. Nothing can be satisfactorily beautiful which implies a strain of the resources – anything

26 Wharton, *Decoration of Houses*, 159.

27 “The Art of Furnishing: The Dining-Room,” *The Art Amateur; A Monthly Journal Devoted to Art in the Household*, August 1880, 62.

28 Hope Myddleton, “The Decoration of Our Homes: The Dining-Room,” *The Art Amateur; A Monthly Journal Devoted to Art in the Household*, February 1886, 64.

29 Wharton, *Decoration of Houses*, 164.

30 Dewing, *Beauty in the Household*, 55.

31 Veblen, *Theory of the Leisure Class*, 81.

32 Mary Ellen Waller-Zuckerman, “Old Homes, in a City of Perpetual Change: Women’s Magazines, 1890-1916,” *Business History Review* 63 (1989): 716.

33 Clarence Cook, *The House Beautiful: Essays on Beds and Tables, Stools and Candlesticks* (New York: Scribner, Armstrong & Co., 1878), 45.

34 A. R. Ramsey, “Interior Decoration: The Parlor,” *The Ladies’ Home Journal and Practical Housekeeper*, August 1888, 9.

35 Candace Wheeler, “The Principles of Decoration,” *Outlook* 53, 1896, 284.

which throws the life out of gear.”³⁶ The new middle-class style not only attacked the idea of beauty that was extolled in the old fashion, but attacked the core problem many had with the then current idea of style in general: its price.

Despite the early protests of housewives, the new ‘principles’ of interior design championed in the home did not gain solid ground immediately. In a field heavily dictated by history and fine culture, these new ideas of decoration struggled to find educated supporters. When noted Yale Professor Edward E. Salisbury delivered his 1887 address *Principles of Domestic Taste*, in which he championed harmonious furnishings of the home based on personal ideals and taste, his ideas were received with skepticism, but seen as intriguing nevertheless.³⁷ In asking women to place their own culture first and to allow home art to “grow from within outward,” Professor Salisbury was asking housewives to forge ahead towards a uniquely American domestic life.³⁸ It was not until around 1910 or so that these ‘principles’ took on a wider popular role, widely influencing fashion trends for middle and upper classes alike. First and foremost, these new principles of decoration had a massive effect on interior décor within the public spaces that had been so tantamount earlier in the century. The role and fashion of the parlor and the dining room were significantly altered in the almost half-century since the principles came into being; the changes attacked the old institutions to a degree never before imaginable.

The parlor, which had earlier been the center of all public life within the home, found its final death stroke with the arrival of these ideals that championed utility and simplicity over extravagant superfluity. However, as previously mentioned, this change did not happen instantaneously, but gradually as the ideas fostered by the housewives gained popularity. The first quality of the parlor challenged by the housewives was its utility. In 1872, the *Ohio Farmer* shared the following sentiment: “I confess to liking a homely parlor – one that looks as if it were used.”³⁹ A.B. Ramsey also reiterated the demand for use of the parlor in writing for the *Ladies’ Home Journal*, as did a plethora of other interior design writers looking to redefine the dreaded room of public affairs.⁴⁰ Calls for tarnished brass, worn-out chairs, and the elimination of excessive wall hangings were just some of the earlier changes made to the parlor in an attempt to make more use of them. Many designers and homemakers continued to champion the idea of the parlor well into the early 1900s, but it was far too late for the antiquated space. The movement to make parlors

more and more usable led to a desire for more space. Parlors were emptied of the trinkets and knickknacks that once adorned the shelves and what was left were a few choice pieces of furniture and decoration that ‘harmonized’ well.⁴¹ No longer was the idea to cover every space with a large quantity of the most quality items. The key to interior décor in the parlor was balancing simple and elegant elements together to achieve that homely feel as described by the *Ohio Farmer*.⁴²

The harmony of the room and the simplification of decoration, though, was not enough to save the parlor. Even with space freed up within the parlor, the new middle-class sense of taste desiring a combination of utility, simplicity, and personality could not be satisfied any longer with concessions to the original model. To the housewives of America the parlor became the room of ‘grandmothers’ symbolizing a style far out of date with modern necessity.⁴³ It became, according to the *Ohio Farmer*, so “hearse like... that my very blood chilled at their uninviting upholstery stiffness.”⁴⁴ The impersonal, small, and cluttered rooms that represented the parlor filled with small goods of little utility except for the utility of display disappeared from the home as a singular public space. To fill in the need left behind by the parlor, the homely, spacious, and utilitarian living room came in to replace it. As Caroline Burrell described it, the living room was “one large room which is to take the place of a parlor, sitting-room and library. Often... even larger, so there may be opportunity for several groups of people to engage in different pursuits in it at the same time with some degree of privacy.”⁴⁵ The parlor, with its clear specificity in function and impersonal feel, could not compete with the living room’s “general service, unique in usefulness, its realization a continuous source of delight.”⁴⁶

Despite this growing sentiment, some more traditional housewives and interior decorators continued to defend the idea of the parlor. One defender of the parlor, writing in the editor’s column of *Atlantic Monthly* in 1903, stressed the sanctity of the parlor as a means of keeping the public and private spheres of life separate from each other: “Here in the sitting-room we have a divine right to be *we*; but you, the outsider? No, I am old-fashioned, I had rather there were a parlor for you – stay there!”⁴⁷ Efforts to bring back the parlor, though, were met with limited success. By 1900, all but a few interior design catalogues included the parlor in its description of rooms and those that did usually only did so to explain its sudden decline.

36 Wheeler, “Principles of Decoration,” 285.

37 Prof. Edward E. Salisbury, “Principles of Domestic Taste: A Lecture Delivered in the Yale School of the Fine Arts,” *New Englander*, April 1877, 310; “Harmony in Home Decoration,” *National Repository, Devoted to General and Religious Literature, Criticism, ...*, October 1877, 370.

38 Salisbury, “Principles of Domestic Taste,” 326.

39 “Parlors,” *Ohio Farmer*, February 17, 1872, 106.

40 A. R. Ramsey, “Interior Decoration: The Parlor,” 10.

41 Miss Helen A. Hawley, “The Reformation of the Parlor,” *New York Observer and Chronicle*, January 28, 1909, 9.

42 “Parlors,” *Ohio Farmer*, February 17, 1872, 107.

43 Eugene Wood, “The Parlor Back Home,” *McClure’s Magazine*, September 1909, 475.

44 “Parlors,” *Ohio Farmer*, February 17, 1872, 106.

45 Caroline Benedict Burrell, “The Decline and Fall of the Parlor,” 623.

46 Alice M. Kellogg, *Home Furnishing: Practical and Artistic* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Co., 1905), 31.

47 “The Contributor’s Club: The Passing of the Parlor,” *Atlantic Monthly*, 1903, 712.

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Furthermore, design manuals focused less on detailing the exact type of plush curtains and silver plates to buy, and focused more on developing, in the words of interior designer Fred Daniels, “for those who have sense and feeling... [a] good taste in the home.”⁴⁸ The combination of harmony, simplicity, utility, and personality redefined American interior design and style. In tandem with the development of these principles also came the devaluation of price as essential to creating a properly decorated household. Elsie de Wolfe in her décor manual *The Household in Good Taste*, stressed that “it [was] much more important that wall openings, windows, doors and fireplaces should be in the right place... than that there should be expensive and extravagant hangings and carpets.”⁴⁹ While in the past a certain price was always required when looking to decorate a room, the new principles of interior design stressed balance over quantity and quality. Eugene Wood in the September 1909 volume of *McClure's Magazine* summed up the final sentiment on the ostentatious parlor room quite nicely when he said, “the old-time aristocratic, idle, useless Parlor went because it was more bother than it was good... I never could see that the idling-place about a house had any better right to be prettier than the working-place about the house.”⁵⁰

Much like the parlor, the dining room eventually transitioned from being a public center of glamorous decoration and intricate tableware into a more personal and family-oriented area where decorations were important mostly for their usefulness to the room. However, the dining hall's transformation with the rise of this new middle-class style could be considered even more striking than that of the parlor room. China, silverware, brass, and glassware stayed the norm through this time period, but the quality and quantity of tableware that was socially acceptable shifted dramatically from a style where the highest quality and quantity was desired to a style where uniformity and the balancing of colors and forms took precedence and was socially praised regardless of price and luxury.⁵¹ In following this new middle-class style, dining rooms were decorated with furniture that served function without deviating far into the intricate European designs called on by earlier designers. An article in *The Craftsman* detailing the development of American interior décor style of home furnishing noted, “in order to achieve real distinction and beauty in American home furnishings, we must approach the undertaking from the standpoint of elimination, or judicious selection of objects, textures and color harmonies.”⁵² The

simplicity of the furniture applied equally to the decorations that hung against the walls, as Elsie de Wolfe stated, “but one thing you must have: simplicity... the easiest way to destroy this simplicity is to litter the room with displays of silver and glass... [but] let your walls take care of themselves and to put away your silver and china and glass, the room will be as dignified as you could wish.”⁵³ This shift to the more simple, harmonic, and utilitarian design mirrored the dining rooms shift from a mainly public space to one focused on the family. In Abbot McClure's *House Furnishing and Decoration* the newly focused significance of the dining room is stressed as it is “in the dining-room [that] we perform pass much of our time, and time we spend there should embrace many of our pleasantest hours, for though family table talk cannot be expected to... [be] uninterrupted... it ought at least to be lively, good-natured and as constant as possible.”⁵⁴

The rise of a new middle-class driven interior design style based on certain key principles of good taste and sense, affected interior design drastically as seen through the significant change brought on the public and decorated rooms in the house, the parlor and dining room. Simplicity, harmony, personality, and affordability changed American interior design style starting with the middle-class and then moving slowly towards the Elite. The effort of the middle-class facilitated a class-consciousness among them that spurred on this new push in style. With the support of intellectuals such as Professor Edward E. Salisbury of Yale University and University of Pennsylvania economist Simon N. Patten, who called for the rejection of European extravagance in favor of American cheap and cultivated pleasures, the newly emerging middle-class style gained an intellectual defense based on harmonious ideals of the home.⁵⁵ The combined support of women's publications, a few upper echelon social circles within academia, and the business elite facilitated a unification of style between the classes. Finally, the crossover of the grass-roots interior design into the upper crust of American society was completed through the adoption of these middle-class principles of decoration style by the major interior decorators of the time period. The middle-class consciousness that challenged class divisions succeeded. In successfully spreading this new principles-based style, the middle-class consciousness became the conscious of the whole, both of the middle-class and the elite. In finding a unified style to follow, the middle and upper class were able to bridge the divisions of the early consumer era, and blurred class lines from the early nineteenth century through the cultural acceptance of a wider range of the American populous by way of interior design.

48 Fred Hamilton Daniels, *The Furnishing of a Modest Home* (Worcester: The David Press, 1908), 12.

49 Elsie De Wolfe, *The House in Good Taste* (New York: The Century Co., 1913), 17.

50 Wood, “The Parlor Back Home,” 482.

51 Mrs. Julian Hawthorne, “Cheapness, Comfort, and Luxury: Dining-Rooms,” *Harper's Bazaar*, May 22, 1875, 338.

52 “The Development of an American Style of Home Furnishing Founded upon Beauty, Comfort and Simplicity,” *The Craftsman*, 1914, 70.

53 De Wolfe, *House in Good Taste*, 176.

54 Abbot McClure and Harold Donaldson Eberlein, *House Furnishing and Decoration* (New York: Robert M. McBride & Co., 1916), 113.

55 Simon N. Patten, *The Consumption of Wealth* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1889), 36.

Conclusion

In analyzing a new form of fashion that both adhered to the cultural consumption of goods but delineated a means other than quantity or quality to determine the effect of these goods on social rank, Veblen's theory of conspicuous consumption is both verified and challenged. Using the *décor* style created by the middle-class housewives, class lines were bridged in a way that Veblen's initial theory and that of many modern economic historians did not account for. The 'inconspicuous consumption' outlined by such a style would alter the negative class effects usually presented in discussions of mass consumerism in America. The ostentatious luxuriousness of the early years of consumerism would continue to be championed by the department stores of the age, particularly those catering to a higher-class audience such as Wanamaker's or Marshall Fields. The efforts of the retail industry to propagate class fission via elitist consumption could even be seen as the retail giants' response to the attack towards maximum consumption presented by middle-class style. However, the influence of the grass-roots housewives' style became a mainstay focus of the emerging 'American' style and acted as a mediator to the 'buy more' ideology impressed by the department stores.

As to why middle-class women were able to rally together under this common cause of home design, that question proves too large to answer in the scope of this paper but there are certainly clues that can help point the way. The commanding control late-nineteenth century housewives had on literacy certainly played an important role. The early explosion of women's magazines decades before their rise in the mainstream media might have given women a focused voice of opinion that consumer corporations were unsure how to deal with.⁵⁶ Another possible reason for the quick structuring of design principles could have been the great pressure women suddenly faced to be aware and vigilant of on-going trends, especially if they could benefit their family. In turning women into full-time shoppers, department stores might also have inadvertently created full-time trendsetters. What we know for certain, however, is that middle-class style would continue to evolve in tandem with the ostentatious style of the old Elite and the department stores as both styles tried to gain the upper hand. The ebb-and-flow between the two competing interior fashions generated a new uniquely American style. Increased consumption softened by principles of taste propelled retail consumption forward into the twentieth century, while creating a cultural cohesion based on tenable principles of taste. In so doing, a cultural permeability brought the upper- and middle-classes closer together and began what would become strong ties between the two groups in the decades to come.

56 Waller-Zuckerman, "Old Homes, in a City of Perpetual Change," 756.

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Picture on page 3:
Library of Congress / Government Release / Parlor, Rock Island Arsenal Building No. 1



Chicago's Engine Company 21: An Interracial Vision in an Era of Reconstructions, 1872-1900

By Amber Bailey, University of Chicago '13

In November 1872, the Chicago Fire Department announced that it would establish three new fire engine companies. Though predictable given the previous year's tragic conflagration, the Department's announcement aroused "unusual flurry among the firemen."¹ This sudden burst of interest had little to do with where these new companies would be stationed or what engines they would command. Instead, the firemen clamored over who would staff them. Reporting on the Department's expansion, the *Chicago Daily Tribune* noted, "Of course it is conceded on all sides that one of the companies will be composed of colored men." This black fire company was activated less than a month later and assigned to Engine 21. Yet few Chicagoans would have imagined a black fire engine company little more than a year before. In 1872, black

Chicagoans began to participate in civic life and administration at an unprecedented level. Engine Company 21 stood at the vanguard of this local reconstruction. Created in the wake of slavery's abolition, the historic fire company heralded a new era of reconstructions.

Despite the company's historical significance, the story of Engine Company 21 has been overlooked by scholars of early Chicago. Historiography on early black Chicagoans, in particular, is scant because the city's early black population has been dismissed as little more than a marginal, unremarkable presence. However, a few scholars have offered valuable insight into the lives of African Americans living in Chicago before the Great Migration. Notably, historian Allan Spear demonstrated that prior to 1900 the city was not yet plagued by anti-black hostility, and its black residents had not yet embraced

1 "The Fire Department," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Nov. 26, 1872.

CHICAGO ENGINE COMPANY 21

a separatist agenda.² As the city's black residents had not yet been forced into physical ghettos, early black Chicagoans were able to assimilate into mainstream civic institutions, or secure white financial support and personnel for institutions that would later become the bedrock of the city's institutional ghetto.³ Though Spear focuses primarily on the 1890s onward, his analysis provides valuable insight into the nature of race relations during Chicago's black reconstruction. Adding to Spear's work, historian Christopher Reed extensively charted the development of Chicago's black community in the 19th century.⁴ Neither of these authors, however, has critically examined Engine Company 21.

The story of this obscure company offers new ways for thinking about the history of Chicago in the late 1800s. The story of Engine Company 21 links black Chicagoans' struggle for civil rights and inclusion to the city's quest to reconstruct itself and its government after the Great Fire of 1871. These local efforts resembled and resurrected Congressional Reconstruction. As Chicago underwent its own reconstruction, freedmen throughout the nation were granted civil rights, and the state expanded dramatically. Engine Company 21's unique story, therefore, provides a new lens for exploring how Chicago's post-fire reconstruction converged with the national Reconstruction project.

The complex experience of blacks in Chicago and other Northern cities has been ignored in Reconstruction historiography. Scholarship on the era has focused almost entirely on the repercussions of emancipation in the South. Studies of Reconstruction have no doubt illuminated the particular problems facing the region as it transitioned from a slave society to a free one. But by focusing on the rural South, historians have failed to fully convey how the abolition of slavery fundamentally transformed all of American life, especially black life in Northern cities. As Leslie Schwalm argued in *Emancipation's Diaspora*, emancipation "changed the history of race throughout the nation" – even in the North.⁵ Schwalm began to unpack the repercussions of emancipation outside of the South, particularly in the Upper Midwest. However, in offering the first sweeping analysis of Reconstruction in the region, she did not address how Northern cities in particular responded to the nation's most profound experiment.

Historiography of the era has, in fact, overlooked how Reconstruction unfolded on a municipal level. Eminent historian Eric Foner, for instance, focused on the role of Northern Republican leaders in reforming state laws rather than the everyday changes blacks experienced on a local level.⁶ As the

narrative of Reconstruction has focused on the South and the state, stories such as that of Engine Company 21 have gone unnoticed. Yet Engine Company 21, a collection of men who had risen from the status of slaves to integral citizens within their community, represented the fulfillment of the highest ideals of Reconstruction. As the experience of these black firefighters attests, cities throughout the North were forced to rethink the place blacks occupied within them in the wake of emancipation. Chicago was not immune from this rethinking process, which spurred the city to begin an experiment with interracial democracy that mirrored but remained distinct from national Reconstruction.

Indeed, this essay's central claim is that, through Engine Company 21, Chicago experimented with the interracial democracy envisioned by the architects of Congressional Reconstruction. The story of Engine Company 21 reveals that the ideals of Reconstruction flourished within the city despite persistent racism. Until its decline in the 1890s, Engine Company 21 symbolized the fulfillment of an interracial vision of American democracy, in which the government and freedmen worked together to integrate blacks into civic and public life. But the image of black firemen was also manipulated in popular culture, namely in a series of Currier & Ives lithographs titled the *Darktown Comics*, to produce a counter vision. In the imaginary world of Darktown, interracial democracy was not a lofty ideal to be pursued but a problem to be resisted. Darktown's black firefighters reflected intense racial anxieties over the integration of blacks into public life. As symbols in these two opposed visions of interracial democracy, black firemen tested the limits of Reconstruction.

The term "reconstruction" could be applied to a number of processes taking place in the latter half of the 19th century. For the purposes of this essay, the term "federal Reconstruction" refers to the period between 1863 and 1877 when the federal government oversaw the readmission of Confederate states to the Union, and contemplated the social, political, and economic destiny of freedmen. Three years after federal Reconstruction began, Radical Republicans gained control of the United States Congress where they imposed martial law in the South and enacted laws to protect freedmen. This period is labeled here as "Congressional Reconstruction". Both Federal and Congressional Reconstruction ended with the Compromise of 1877 when federal troops evacuated the South and returned control to Southern Democrats. Borrowing from Eric Foner, the general term "Reconstruction" used in these pages refers to a protracted historical process in which American society adapted to the abolition of slavery.⁷ Through this lens, Reconstruction can be understood as a process that extended beyond the Compromise of 1877 and transcended the boundaries of the South.

The analysis that follows seeks to situate the story of Engine Company 21 in an era of local and national reconstruction

2 Allan Spear, *Black Chicago: The Making of A Negro Ghetto* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), 8.

3 Spear, *Black Chicago*, 91.

4 Christopher Reed, *Black Chicago's First Century: Vol. 1, 1833-1900* (Columbia, Mo: University of Missouri Press, 2005).

5 Leslie Schwalm, *Emancipation's Diaspora: Race and Reconstruction in the Upper Midwest* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2009), 2.

6 Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution* (New

York: Harper & Row, 1988), 470.

7 Foner, *Reconstruction*, xxvii.

tions. From the halls of Congress to the chambers of Chicago's City Council to the firehouse of this historic company, the country underwent a profound experiment that determined the fate of former slaves and that of the entire nation. Engine Company 21 stood at the center of this experiment. These groundbreaking black firemen cast off their tattered garments for firefighter uniforms, the chains of slavery for a fire hose. As they battled blazes throughout the city, the men of Engine Company 21 proved themselves worthy of citizenship and inclusion in a new interracial democracy. Though federal Reconstruction unraveled after less than two decades, Chicago's black reconstruction renewed the possibility for a true interracial democracy for just a moment more.

An Era of Reconstructions

Blacks had maintained a small but consistent presence in Chicago since the late 1700s when Jean Baptiste Point Du Sable, a man of African and French descent, became the first permanent settler in the area. Though Du Sable has long been hailed as the founder of Chicago, subsequent generations of black settlers found themselves excluded from civic life and administration. However, black Chicago reached a turning point when the Chicago Fire Department created Engine Company 21 in 1872. Engine Company 21 marked the beginning of the city's black reconstruction. What had black life in Chicago been like prior to this reconstruction, and how did it change afterwards? What catalyzed this profound reshaping of municipal life? And how did Chicago's reconstruction compare to Congressional Reconstruction taking place at the same time? Just as Congressional Reconstruction waned, Engine Company 21 signaled a renewed reconstruction that accorded blacks a formal place within municipal life and administration for the first time. In this era of reconstructions, Chicago's growing black population enjoyed a legal status equal to whites, ascended to elected office, and earned municipal appointments.

Prior to the formation of Engine Company 21, black Chicagoans were disenfranchised under state law. Under Illinois's slave codes, black indentured servants and slaves were subject to unmitigated violence, exploitation, and highly restricted mobility, as well as "the entitlement of all whites to act punitively against blacks in the enforcement of these regulations."⁸ Even after the 1848 Illinois State Constitution outlawed slavery, the state's black codes continued to disenfranchise black people. An 1819 statute required black residents to prove their freedom to circuit courts and carry papers indicating their status.⁹ In 1853, the Illinois General Assembly altogether banned free blacks from immigrating to the state, made it a criminal offense to bring a slave into Illinois, and awarded money to anyone who apprehended a black or mulatto per-

son – whether slave or free.¹⁰ In antebellum Chicago, state laws denied free blacks the right to vote, testify in court against whites, or marry outside of their race. Legal statutes likewise maintained racial segregation in public schools, accommodations and transportation.¹¹ Through these many laws, black Chicagoans were marked as inferior and unworthy of citizenship, thus allowing whites to "exploit, coerce, and dehumanize" them with impunity.¹²

Despite the legal statutes circumscribing their rights, the law did not always dictate the reality of black life. For instance, the Illinois General Assembly barred blacks from immigrating to Illinois in 1853, but the city's black population steadily grew afterwards. The number of free black Chicagoans nearly tripled from 323 in 1850 to 955 in 1860.¹³ Most of these new residents immigrated to Illinois from other states, primarily the slave states of Virginia, Kentucky and Missouri.¹⁴ Thus, even though blacks were legally barred, a significant number of free blacks and runaway slaves found refuge in Illinois in reality.

The dissonance between law and reality manifested again shortly after Congress passed the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. The act compelled federal marshals to arrest any black person accused of being a runaway slave and denied the accused a right to a jury trial. The controversial act likewise provided marshals with a bonus for capturing alleged slaves and stipulated that anyone who abetted a runaway could be fined and jailed. Chicago's City Council condemned the law, calling it "revolting to our moral sense, and an outrage upon our feelings of justice and humanity."¹⁵ Accordingly, the council declared that officers in the city would not enforce the law. Despite the support of the City Council and local abolitionists, black Chicagoans were still targeted by slave catchers hoping to profit from the ambiguity of blacks' status. Such was the case when a group of slave traders seized a runaway slave named Eliza and attempted to send her back to captivity.¹⁶ Though Eliza was spirited away by local abolitionists, her ordeal highlights how precarious and complex many black Chicagoans' lives were prior to the city's reconstruction.

In spite of their precarious legal status and inferior social position, black Chicagoans successfully assimilated into

10 *Laws of Illinois*, 18 G.A., Act of Feb. 12, 1853, 57-60.

11 Spear, *Black Chicago*, 6.

12 Schwalm, *Emancipation's Diaspora*, 27.

13 U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Census of Population and Housing, 1850*, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1850), 705; U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Census of Population and Housing, 1860*, (Washington, DC: GPO, 1860), 613.

14 U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Census of Population and Housing, 1860*, 613.

15 Chicago City Council, Resolution Regarding the Fugitive Slave Act, Nov. 29, 1850, File 6603A, in Chicago City Council Proceeding Files, Illinois Regional Archives Depository.

16 St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton, *Black Metropolis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 33.

8 Schwalm, *Emancipation's Diaspora*, 16-17.

9 Elmer Gertz, "The Black Laws of Illinois," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*, 56.3 (Autumn, 1963), 454-473.

the city's communities. In 1850, the majority of the city's 323 black citizens were spread out relatively evenly in the first four of the city's nine wards, where blacks made up around two percent of the residents in each area.¹⁷ Out of the five remaining wards, only the Fifth and Seventh Wards held no black residents. The remaining wards, South Chicago, and East and West Chicago each held at least one black resident – with as many as thirty-five in the latter. Thus, few of the city's wards were exclusively white, and none of the city's neighborhoods were isolated black ghettos. Five years after the end of the Civil War, Chicago's black population exploded to 3,091, as thousands of former slaves fled the South in search of a new start. Even with this dramatic influx of freedmen, the city's neighborhoods remained racially mixed. Forty percent of this growing population was spread out over eighteen wards. Even in the Second and Third Wards, where the remaining sixty percent of black Chicagoans lived, they did not exceed ten percent of the total population.¹⁸ Living alongside each other, whites and blacks enjoyed frequent contact in the antebellum and immediate postwar period.

Before the city's reconstruction, Chicago's community institutions had also been integrated. Businesses were just one of the many integrated community institutions. Black entrepreneurs such as John Jones, a wealthy merchant-tailor, ranked among the city's business elite. Businessmen like Jones catered to a racially mixed clientele, and maintained professional ties with the white community. Furthermore, early leaders argued against founding other separate community and civic institutions. According to historian Allan Spear, black leaders were steadfastly committed to "the ideal of an integrated community" where hospitals, social agencies, and other public institutions were open to whites as well as blacks.¹⁹ Though black Chicagoans founded separate churches and fraternal organizations, other community institutions remained mixed.

Black Chicagoans, though, desired to be given a prominent place within municipal life and administration. Drawing upon the rhetoric of freedom and equality abounding during Congressional Reconstruction, early black Chicagoans demanded to be recognized as equal citizens and accorded their rights as such. For instance, in May of 1866, a committee of prominent black Chicagoans sent an address to the congressmen who had supported the passage of the Civil Rights Act. The contentious act granted citizenship and extended certain legal rights to freedmen. In praising the act's passage, however, the committee also reminded the congressmen that there was still much work to do:

But giving to her [the United States] the whole heart,

we ask from her the whole hand! The suffrage of the citizen is the strength of the republic! Constituting a part of the American nation, we possess with it a common destiny. Our record in the past, we think, warrants the belief that with it we will be found willing to do, to dare, to suffer, and, if need be, to die in defense of American constitutional liberty for the entire American people.²⁰

Bringing this emancipation-inspired activism to the local level, early black Chicagoans also successfully lobbied the Illinois General Assembly to repeal the black codes in 1865.²¹ Through their political agitation, Chicago's early black residents attempted to remove the legal barriers denying them citizenship and inclusion. However, these incremental legal victories did not substantially improve their status within society.

In fact, African Americans throughout the country found their legal status imperiled as Congressional Reconstruction came to an end. Led by Radical Republicans, Congress passed the Reconstruction Acts and Amendments, Enforcement Acts and two civil rights acts between 1866 and 1875. Together they laid the foundation for to a truly interracial democracy. However, the federal government failed to enforce and protect many of the legislative victories achieved during Congressional Reconstruction. Most notably, Radical Republican struggled to draft the Fifteenth Amendment, which granted the franchise to black men, and have it ratified by highly resistant state governments. Rather than protect the spirit of this landmark amendment, the federal government allowed states to completely exclude blacks from voting as long as they did so on grounds other than race. Thus, by 1890, every Southern state – and many Border States – had devised laws that trampled over the Fifteenth Amendment without violating it.²²

By the time Democrats regained control of the House of Representatives in 1874, Congressional Reconstruction had lost support among the people and within the federal government. In honor of their late leader Charles Sumner, Radical Republicans passed what would be Congressional Reconstruction's final achievement, the Civil Rights Act of 1875. The federal act specified that blacks were entitled to equal treatment in public accommodations, further stipulating that blacks could not be excluded from jury service.²³ The monumental act met the same fate as many of the key legislative victories made during Congressional Reconstruction: The executive branch did not enforce the laws, and federal courts quickly rolled back

17 U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Census of Population and Housing, 1850*, 705.

18 U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Census of Population and Housing, 1870*, (Washington, DC: GPO, 1870), 1: 110; Spear, *Black Chicago*, 7.

19 Spear, *Black Chicago*, 7.

20 "Civil Rights – 'Address of the Colored Citizens of Chicago to the Congress of the United States'" U.S. House of Representatives. 30th Congress, 1st Session. May 10, 1866, 3–4.

21 Drake and Cayton, *Black Metropolis*, 50.

22 Eric Foner and Joshua Brown, *Forever Free: The Story of Emancipation and Reconstruction* (Alfred A. Knopf: New York, 2005), 206; Foner, *Reconstruction*, 422.

23 Foner, *Reconstruction*, 553–4.

many of the remaining vestiges of Congressional Reconstruction.²⁴ The Compromise of 1877 served as a resounding reminder that federal Reconstruction was officially over.

Like millions of freedmen throughout the nation, black Chicagoans found that the short-lived national Reconstruction project had failed to deliver the interracial democracy they hoped for. As the federal government abandoned Reconstruction, early black Chicagoans were as excluded from civic life and administration as they had ever been. By 1872, racial discrimination and segregation remained legal, no blacks had been elected to public office in the city, and no blacks had been appointed as municipal employees.

With the creation of Engine Company 21, Chicago's reconstruction began. Blacks were incorporated into municipal life and administration for the first time – even as Congressional Reconstruction unraveled. But how could Chicago's reconstruction succeed when blacks had theretofore been roundly barred from participating in civic life? Earlier efforts had proved that a growing population and political agitation alone would not realize black Chicagoans' vision of an inclusive civic sphere. Carving out a place for the city's growing black community, then, would require more. It would require a fire.

In the twilight of Congressional Reconstruction, the Great Fire of 1871 catalyzed the reconstruction of Chicago on a number of levels. First, the conflagration required the literal reconstruction of homes, businesses and factories in the burnt district. Second, the fire allowed the city to construct a new public image as a resilient, world-class metropolis filled with opportunity. Third, the fire was attended by a reconstruction of class and labor relations in the city. According to historian Karen Sawislak, local elites and working class people competed to "reconstruct a [class-based] sense of 'order'" after the tragedy upended social hierarchies within the city.²⁵ Finally, the 1871 fire brought about a reconstruction of municipal administration. Following the fire, the city's government took greater control over economic and social affairs.²⁶ The City Council began regulating the sale of bread and taxi fares, created new departments, wrested control of the police and fire departments, and began to modernize city services. These four reconstructions profoundly reshaped municipal life, redefining social relations as well as the relationship between the city's government and its citizens.

At the helm of these municipal reconstructions was Joseph Medill. Following the fire, Medill capitalized on his popularity as an owner and editor of the *Chicago Tribune* to run for mayor on the aptly named Union Fire Proof ticket. In his inaugural address just two months after the fire, Mayor Medill proclaimed that his first priority was to restore integrity

and financial stability to the city's government.²⁷ Medill announced and undertook a number of initiatives to modernize the city, including outlining new fire-resistant building codes, establishing the public library system, and modernizing fire-fighting by establishing a reservoir system. Medill sought to propel Chicago to "a prosperity greater than ever dreamt." He hoped that Chicago would serve as "a good and pure example" to other cities, believing that "the perpetuity of the nation itself depends upon the character of the municipalities." The Great Fire catapulted Mayor Medill and the city to the forefront of a movement to modernize and expand government administration. Indeed, Chicago's reconstruction was a localized expression of an identical process of expansion, bureaucratization, and increasing power taking place on the state and federal levels.²⁸

Besides overseeing the modernization of municipal government, Mayor Medill spearheaded Chicago's black reconstruction, no doubt inspired by his Radical Republican roots. Before moving to Chicago, he helped to found the Republican Party on the principles of free soil and anti-slavery. From the outset of the Civil War, Medill personally urged President Lincoln to take a radical course: emancipate the slaves, allow black men to serve in the army, extend the franchise to freedmen, and punish states that had seceded.²⁹ Following Lincoln's assassination, Medill joined other Radical Republicans in condemning President Andrew Johnson for readily welcoming the former Confederate states back into the Union and not supporting the civil rights of freedmen.³⁰ He feared that "the curse and horror of slavery" would return if the military did not continue to occupy the South and the government did not extend suffrage to freedmen.³¹

Medill continued to push his Radical Republican agenda on the local level, using his authority to carve out a place and secure rights for freedmen. Medill advocated for freedmen's right to vote as Cook County's delegate at the 1869 Illinois Constitutional Convention. On the topic of black enfranchisement, many of his fellow delegates favored a "white man's vote for a white man's government."³² But Medill defiantly declared, "The colored man... has the same right to suffrage as the white man."³³ At the Convention, Medill also lobbied for a cumulative voting system that would increase mi-

24 Foner, *Reconstruction*, 587.

25 Karen Sawislak, *Smoldering City: Chicagoans and the Great Chicago Fire* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

26 Dominic A. Pacyga, *Chicago: A Biography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 82.

27 Chicago Common Council, "Inaugural Address of Mayor Joseph Medill, December 4, 1871," *Journal of Proceedings*.

28 Foner, *Reconstruction*, 469.

29 Tracy Strevey, "Joseph Medill and the *Chicago Tribune* during the Civil War Period," (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1930), 194.

30 Strevey, "Joseph Medill," 192.

31 Strevey, "Joseph Medill," 193.

32 Illinois Constitutional Convention, *Debates and Proceedings of the Constitutional Convention of the State of Illinois, Vol. 2* (Chicago: E.L. Merritt, 1870), 1291.

33 Illinois Constitutional Convention, *Debates and Proceedings*, 1290.

nority representation.³⁴ Under Medill's new system, black politicians were finally elected to state posts, as black Chicagoans translated their relatively small number into political power.³⁵ Medill continued his Republican agenda as mayor of Chicago, carving out a place for freedmen in the city's expanding government. Notably, he appointed the city's first black firemen and policemen. For his radical efforts, Medill earned a reputation as a champion of the "rights of the Negro people."³⁶ While no extant records indicate why Medill formed Engine Company 21, he likely used his position as mayor to enact a radical Republican agenda suited for the municipal level.

That Mayor Medill oversaw the reconstruction of municipal government and black life in Chicago attests to how intimately connected the processes of modernizing government and integrating blacks into civic life were during Reconstruction. Though perceived by some as a threat to white privilege, the new model for government administration was necessary for creating the interracial democracy envisioned by Radical Republicans.³⁷ Indeed, the hallmarks of federal Reconstruction, such as the federal occupation of the South and the Freedmen's Bureau, would have been impossible without a robust federal government. On a local level, the modernization of municipal administration and expansion of public services likewise afforded black Chicagoans previously unavailable opportunities to participate in civic life. The expanding municipal state incorporated the thousands of freedmen who flocked to the city following the Civil War, renewing the possibility for equality and inclusion dashed by the end of Congressional Reconstruction. The figure most responsible for Chicago's reconstructions was Mayor Medill. As he embarked on a radical mission to reconstruct Chicago, he began to create a modern city responsive to the needs of its lowest citizens. As a single figure, Medill best embodies how dependent the project of creating an interracial democracy was on the success of a modern, expansive government. Unfortunately, his agenda was ultimately left unfulfilled. Medill fell ill and resigned before completing his first term.

Without Mayor Medill as its architect, Chicago's black reconstruction persevered. During this period, Chicago's black population was booming. Just a year before the fire, the city's black population totaled 3,091. Ten years later, that number had more than doubled to 6,480.³⁸ By 1890, Chicago's black population had exploded to 14,852.³⁹ When the city's recon-

struction drew to a close in 1900, more than thirty thousand blacks had settled in Chicago.⁴⁰ In this thirty-year period, though, blacks never exceeded more than two percent of the population. That such a miniscule segment of the population spurred a profound reordering of municipal life is a testament to the centrality and pervasiveness of the broader ideals of Reconstruction during this period.

Unlike in the antebellum and immediate postwar eras, thousands of black Chicagoans now enjoyed a legal status equal to their white counterparts. Only a year before the fire, the state's new constitution granted black men in Illinois the right to vote. Three years after the fire, the Illinois Supreme Court ordered that the city's public schools be desegregated.⁴¹ The Illinois General Assembly passed a civil rights act in 1885, which deemed blacks "entitled to the full and equal enjoyment of the accommodation, advantages, facilities and privileges" in public accommodations, including restaurants, barbershops and theaters.⁴² While these laws and rulings did not necessarily shield them from discrimination, black Chicagoans were accorded a badge of citizenship that would have been unattainable prior to the 1871 fire.

Just as state laws began to recognize them as equals, black Chicagoans were elected to public office for the first time. Local businessman John Jones was elected nearly unanimously to the Cook County Board of Commissioners just a few months after the fire, becoming the first black person elected to public office in Illinois.⁴³ The Illinois House of Representatives welcomed its first black member, John W.E. Thomas, in 1877.⁴⁴ That Black Chicagoans were able to achieve such electoral success was not unprecedented given the number of black men elected to Congress after the Civil War. However, as blacks throughout the nation were increasingly disenfranchised and otherwise excluded from the democratic process, the ability of black Chicagoans to consistently assume political office proved remarkable.

More than the legal and electoral victories, municipal appointees were the most visible signs of Chicago's black reconstruction. The first black police officer was appointed in 1872. The city also appointed Franklin Denison assistant prosecuting attorney in 1891, making him the first black person in the city's legal department.⁴⁵ When city officials did not move quickly enough in appointing them to municipal positions, black Chicagoans banded together to demand that they do so. In 1878, the city's black citizens called upon Sheriff John Hoff-

34 "Hon. Joseph Medill," *The Graphic*, Dec. 1, 1891.

35 Harold Gosnell, *Negro Politicians: The Rise of Negro Politics in Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1935), 65-66.

36 "Helped Negro Race," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Sept. 10, 1918.

37 Schwalm, *Emancipation's Diaspora*, 90.

38 U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Compendium of the Census of Population and Housing, 1880*, (Washington, DC: GPO, 1880), 152.

39 U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Census of Population and Housing, 1890*, (Washington, DC: GPO, 1890), 4: 161.

40 U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Census of Population and Housing, 1900*, (Washington, DC: GPO, 1900), Bulletin 8: 269.

41 Chicago Commission on Race Relations, *Negro in Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1922), 234.

42 Chicago Commission on Race Relations, *Negro in Chicago*, 233.

43 Gosnell, *Negro Politicians*, 82.

44 Gosnell, *Negro Politicians*, 65-6.

45 Gosnell, *Negro Politicians*, 198.

man to fulfill his promise to appoint a black bailiff.⁴⁶ Only a year before, a group of more than one hundred black Chicagoans vowed that they would only support politicians committed to “securing for us a portion of the public patronage which are to be distributed broadcast to every nationality.”⁴⁷ In seeking political office and municipal appointments, black Chicagoans demanded to not only be recognized by the city’s administration but to have a voice within it. The city responded to these demands, realizing for a brief moment the interracial democracy envisioned during federal Reconstruction.

Given that the 1871 fire has traditionally been identified as a turning point in the history of Chicago, it is fitting that the nation’s first black professional fire company spearheaded this local reconstruction. The city’s black firefighters were among the thousands of freedmen who migrated to the city following the Civil War. Like Chicago’s other black citizens, the men of Engine Company 21 arrived hopeful that they too could stake their place in the Midwestern metropolis. Burdened by color prejudice and the stigma of slavery, they nonetheless held on to the promises that the city offered and demanded even more. The men of Engine Company 21 found their place through service in the fire department, simultaneously carving out a place for others within the larger civic sphere.

Yet Engine Company 21 more than laid the foundation for Chicago’s reconstruction. The company emblemized this historic moment, serving as a testament to the lasting influence and legacy of Reconstruction in post-fire Chicago. The ideals of Reconstruction did not just survive in the city but thrived, inspiring the city’s government to create a thoroughly modern and interracial democracy. While highly inspired by Congressional Reconstruction, Chicago’s reconstruction was marked by a stronger and more prolonged commitment by the government to give blacks a prominent place within civic and public life. By creating Engine Company 21, the city gave the black firemen – and black Chicagoans in general – not only equal citizenship but also an opportunity to prove themselves equal as laborers, members of society and men. But the administration’s commitment to an interracial democracy did not receive popular support among white Chicagoans. Indeed, Engine Company 21 – in fact, the very image of black firemen – faced tremendous racial prejudice that tested the limits of interracial democracy and threatened the fate of Reconstruction.

“The Pipemen Evidently Do Not Mind Heat”: Overcoming Prejudiced Perceptions of Engine Company 21

Though Engine Company 21 was the nation’s first professional black fire company, the image of black firemen circulated throughout the nation. The most popular images of black firemen were a series of chromolithographs known as

the *Darktown Comics* printed by Currier and Ives, a company that held a reputation as “weather vanes of popular opinion [and] reflectors of American attitudes.”⁴⁸ The product of unadulterated white racism, the imaginary Darktown Fire Brigade reflected intense racial anxieties over the prospect of an interracial democracy, especially the increasing prominence of blacks in civic and public life. The anxieties coded into the image of Darktown’s black firemen would resurface in newspaper coverage of Engine Company 21.

In the interracial vision of Darktown, black firefighters raised anxiety over the prospect of blacks being treated as equals in the labor and social spheres or as men. These anxieties are particularly evident in the lithograph “Under Full Steam” (Figure 1). As in many of the other prints, the black firemen of Darktown are depicted as inept – a fireman shoots water at a woman descending the stairs rather than at the fire raging inside. This image of black laborers as incompetent helped to justify the exclusion of freedmen from the free and compensated labor market. More than expressing anxiety over blacks’ capacities as skilled laborers, the image of this particular fireman also suggested anxieties over the prospect of an integrated social sphere. Sitting atop the brigade’s rig, the fireman holds the hose close to his lap while shooting water at the woman’s posterior. In this image, the fire hose and rig powerfully symbolize sex and intimacy. Outside of the all-black Darktown, this symbolism would have definitely aroused fears of interracial intimacy and miscegenation, which stemmed from underlying fears of social equality among the races. Finally, in depicting blacks as simian-like creatures, the producers and consumers of the *Darktown Comics* stripped the brigade’s men of their masculinity and humanity. All of these racial anxieties rendered the vision of an interracial democracy problematic and helped to bring an end to Reconstruction throughout the nation.

For many white Chicagoans, Engine Company 21 and the city’s interracial democracy were no less problematic. Despite the persistence of white racism, the ideals of Reconstruction were more successful in the city than they had been in the imaginary world of Darktown. The anxieties coded into the Darktown lithographs were expressed explicitly in newspaper articles about the company. These articles revealed that some whites in the city harbored racial anxieties related to labor, social interactions and manhood that shaped how they perceived the company. Because of these anxieties, the city’s black firemen were attacked as incompetent, socially inferior, and unmanly. In many ways, Engine Company 21 confronted the same stereotypes presented in the *Darktown Comics* that had rendered Reconstruction and the ideal of an interracial democracy untenable throughout the nation.

Compared to the imaginary world of Darktown, however, the reality of Chicago’s interracial democracy was much more complex and ambivalent. This ambivalence arose be-

46 “City Brevities,” *Chicago Inter Ocean*, Dec. 9, 1878.

47 “Chicago Politics,” *Chicago Inter Ocean*, March 14, 1877.

48 Harry Peters, *Currier and Ives: Printmakers to the American People* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co., 1942), 7.

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cause, unlike the static Darktown brigade, the men of Engine Company 21 could speak for themselves through their actions and words. The city's black firemen pushed back against racist perceptions by outperforming their white counterparts, integrating into social institutions and asserting their masculinity. Engine Company 21 proved that they deserved to be included in a reconstructed Chicago. The contest between the perception and reality of Engine Company 21 demonstrated that Reconstruction had not removed whites' racial prejudices. But the company overcame these prejudices and offered hope for Chicago's future as an interracial democracy.

Labor

Some white Chicagoans perceived the black firemen in Engine Company 21 as incapable of performing their duties. The collection of black firefighters – like thousands of freedmen seeking skilled, nonagricultural positions in the urban North – struggled to combat stereotypes that blacks were incompetent and lacked the faculties to compete with whites in the skilled labor market. The stereotype that Engine Company 21 most often found itself combating was Sambo, a popular minstrel character who was goodhearted and docile but irresponsible and childlike. Despite these racist perceptions, in reality, the collection of black firefighters was not only competent but also exemplary – worthy contributors to a reconstructed Chicago.

Some whites openly feared that blacks were incompetent and incapable of serving as firefighters. Whites outside of Chicago expressed anxiety over integrating their fire departments. For instance, Detroit's fire commissioner rejected petitions from black Detroiters to appoint black men to the department, citing the alleged inefficiency of Engine Company 21. Remarking on a recent fire, the unnamed official claimed that Chicago's "colored company" was "slow and... did not do all in their power to save the [homeowner's] property."⁴⁹ Despite his intense animosity towards Engine Company 21, Detroit's fire commissioner had not personally observed the company in action. His attack on the company indicates that racial anxieties – and not observed facts – determined white perceptions of black firemen.

The most vicious attacks, of course, came from Chicagoans. A former volunteer firefighter, F.A. Bragg, dismissed Engine Company 21 as "inferior."⁵⁰ He further alleged that the company had only been created to "subserve political interests" and had kept "good and experienced" white volunteer firemen from joining the reorganized department. The colored company, Bragg continued, endangered the lives and property of fellow firemen and the public with their "unaccountable ignorance." Certain that the city's black firemen were dangerously inept, Bragg felt that blacks were only qualified to work as drivers and horsemen, jobs that required little skill

or technical knowledge. A later article published by the *Tribune* was less hostile towards the company but nonetheless attacked their mental capabilities. The reporter praised the men for their superior service but refused to attribute their success to their skillfulness or quick thinking.⁵¹ Rather, he pointed to their "magnificent lungs and splendid muscles" and ability to "climb like squirrels." The article suggested that black firemen were strong but otherwise incompetent without a watchful and commanding white captain. Such demeaning characterizations validated some white Chicagoans' belief that blacks were mentally incapable of performing skilled labor.

Often times, whites cloaked their anxiety about black firemen's incompetence in minstrel stereotypes. Such was the case when the Republican-leaning *Tribune* published a lengthy exposé on the controversial company. Asked by the reporter how the company occupied itself when not fighting fires, Engine Company 21's white captain, Joseph Kenyon, responded, "A number of the boys are good singers, and we usually have a banjo around."⁵² Sketches accompanying the article reinforced this stereotype of the company as a collection of happy-go-lucky, singing and banjo-playing Sambos. Like the *Tribune*, the *Inter Ocean* indulged in minstrel stereotypes. While the paper was generally empathetic towards the city's black community, the *Inter Ocean* abandoned any claims to reality in a story published about Engine Company 21. The paper comically reported:

Yesterday forenoon as Mr. Eaton, the undertaker, was passing the station, one of the boys with an eye in a sling and his lower jaw tied up, grinned, as well as he could and remarked: "Mornin', Mr. Eaton, comin' to take my measure?" "No, Jim," said the party addressed, "I don't want to do that." "Golly, though," was the answer, "I thought I was gone suah tho' last night. I did."⁵³

Deploying ducky dialect and creating a fictional member of the company (Jim), the article provided its upper-class readers a minstrel show in writing. In doing so, the paper reduced the company to little more than a collection of dimwitted and comical Sambos.

Though many whites labeled Engine Company 21 as inferior, their perceptions did not match reality. In a rare moment when the voice of the city's black firemen emerges from the historical record, a member of Engine 21 directly responded to perceptions of the company as inferior. In a letter published in the *Sunday Times*, former engineer Isaiah Washington took the aforementioned F.A. Bragg to task for his demeaning comments about the company, asking, "Is it possible that in the ... giant metropolis of the west, there is one man so full of preju-

51 "The Boys of Engine 21," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 11, 1888.

52 The Boys of Engine 21."

53 "City Brevities," *Chicago Daily Inter Ocean*, Nov. 16, 1877.

49 "Glances Here and There," *Plaindealer*, Dec. 6, 1889.

50 "The Fire," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 22, 1874.

dice, so selfish?”⁵⁴ Washington continued his defense, boasting that Engine 21 had “always proved faithful and reliable.” Annual reports published by the Chicago Fire Department more than support Washington’s claims. According to the reports, the colored company repeatedly outperformed their all-white counterparts. In 1893, for instance, they traveled more miles than other companies, responded to 474 alarms (compared to an average of 360), worked 184 hours (compared to 110) and performed duties at 148 alarms (compared to 75).⁵⁵ Engine Company 21 met and exceeded the expectations many white Chicagoans placed on them.

They demonstrated their proficiency to the public in an 1885 three-alarm fire – one of the worst the city had faced since the 1871 conflagration. Beginning in the Chicago Lumber Company’s yards, the blaze jumped across the Chicago River, and threatened to destroy the city’s lumber stockpiles, much of the South Side and the neighboring Town of Lake. By the time Engine Company 21 was called to the scene, the fire had been raging for hours and seventeen companies had attempted – but failed – to contain the blaze. When the men arrived, they were immediately met with ridicule. “There was a great crowd of spectators present, and many of them made fun of the colored firemen when they dragged their hose in,” the paper reported, “But the levity was soon succeeded by admiration. Their steamer is a powerful one, and the pipemen evidently do not mind heat.”⁵⁶ The article continued to document the company’s heroic and awe-inspiring efforts, “They went up to within ten feet of the burning lumber pile so full of danger to the city and Lake, and soon made an impression on the flames. The pipe got away from three of them once, but the fourth held on, though he was thrown down and knocked around on the ground.” In helping to contain the blaze and risking their own lives, the company proved their skills and worth as members of the department.

This and similar acts of valor helped the company gain wider esteem. For blacks in the city and elsewhere, Chicago’s black firemen were a source of pride, a symbol of what blacks could be now that the wretched institution of slavery had been abolished.⁵⁷ The historic company was held in high regard by some whites as well. Fire Chief D.J. Sweeney and others proudly proclaimed that Engine Company 21 invented the sliding pole, an iconic fixture in early American firehouses.⁵⁸ Furthermore, the company was regularly called to demonstrate new fire engines and frequently received praise for their performance from the press and CFD officials.⁵⁹ The Department’s

initial announcement that it was not “definitely known whether [Engine Company 21 would] be commanded by a Caucasian” provides perhaps the best indication that some whites had faith in the capacities of freedmen.⁶⁰ While the captains of the company were in fact white for its first three decades, the announcement indicates that at least some whites believed blacks capable of not only fulfilling the duties of a fireman but also leading an entire company.

Society

Besides questioning whether the firemen were suited for skilled labor, some white Chicagoans also expressed anxiety over Engine Company 21 invading social and intimate spaces. The idea of black firemen sharing social spaces with whites aroused anxiety because some whites perceived blacks as unclean and unworthy of socializing with them. Newspapers surprisingly reported on the company entering white people’s homes, churches, and businesses with little hint of trepidation. Instead, anxieties over interracial social relations pervaded newspaper coverage of the company’s firehouse and led the CFD’s auxiliary club to ban black firefighters. In both cases, Engine Company 21 successfully overcame these perceptions and achieved a degree of acceptance in the social sphere.

White Chicagoans feared interracial social interactions in a place most would never enter: the company’s firehouse. Indeed, a number of news articles expressed concern over black firemen sharing communal and sleeping quarters with their white superiors.⁶¹ While men sharing living spaces did not carry the threat of miscegenation, whites nonetheless perceived black firemen as unclean and a threat to the purity of their white counterparts. Playing on these fears, the *Tribune* titillated readers with the promise of “a glimpse [into] everyday life” in the quarters of the city’s colored fire company.⁶² Perhaps to assuage white readers’ fears that the Negro firemen were tainting or corrupting their white counterparts, the journalist thoroughly noted the cleanliness of the men and the firehouse. Indeed, he remarked on everything from the Brussels carpet in the sitting room “swept to the last degree of cleanliness” to the “neatly ranged” collection of “brushes, combs, [and] handkerchiefs.” This language of cleanliness attempted to dispel notions that the black firemen would somehow taint the white men who lived in close proximity. Despite the *Tribune*’s complicated coverage of Engine Company 21, the article attempted to sooth anxiety over blacks and whites sharing intimate and social spaces.

To a lesser extent, the white perception of blacks as inferior affected social organizations as well. For firefighters in Chicago, the Benevolent Association of the Paid Fire Depart-

54 “The Colored Company,” *Sunday Times*, July 26, 1874.

55 Chicago Fire Department, *Report of the Fire Marshal*, (Chicago: Hazlitt & Reed, 1893), 132.

56 “Battling with Fire,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 9, 1885.

57 For instance, “Flotsam and Jetsam,” *Indianapolis Freeman*, Sept. 29, 1888; “Dedication of Bethel,” *Cleveland Gazette*, July 15, 1899.

58 “Among the Firemen,” *Boston Daily Globe*, April 3, 1898.

59 For instance, “Fire Fighters Win Record,” *Chicago Daily Tri-*

bune, April 9, 1900.

60 “The Fire Department.”

61 For instance, “Colored Fire Fighters,” *Washington Post*, Sept. 20, 1903.

62 “The Boys of Engine 21.”

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ment was their primary social and mutual-aid club. The association provided “means for the relief of distressed, sick, injured and disabled workers” and supported the families of firemen killed in action.⁶³ Though the association’s bylaws stipulated that each company elect a member to the Board of Directors, black firemen from Engine Company 21 were explicitly barred from the organization.⁶⁴ In banning the men, the city’s white firefighters rejected any implications of brotherhood with the black firefighters, their perceived social inferiors. Even though their firehouse had been integrated, black firemen were still treated as unworthy of socializing with whites in the department’s social extensions.

However, Engine Company 21 overcame perceptions that had led the Benevolent Association to ban black firemen. In 1884, the association admitted an original member of Engine Company 21, Wilson C. Hawkins.⁶⁵ The club’s admission of Hawkins demonstrated that blacks were not only capable of socializing with whites but doing so as equals. In reversing its stance on black members, the association suggested that racial boundaries in the department’s social sphere were permeable to a certain degree. The integration of black firemen into the Benevolent Association likewise hinted at the possibilities for an integrated social life in post-fire Chicago.

Manhood

Engine Company 21 also struggled to overcome the white perception that they lacked masculinity. The most common way that white Chicagoans denied the firefighters’ manhood was by calling them “boys”. For instance, the *Tribune* included only one comment on Engine Company 21 in its report on the CFD’s annual inspection: “The colored boys did nobly.”⁶⁶ Engine Company 20, on the other hand, was derided as having “the worst house and worst body of men visited.” The article continued, “The house looked dilapidated, and the men, from their shaky appearance, did not relieve the melancholy spectacle.” Though clearly inferior, the firefighters of Engine Company 20 were bestowed a badge of manhood consistently denied to the colored company.

A later news article went one step further by comparing the black firemen to adolescent girls. “The next room is the bedroom, and this, it may be wagered, will be a surprise to any one,” the reporter teased, “It looks more like the dormitory of a girls’ boarding-house than the sleeping-room of eight colored firemen.”⁶⁷ The journalist essentially castrated the firemen in order to make them palatable to the public. In an era when

women were prohibited from voting, denying the black firemen’s manhood was tantamount to denying them full citizenship and a place in the nation’s civic life.

But the black firefighters of Engine Company 21 constantly asserted their manhood, primarily through their clothing. The firefighter uniform commanded respect, deference, and recognition of manhood because it was associated with one of the nation’s most venerable professions. The uniform worn by the men of Engine Company 21 carried a symbolic value similar to that worn by soldiers. In the years following the Civil War, the military uniform took on added significance for black veterans who drew power and respect from its connotations of masculinity and public service. Whether tied to service to the Union or the city, the uniform profoundly transformed popular perceptions of blacks. Historian Kirk Savage powerfully stated the transformative potential of the uniform in his analysis of 19th century sculptural monuments: “In one simple change of outfit, he stepped out of one entrenched tradition of popular representation – the ragged, feeble, pathetic ‘darky’ familiar from minstrelsy and caricature – and into a brave new world of civic display.”⁶⁸

The symbolic association between Engine Company 21, the military and manhood was on full display in an 1878 parade for President Rutherford Hayes. In a procession before the man whose presidency had brought about the end of federal Reconstruction, the men of Engine Company 21 marched alongside more than a thousand Illinois soldiers, including a company of black troops.⁶⁹ In an era of reconstructions, the soldier’s uniform remained a salient symbol of freedom, citizenship, and manhood for the black men who wore it. The men of Engine Company 21 drew upon this symbolism every time they donned a firefighter uniform, subconsciously challenging white perceptions of them as unmanly.

Despite the negative reaction they received from white Chicagoans, the black firemen of Engine Company 21 challenged the stereotypical perceptions that dogged them. Overcoming racial anxieties over labor, society, and manhood, the firemen proved themselves capable as workers, comrades and men. Engine Company 21 embodied the radical possibility of an interracial democracy in Chicago. But neither Engine Company 21 nor the city’s interracial democracy would last. If persistent racism among local white citizens had not brought about an end to Chicago’s reconstruction, what would? While the city’s government had been relatively uninvolved in counteracting prejudiced perceptions of Engine Company 21, it played a central role in determining the destiny of the historic company and its experiment with interracial democracy.

63 Benevolent Association of the Paid Fire Department of the City of Chicago, *Charter, Constitution and By-Laws* (Chicago: Hazlitt & Reed, 1877), 4.

64 “Local Brevities,” *Pomeroy’s Democrat*, Dec. 1, 1877.

65 “Chicago Doings,” *New York Globe*, April 26, 1884.

66 “The Fire Department: Official Inspection by the City Authorities,” *Chicago Tribune*, Nov. 12, 1874.

67 “The Boys of Engine 21.”

68 Kirk Savage, *Standing Soldier, Kneeling Slaves: Race, War, and Monument in Nineteenth Century America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1997), 97.

69 “The Great Event,” *Daily Inter Ocean*, Sept. 4, 1878; “The Tournament,” *Pomeroy’s Democrat*, Sept. 7, 1878.

The Breakdown of Reconstruction in Chicago

Engine Company 21 served as a powerful symbol of Chicago's reconstruction – a testament to the power of municipal government in shaping civic and public life to include black citizens. The reconstruction of municipal government and black life in the city were intimately connected as the city sought to realize an interracial vision. But as the century drew to a close, municipal government became less concerned with using its increasing power to create an interracial democracy. Again, the story of Engine Company 21 harbingered and symbolized the demise of this interracial vision. Whereas the city initially took an active role in integrating Engine Company 21 into civic life, municipal government reversed course in the last decade of the 19th century. In ordering the segregation and subjugation of black firefighters, municipal government signaled that Chicago's experiment with an interracial democracy had come to an end.

While it had once been the protector of Engine Company 21, the city's administration came under attack for discriminating against the company. In late 1889, black Chicagoans called for a mass meeting to "have the wrongs heaped upon our colored men righted, and see that they get better treatment."⁷⁰ A month later, John G. Jones reiterated and expounded these charges of discrimination. Speaking before a crowd of black masons, Jones censured the CFD, especially Fire Marshal Sweeney, for exploiting the company: "They [are] stationed in one of the heaviest districts of the city and compelled to do with ten men what the other companies did with fifteen."⁷¹ Before condemning the city's treatment of Engine Company 21, Jones had warned the audience that it was "useless for the colored people to look to Congress for aid." As Jones's speech indicates, the demise of Chicago's reconstruction mirrored the breakdown of the national Reconstruction project.

Moreover, while Engine Company 21 had consistently demonstrated its efficiency, the city rejected cries from black Chicagoans to appoint a black fire captain. In 1889, local blacks presented petition to Mayor Hempstead Washburne demanding that he appoint a black captain, calling the city's "appointment of a white officer [a negative] reflection on the ability of the colored firemen."⁷² A few months later, the black firemen of Engine Company 21 presented a similar petition to Fire Marshal Sweeney asking that a special board be formed to review their applications for promotion to the captaincy.⁷³ Both petitions were denied. While the Department did not go so far as to call the firemen inept, the city nonetheless began to discriminate against black firefighters and refused to treat them

as the equals of their white counterparts.

Chicago's government further signaled that it had abandoned Engine Company 21 as an experiment in interracial democracy in 1901. The city's newly created Civil Service Commission declared that it would not send the recruit at the top of the eligibility register to Engine Company 21 because he was white.⁷⁴ In doing so, the municipality treated black and white recruits as inherently different and unequal. This differential treatment would later lead the commission to formally establish separate lists for black and white recruits. The commission's actions further signified that promoting an interracial democracy was no longer a priority as the reconstruction of municipal administration continued.

The Chicago Fire Department, an extension of city government, further condoned discrimination against the city's black firemen. Indeed, in 1907, the *Tribune* reported a troubling incident at a white fire station:

Firemen of truck company No. 17 in South Chicago burned a negro in effigy last night... on learning that [a black recruit] had been assigned to work with them. Feeling against the presence of the colored man as a member of the company is so strong that the firemen said they would not sleep in the same dormitory with him.⁷⁵

While the fate of this black recruit is unknown, he likely received the same treatment as John Jackson. Jackson, a black firefighter, was originally assigned to Truck Company 2, but was forced to transfer to Engine Company 21 after the firemen of the white truck company went on strike.⁷⁶ In giving in to demands of these insubordinate white companies, the CFD signaled that black firefighters would not be accorded equal status within the department.

Twenty years later, the department took its discrimination against black firefighters to the ultimate level. Members of Engine Company 21 were directed to switch engines and firehouses with Engine Company 19, moving from their downtown station at 1213 S. Plymouth Court to 3440 S. Rhodes.⁷⁷ Located firmly within the Black Belt, the city's black firemen – now members of Engine Company 19 – were kept out of the sight of white Chicagoans and increasingly neglected by the department. Thus, the city's government drew a color line in the fire department that was more defined and entrenched than it had ever been. After more than fifty years, Engine Company 21 was no more, and the city's experiment with an interracial democracy had come to an end.

⁷⁰ "The Color Line a Failure," *Indianapolis Freeman*, Dec. 4, 1889.

⁷¹ "Mr. Jones Wrath," *Daily Inter Ocean*, Nov. 11, 1889.

⁷² "Needs Non-Partisan Management," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 11, 1891.

⁷³ "Why Mr. Lane Should Be Chosen," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Sept. 17, 1891.

⁷⁴ "To Unite City Bureaus," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 16, 1901.

⁷⁵ "Firemen Draw Color Line," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 12, 1907.

⁷⁶ "Firemen Draw Color Line."

⁷⁷ Kenneth Little and Joe McNalis, *History of Chicago Firehouses of the 19th Century*, (n.p: Chicago, 1997), 193.

CHICAGO ENGINE COMPANY 21

The demise of the historic company coincided with the breakdown of Reconstruction throughout the city. At the precise moment that they began to charge the city with discriminating against Engine Company 21, black Chicagoans became the targets of intense white racism. According to Allan Spear, as Chicago's black population became more conspicuous, racial hostility heightened.⁷⁸ Again, anxieties over social interactions and labor helped to fuel this emergent anti-black prejudice: "Whites grew anxious as a growing Negro population sought more and better housing; they feared job competition in an era of industrial strife when employers frequently used Negroes as strikebreakers."⁷⁹ At the same time that anti-black racism spread, black Chicagoans also turned inward, abandoning their desire to integrate into civic life for a self-help ideology.⁸⁰ As the century drew to a close, Chicago's civic and public life became segregated, and the gains the blacks had made under the city's reconstruction slowly evaporated.

Conclusion

Engine Company 21 remains a salient symbol of the profound experiment that was Reconstruction. Through a group of former slaves, Chicago reawakened the possibility of an interracial democracy just as this radical vision began to fade in the rest of the nation. Engine Company 21 proved that Reconstruction radically transformed not only the rural South but also Northern cities like Chicago. As these cities began to modernize, blacks seized opportunities to integrate into civic and public life in ways that even the architects of Radical Reconstruction might not have imagined. Through their exemplary actions and occasionally through their words, the black firefighters of Engine Company 21 forcefully pushed back against whites who anxiously tried to deny them a place within a reconstructed America. Yet, just released from the chains of slavery, Chicago's black firefighters could not realize the vision of an interracial democracy alone.

A municipal government that had once been committed to the ideals of Reconstruction betrayed Engine Company 21. The company's demise at the hands of Chicago's government was perhaps the most tragic ending possible – but not the most surprising. Indeed, the story of Engine Company 21 is the story of Reconstruction. Just as blacks began to carve out a place in civic and public life, the governments that once vowed to protect them abandoned them instead. Nonetheless, Engine Company 21 extended for a brief moment the possibility of an interracial democracy. In doing so, the company left a legacy that Chicago and the nation should strive to live up to.

78 Spear, *Black Chicago*, 7.

79 Spear, *Black Chicago*, 8.

80 Spear, *Black Chicago*, 54; Drake and Cayton, *Black Metropolis*, 50.

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Wikimedia Commons / Mark A Welsh / Creative Commons / Saskatchewan Firefighters' Memorial



A History of What Was Once Unspoken: Legitimizing Female Experiences of Sexual Harassment through Language and Law

By Lilliana Paratore, Reed College '13

¹Work, as the primary enabler of economic well-being, is of fundamental importance to an individual's lived experience, and indeed, this was the case for women who had joined the workforce in ever increasing numbers at the close of World War II.² Thus, it is perhaps inevitable that it is at the intersection of a desire for economic security and expanding women's rights that we find the motivations of feminist rhetoric that demanded the eradication of artificial barriers to women's employment and inferior status as workers. Demanding the recognition of women as viable and necessary participants in the

workplace, the feminist movement aimed to make this economic necessity tolerable for women's emotional and physical health.

Despite Anglo-American ideological stances on gender norms and spheres – those that perpetuate the image of the homemaker and housewife – women have been a crucial part of the American workforce since the turn of the 20th century. Since women first stepped over the threshold of the industrial factory, restaurant, or office, they have been vulnerable to the unwanted sexual advances and coercive conduct of their typically male supervisors. Such vulnerability derives from women's structural inferiority in the workplace. The stakes of women's continued subordination were high. As legal scholar and feminist Catherine MacKinnon argued in her seminal text *Sexual Harassment of Working Women*:

Sexual harassment exemplifies and promotes employment practices which disadvantage women in work and sexual practices which intimately degrade and objectify women.

1 This paper was presented to the undergraduate research committee for the Mellon Foundation grant at Reed College during Summer 2012.

2 Julia Kirk Blackwelder, *Now Hiring: The Feminization of Work in the United States* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1997)

In the broader perspective, sexual harassment at work undercuts women's potential for social equality in two interpenetrated ways: by using her employment position to coerce her sexually, while using her sexual position to coerce her economically.³

As contemporary political scientist Gwendolyn Mink notes, sexual harassment is that which "reduces a woman to her sexuality."⁴ Identifying the problem, naming and defining it, comprise a critical linguistic aspect of the struggle, gaining legitimacy and acceptance for that name and definition, yet another. In the case of undesired sexual conduct in the workplace, feminists, lawyers, judges, and politicians all contributed to the recognition of a woman's word through the language of law.

Over the course of the last 40 years, legal circles have come to regard Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as the statutory bedrock for protection from sex discrimination and harassment in the workplace. However, Title VII's legal content and legislative context mention nothing specifically about sexual harassment. It was originally introduced to prohibit discrimination – largely as a function of race – in broadly defined employment practices. "Sexual harassment" as a term does not emerge until eleven years later in 1975 as a product of a small, dedicated group of feminists attempting to conceptualize a broad range of behaviors that had beset American working women for decades. By 1986, sexual harassment was codified in the legal lexicon by the Supreme Court. This paper asks why. Specifically, how did Title VII become the single most important piece of federal legislation to protect women from unwanted sexual advances in the workplace given women were not its original intended beneficiaries?

Most studies of sexual harassment adjudication and the development of its legal acceptance begin with the court cases of 1970s. To answer the above question, however, this paper takes an alternate point of departure and begins in 1963 at the legislative origins of Title VII. By integrating the history of Title VII with the history of pioneering court cases, I aim to expand our understanding of the legislation that is so fundamental to women's claims and also more completely elucidate the judicial decision-making that occurred in the early 1970s, where the contentious history of Title VII is often referenced but never fully investigated. After tracing the historiography of Title VII, I outline the ways in which sexual harassment as a concept was defined, using linguistic frameworks that were expanding as gender and language studies and women's liberation movements coalesced and attempted to identify the same problem through different means. The linguistic theory regarding language and gender helps to inform the definitional efforts of the feminist movement and the law. Having established this theoretical background, I outline the early efforts of the feminist movements to define "sexual harassment" and their continual awareness raising endeavors to bring the issue of sexual harassment to the public. Following this, I trace the advance of sexual harassment litigation and regulations, beginning in the 1970s with the first district court

cases and ending with the first Supreme Court case in 1986. This legal history overlaps with the women's movement, revealing the ways in which the law responds to popular demand and advocacy.

These three elements, 1) the early legislative history of Title VII, 2) the women's movements' attempt to define and rally against such unwelcome and degrading behavior, and 3) the court cases and federal regulations that have responded to their demands, contribute to explaining the emergence of "sexual harassment" from a legislative Act that considered gender only as an afterthought to civil rights. In this history, we see the ways in which women defined a problem, sought legal remedies, and were responded to by the court system. By focusing on the definition and language surrounding this evolution, we will see the important role of the interplay between the feminine declarative word in this process and the legal interpretation of civil rights legislation. Despite the fact that this narrative is at times discouraging and enraging, it is clear that over the course of the last 40 years, women's voices have gained legal legitimacy, proving that a group of women can regain control of their naming power to speak out against an unwanted behavior and take steps to achieve legal redress.

I. The Legislative Origins of Title VII

The Civil Rights Acts of 1964 is often thought of as the landmark piece of law addressing racial discrimination in the United States. Born out of the civil rights movement, the Act focused on eradicating barriers that minorities face to equal citizenship. The civil rights movement's advocates were the primary motivators of the Act, though other grassroots organizations also played a role in advancing the civil rights agenda. The main concerns of the movement focused on access to work. As historian Nancy MacLean argues, the glamorous and high profile events that define the civil rights movement in the popular imagination overshadow advocates' demands for employment opportunity, for the good jobs that would allow them access to American prosperity and the American Dream. By placing access to jobs at the center of the civil rights movement, advocates sought "genuine inclusion [and] participation in the economic mainstream."⁵ This is the impetus from which Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 springs. Prohibiting discrimination "against, any individual because of his race, color, religion, sex, or national origin," Title VII promised to end employment practices that placed unequal barriers in the path of men and women of color seeking work.⁶

President John F. Kennedy conceived of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 a year before its passage in 1963, and made public his legislative plans on June 11, 1963 in an address to the nation, saying: "Today, we are committed to a worldwide struggle to promote and protect the rights of all who wish to be free."⁷ His rhetoric, informed by the events that were occurring around him,⁸ focused on

3 Catherine A. MacKinnon, *Sexual Harassment of Working Women: A Case of Sex Discrimination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 7.

4 Gwendolyn Mink, *Hostile Environment: The Political Betrayal of Sexually Harassed Women* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000)

5 Nancy MacLean, *Freedom Is Not Enough: The Opening of the American Workplace* (New York: R. Sage, 2006), 5.

6 *Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, U.S. Statues at Large*

7 "Civil Rights Address," John F. Kennedy, <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/jfkcivilrights.htm>.

8 The speech was specifically responding to a series of protests by African-Americans, most significantly the Birmingham, Alabama campaign.

discrimination against African-Americans and other racial minorities. The Civil Rights Act was intended to be the most comprehensive civil rights legislation to date, the expected beneficiaries of which would be minority groups. The eleven titles of the Act range in coverage from voting rights to the desegregation of schools to the aforementioned employment protections. Following Kennedy's death later that year, Lyndon B. Johnson prioritized the legislation. It was in this context, and amid a national climate of distress and determination, that Title VII was discussed in the House and the Senate.

Title VII's primary aim was to eradicate discriminatory employment practices, such as those that base hirings on race rather than qualifications and experience. The Title's original wording did not include "sex" as it was specifically motivated by the civil rights movement to address the struggles of African-Americans entering the workplace. The history of just how the Title came to include "sex" has undergone close scrutiny in recent years, as historians have grappled with two historiographical interpretations of the event: one that views the amendment as an ad hoc development, and a second that sees the change as the product of intense and intentional efforts. The first historical narrative was widely held until recently, when historians and policy analysts began to uncover the more covert actions of a group of dedicated first-wave feminists. The second, and currently more accepted narrative, views the "sex" amendment within the context of interest group politics and conservative concerns rather than as a single and isolated event that occurred on the Congress floor.

The first interpretation of the "sex" amendment to Title VII views the amendment as a fluke: the accidental result of an ill-conceived and mocking suggestion by Republican congressman Howard Smith of Virginia. On February 8, 1964 he proposed that "sex" be added to Title VII. This proposal was met with laughter and Smith himself presented the amendment as a joke. Historians have interpreted this introduction of "sex" as a way to derail the civil rights bill and sidetrack it into needless debate. For example, Barbara and Charles Whalen argue in *The Longest Debate*, that Smith, as an "arch foe of civil rights," believed that if anything could "kill the bill... this would."⁹ They describe his tone when suggesting the amendment as "dripping with honey" and "cunning," his smile "expectant" at the havoc he hoped to create.¹⁰ In this reading, Smith suggested the amendment and acted alone as an agent of mischief, hoping to reveal the lunacy of the notion of women's rights and to spoil the efforts of civil rights legislation in general. This interpretation is overly simplistic, however, and fails to take into account key elements that informed both Smith and the debate at the time.

Smith's introduction of the "sex" amendment cannot be viewed as an isolated moment, motivated solely opposition to civil rights legislation. Instead, when viewed in a larger context, Smith's suggestion reveals itself to be part of an interest-group effort to achieve sweeping legislation to enhance women's rights in the workplace. Jo Freeman, Carl Brauer, and Cynthia Deitch all argue that without the involvement of the National Women's Party (NWP)

the amendment would never have been conceived.¹¹ NWP had not appeared in previous analyses of the amendment because of their relative "marginality:" they lacked "clout, visibility, popular support, organization, and numbers."¹² When the efforts of NWP are included in the narrative of the "sex" amendment, however, a holistic and more nuanced understanding of Smith's incentives is possible.

First-wave feminists, focused on the suffrage movement, founded NWP in 1913. By the 1960s NWP was considered a conservative women's group, made up of Anglo-American elite, upper class women who "tended to look backward rather than forward."¹³ Despite the group's senior status, position of privilege, and conservatism, the group was able to deftly coalesce the budding women's movement with the civil rights movement in order to advance their own goals. After Kennedy's Civil Rights Address calling for civil rights legislation, one NWP member urged their leader Alice Paul that they should take this opportunity to solve the "women problem" and the "negro problem" with a single piece of legislation.¹⁴ By aligning the nascent women's movement with the mature civil rights movement, NWP was able to use established momentum to further their own aims. In particular, NWP was interested in advancing the controversial Equal Rights Amendment (ERA).

In its support of ERA, NWP set itself apart from other feminist groups of the time and revealed its rightward leanings. Most Democrats and feminist organizations were against the ERA because of its potential erasure of existing legislation that protected women in the workplace from grueling hours and minimum wages; the ERA would have too blanket of an approach to gender inequality and would eliminate the few laws that protected women at work. Proponents of the amendment believed, however, that it would eradicate all barriers to women's equal advancement. This divide in the debate, as Brauer succinctly summarizes, "had distinctly class, interest-group and ideological overtones, pitting affluent, business oriented, and politically conservative women against poor, union-oriented, and politically liberal women."¹⁵ With this fight ongoing and no visible promise of resolution on the horizon, when Title VII of the Civil Rights Act was introduced, NWP saw an opportunity to further their ERA agenda through the inclusion of "sex" in Title VII.

With this in mind, NWP solicited Howard Smith for his support in December of 1963.¹⁶ Framing the amendment in racist, anti-Semitic, and xenophobic terms, NWP made it clear that their inclusion of "sex" was aimed at preserving white women's rights. For example, one member wrote to those within the organization of her gratitude for the Southern Congressmen "who will use their brains

9 Charles Whalen, *The Longest Debate* (Maryland: Seven Locks Press, 1985), 116.

10 Whalen, *The Longest Debate*, 115-116.

11 Carl M. Brauer, "Women Activists, Southern Conservatives, and the Prohibition of Sex Discrimination in Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act," *The Journal of Southern History* 49 (1983): 38, accessed June 15, 2012, doi: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2209305>.

12 Cynthia Deitch, "Gender, Race, and Class Politics and the Inclusion of Women in Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act," *Gender and Society* 7 (1993): 185, accessed June 15, 2012, doi: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/189577>.

13 Brauer, "Women Activists, Southern Conservatives, and the Prohibition of Sex Discrimination in Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act," 40.

14 Ibid., 39.

15 Ibid., 40.

16 Ibid., 41.

and energies to prevent a mongrel race in the United States and who will fight for the rights of white citizens in order that discrimination against them be stopped.”¹⁷ Smith was not the only representative that NWP solicited, and though he was slow to agree, the others approached reacted to the suggestion with scant enthusiasm and even outright refusal. Smith’s ultimate motives for agreement are conflicting, for his demeanor in Congress regarding women’s rights is contrary to his acceptance of NWP’s request.¹⁸ Here Smith’s dual motivations come to light. While he may have seen it as an opportunity to destabilize civil rights legislation, he may also have wished to shore-up white women’s rights and privilege, which seemed to be threatened. Brauer argues that “he saw an opportunity to take a swipe at the civil rights bill, but as a chivalrous old southern gentleman he also believed that it was only fair that women, specifically white women, be granted the same legal protections that the government was preparing to afford black men.”¹⁹ This timely alliance was enabled by NWP’s appeal to Smith’s personal motivations in order to ensure the introduction of their own agenda.

A close reading of the Congressional Record from February 8, 1964 reveals the unsettling intricacies of this tenuous union and the nuanced arguments for and against the inclusion of “sex.” When Smith offered the amendment,²⁰ he framed it as a “very serious” protection of “ladies” who represent the “minority sex” against discrimination based on sex.²¹ To advance his argument in favor of the amendment, Smith used a letter from one of his female constituents. Despite his repeated claims of sincerity, his demeaning and trivializing treatment of the letter, along with the laughter and snickering that is reported to have ensued, makes clear that Smith’s rhetorical presentation of the amendment contained subtle ridicule and disingenuous undertones. During the debate that followed, the atmosphere that had been set-up by Smith was kept alive. Though he disagreed with the suggested amendment, Emanuel Cellar (D-New York) also belittled the legitimacy of women’s rights and recapitulated traditional gender roles, casting women as tied to the family and the paternal wage, a result, he claimed, of natural gender difference. For example, he jokes:

I can say as a result of the 49 years of marriage – and I celebrate my 50th anniversary next year – that women, indeed, are not in the minority in my house. As a matter of fact, the reason that I would suggest that we have been living in harmony, such delightful accord for almost half a century, is that I usually have the last two words, and those last two words are, “Yes, dear.”²²

While this joke implies deference to his wife and places

her securely as the authority within the domestic, private sphere, it leaves little room for her movement out of it. In the same vein, Cellar speaks of the potential that such an amendment would have to create upheaval within the traditional Anglo-American family, both economically and emotionally. Cellar also alludes to the jovial dynamic in the room as he refers to the “levity” present.²³ From these excerpts it seems that though Smith and Cellar fall on opposite sides of the debate, they both use “discursive strategies” that act “in concert to make a joke of women’s rights and to reinforce women’s subordination.”²⁴ Further, Deitch argues: “Whichever side men took on the amendment, underneath it was understood that there was no disagreement on how they viewed women.”²⁵

Following Smith and Cellar, various congresswomen spoke in favor of the amendment. They included Frances Bolton (R-Ohio), Martha Griffiths (D-Michigan), Katharine St. George (R-New York), and Edith Green (D-Oregon). Of the six women who spoke, Edith Green alone stood against the amendment. All those in favor of the amendment engaged in a sort of flirtatious and congenial banter with the congressmen, helping to perpetuate the feeling of amusement in the room. For example, Bolton stated: “Mr. Chairman, it is always perfectly delightful when some enchanting gentleman, from the South particularly, call us the minority group.”²⁶ As this playful rhetoric continued, the women used the same forms of argumentation as their male counterparts. Much of the debate centered on hiring and employment practices that would disadvantage white women. The debate originated with concerns about civil rights but rapidly became focused on maintaining white women’s rights, not the expansion of rights for African-American men and women. For example, one congressman argued in favor of the amendment because it would “make it possible for the white Christian women to receive the same consideration for employment as the colored woman.”²⁷

Amidst this debate, Edith Green emerged as a voice of reason and gravity. Arguing against the inclusion of “sex” in Title VII, Green believed that the title should address and be motivated by increased rights and equality for African-Americans and other minorities. Refuting those who feared the exclusion of “sex” would leave white women last in line, Green was wary of the debate that altered the language of the title. She argued that such an amendment would jeopardize the bill and that separate legislation should address women’s rights. Whereas most of the congresswomen were flirtatious and almost comic as they debated the congressmen, Green was steadfast in her convictions. Acknowledging the dynamics in the room, Green said: “I suppose this may go down in history as the ‘women’s afternoon.’”²⁸ Despite this concern, and backed by other Democratic men in Congress, the “sex” amendment passed and became part of Title VII. The air of the Congressional chamber that afternoon, punctuated by Edith Green’s searing and serious argument, took on a sense of comic congeniality that precluded all serious debate, replacing it with joking rhetoric.

In this way, the entire debate surrounding the inclusion of

17 Ibid., 43.

18 It is Smith’s joking and demeaning presentation of the sex amendment that informs the previous accepted historiographic interpretation, not NWP’s broaching of the idea with him.

19 Brauer, “Women Activists, Southern Conservatives, and the Prohibition of Sex Discrimination in Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act,” 45

20 Smith was not the first to suggest the amendment. On February 5, 1963, John Dowdy (D – Texas) made a similar suggestion but was promptly dismissed.

21 *Congressional Record*, H2577 88th Cong., (February 8, 1964)

22 Ibid., 2577.

23 Ibid., 2578.

24 Deitch, “Gender, Race, and Class Politics and the Inclusion of Women in Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act,” 189-190.

25 Ibid., 192.

26 U.S. Congress, H 2578.

27 Ibid., 2583.

28 Ibid., 2581.

“sex” in Title VII focused on sex discrimination in the workplace as it pertained to hiring and employment practices. Title VII was intended by legislators and advocates to provide protection against unfair employment practices. Title VII was not created with the intention of protecting women from sexual harassment in the workplace or providing legal recourse from such actions. Not once was the notion of sexual harassment or unwanted advances raised or considered. Every example used in the Congressional debate centered on hiring and firing, not coercive sexual relations or violence. And yet, despite the passage of the “sex” amendment for somewhat dubious reasons amid an atmosphere of disparaging comments against women, Title VII would eventually become the single most important piece of legislation in the protection of women against sexual harassment in the workplace. When and how did this transformation occur?

II. Language

Despite its invisibility during the debate on the Congressional floor, sexual harassment has plagued women throughout history. Women have grappled with unwanted sexual advances, forced encounters, and coercive behaviors of a sexual nature, and have accepted them as a routine part of the female life. That these concerns were not voiced during the passing of the “sex” amendment to Title VII is not surprising given that public discourse in general about this unwanted conduct was unheard of. Crucially, though, part of this silence derived from the lack of vocabulary with which women could speak of such behavior. Indeed, the term “sexual harassment” did not emerge until 1975 when a small group of feminists attempted to conceptualize a broad range of behaviors that had beset American working women for decades. With the coinage of this term, women were finally able to speak out and raise awareness of their experiences, realizing with each personal revelation that they were not alone in their experience. At about the same time that this new vocabulary emerged, the field of sociolinguistics, in conjunction with the development of academic women’s studies, began to explore the intersection of gender and language.²⁹ Scholars focusing on the gendering of language—and men and women’s respective access to altering and creating it—have asked a series of questions to better understand gender and language, such as: Who names? Who creates meaning? What power structures enable them to do so?³⁰

Sexual harassment’s linguistic dilemma is its speechlessness, its silence. Of the absence of language, linguist Robin Lakoff acknowledges the potential for oversight. In the past, many feminists and scholars focused on the gender dynamics present in the spoken word, rather than that which is missing from the lexicon: the silences. It is more intuitive to analyze what is tangible. There is also the potential to misinterpret the reason for silence. As Lakoff reminds us, although “silence is popularly equated with the absence of thought, we also recognize, if subliminally, the uses of silence in

power relations.”³¹ In more recent years, scholars have given more attention to silence in this sense. Lakoff writes of two interpretations of silence: the semantic (non-political) and the pragmatic (political).³² Focusing on the political-pragmatic interpretation, Lakoff claims that structures silence voices. Specifically, this dynamic results from one party’s ability to “prevent another from fully participating (‘silencing’) [because] of the disparate powers and roles of each.” This, in turn, “contributes to the further imbalancing of those roles.”³³ Pragmatic silencing can occur in both the public and private realms, though the consequences are more permanent and serious in the public sphere.

When one group in the public sphere is silenced and another gains dominance, there arises what Lakoff terms “interpretive control,” that is, the maintenance of power over the making of meaning.³⁴ As Lakoff elaborates, “the control of meaning includes the right to name oneself and others; the right to assess one’s own behavior and that of others; the right to decide what form or style of language is “good” or “right” or “appropriate”; and the right to determine what a speaker means to say.”³⁵ It is this making of and control over meaning that feminists and scholars claim men have used to silence women’s voices. Men’s structural superiority, be it economic, political, or physical, has enabled them to define the prevailing interpretation of a word and phrase and furthermore, maintain control of the creation over words or terms. Because men define the language used by society, they dictate the parameters of describable and acceptable experience. This stance does not berate men for their historically established position of control; rather, it acknowledges their place as one previously unchallenged, with an increasing capacity to be altered by a developing society. Here, men are not the victimizers; the established systems of power and control that have placed men in superior rank are to blame.

Some radical and controversial feminists, such as Andrea Dworkin and Catherine MacKinnon, take more an unforgiving stance on men’s naming power and hegemonic control. In her treatise, *Pornography*, Andrea Dworkin writes: “Men have the power of naming, a great and sublime power. This power of naming enables men to define experience, to articulate boundaries and values, to designate to each thing its realm and qualities, to determine what can and cannot be expressed, to control perception itself.”³⁶ Thus far, this stance is fairly consistent with Lakoff’s, but when she goes on to argue that men control their naming abilities with violent force she offers little consideration for a more nuanced view of the infrastructures of power that perpetuate it. This is the case, for instance, when she writes:

He defines her femininity and when she does not conform he names her deviant, sick, beats her up, slices off her clitoris (repository of pathological masculinity), tears out her womb (source of her personality), lobotomizes or narcotizes her (perverse recognition that she can think, though thinking in a women is name deviant)... If she wants him sexually he

29 Robin Lakoff’s seminal text *Language and Women’s Place* (1975) is considered to be the first of the burgeoning field. This is the same year in which feminists coined the term “sexual harassment.”

30 These questions have emerged as linguistic theory has moved from the notion that language reflects the world as it truly is to the notion that language creates and sustains power dynamics and identity construction.

31 Kira Hall and Mary Bucholtz, *Gender Articulated: Language and the Socially Constructed Self* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 25.

32 Ibid., 26.

33 Ibid., 26.

34 Ibid., 29.

35 Ibid., 29.

36 Andrea Dworkin, *Pornography: Men Possessing Women* (New York: Perigee Books, 1981), 17).

names her slut; if she does not want him he rapes her and says she does.³⁷

But even as Dworkin's *Pornography* reads like a manifesto, just like Lakoff's work, it points to the importance of considering the connection between gender, power, and language.

Language defines and orders our lived reality, aiding us in making sense of the world. Lacking a vocabulary to articulate the physical wrong of sexual harassment, women struggled with how to make sense of such occurrences. Recent linguistic studies in the 1990s have focused on conceptualizing sexual harassment as a discursive practice. In particular, this research focuses on understanding sexual harassment within organizations and the dynamics that perpetuate it. One study claims that certain features and dimensions of institutions aid in promoting isolation of the victim and a "conspiracy of silence."³⁸ These features include: power dynamics within the organization, the time frame surrounding the incident, the grievance structures that are in place, perceived bias, and employment stratification. Further, these features normalize sexual harassment, so that when women do step forward, their complaints are framed in a way that perpetuates the structure that oppresses their speech. Linguist Robin Clair claims that women frame their own assaults in three ways that ultimately sustain the hegemonic power structure: 1) Denotative hesitancy, 2) trivialization, and 3) private domain.³⁹ Control of language, then, is profoundly important to the dominant power structures women in the mid-20th century faced.

III. Feminist Definition

When feminists began to grapple with the definition of sexual harassment in 1975, they overcame this linguistic hesitancy. The exact origins of the term "sexual harassment" are murky. Though Catharine MacKinnon claims in the Preface of *Sexual Harassment of Working Women* (1979) that drafts of the text were complete in 1974 and circulated in 1975, women's liberation activist Susan Brownmiller recalls in her autobiography *In Our Time*, that "the origins of this particular breakthrough are ineluctably precise," placing the term's creation in spring 1975 at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York.⁴⁰ Historian Carrie Baker also attributes the origins of the word to Brownmiller's organization, though there seems to be sufficient doubt to cast a minor shadow over the precision that Brownmiller claims. In any case, in 1975 feminists became increasingly aware of the unwanted sexual advances of their peers and sought to conceptualize and define those undesirable behaviors. Collectively or separately, they began to consider the creation of a term that would name a behavior that had occurred throughout history.

This newfound awareness did not arise in 1975 by happenstance. In the early 1970s, grassroots movements led by women began to form, calling attention to various feminist issues. Women joined together to tell their stories and share their experiences on a range of topics including abortion, women's liberation, and

equal employment opportunities. Staging protests, speak-outs, and public events, feminist advocates pushed into the public eye, spurring on media coverage and reporting. To publicize street harassment that women experienced on daily walks to and from work, feminists staged "Ogle-Ins." In an eye-opening reversal, women leered, catcalled, and whistled at men as they entered their office buildings. These events allude to the immediacy of the issue of harassment in general, as women made clear that they would not stand for the continuation of such degrading treatment and began to realize that their experiences were not isolated. The invention of the term "sexual harassment" in this sense emerged from a collective realization of communal experience.

Brownmiller in particular recalls the moment in which the connection between unwanted sexual advances and employment opportunity was starkly revealed.⁴¹ Feminist Lin Farley headed the women's section of Cornell's Human Affairs program. During a seminar held to address women's plights in the workplace, Carmita Wood stepped forward to ask for advice and help from Farley. Wood, a 44-year old mother of four, had been denied unemployment compensation after her resignation from her laboratory assistant position at Cornell University where she had worked since 1971. Suffering from physical illness as a result of her continual efforts and anxieties from fending off the aggressive and demeaning sexual advances of a professor for whom she worked, Wood resigned after enduring the treatment for four years. After attempting to search for new employment in vain, Wood filed for unemployment compensation. The hearing officer ultimately decided that Wood's reasons were "personal" and "noncompelling," and as such, did not amount to a "good cause."⁴² Refusing defeat, she approached Farley and her feminist organization. After Wood told her story at the seminar a woman present recalled, "We realized that to a person, every one of us – the women on the staff, Carmita, the students – had had an experience like this at some point, you know? And none of us had ever told anyone before. It was one of those *click, aha!* moments, a profound revelation."⁴³

Wood's courageous revelation sparked an important realization. Immediately, Farley and some of her colleagues decided to "break the silence about [that which had] no name" by hosting a speak-out.⁴⁴ As they created posters and pamphlets, the women began to brainstorm about what to call this experience, hoping to find a term that embraced "a whole range of subtle and unsubtle persistent behaviors."⁴⁵ Someone shouted out "sexual harassment" and Brownmiller recalls they all immediately agreed that the term was just right. Canvassing and publicizing the speak-out heavily, the group hoped that attendees would outnumber their colleagues at Cornell. On May 4, 1975, they were not disappointed. Over 300 women attended, raised their voices, and called for action. The speak-out was followed by a series of events that continued to buoy this burgeoning idea. Farley testified on sexual harassment to Eleanor Holmes Norton at New York City's Commission on Human Rights. Feminist Enid

37 Ibid., 18.

38 Shreen G. Blingham, *Conceptualizing Sexual Harassment as Discursive Practice* (Conn: Praeger, 1994), 45.

39 Ibid., 67.

40 Catherine Mackinnon and Susan Brownmiller, *In Our Time: Memoir of a Revolution* (New York: Dial Press, 1999), 279.

41 Baker and Mink both support the account given by Brownmiller.

42 Carrie N. Baker, *The Women's Movement Against Sexual Harassment* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 28.

43 Brownmiller, *In Our Time: Memoir of a Revolution*, 281.

44 Ibid., 281.

45 Ibid., 281.

Nemy, a reporter for the New York Times, brought further attention to the issue through her writing. Nemy's article, the first describing sexual harassment ever published, addressed the range of behaviors that constitute sexual harassment, the issues of trivialization that women faced, and women's efforts to advocate for change. Her article brought the issue of sexual harassment to the public, and did so in the tone of an educated and researched exploration into the treatment that, as she wrote, "Many women [have] accepted as a job hazard for years."⁴⁶

Included in Nemy's list of sexual harassment behaviors are leering and ogling, men intentionally brushing up against women, and pinching or squeezing them. A 1977 publication titled *A Handbook on Rape* contains an article called "Little Rapes." The unnamed author urges women to refuse to ignore more subtle forms of harassment. For instance, when the author recalls her own experience writing, "I work in a library. My first day on the job I was putting some books away in the stacks, when I became aware of a man crouched beside me. I thought he was looking for a particular book. Suddenly he put his hand up my dress, then fled."⁴⁷ It is these sorts of "little rapes" that the author and the women's movement sought to acknowledge as a critical component of sexual harassment. In their continual effort to educate about such behaviors and to define them, the women for the first time articulated and named a personal and collective experience. These women defined the experience of "sexual harassment" and were active in perpetuating its meaning. As Catherine MacKinnon notes, men created the definition of rape, originating in the colonial period when women were the property of men, first their fathers and then their husbands through coverture.⁴⁸ Here, women defined their own abuse for the first time, articulating with passion the wrongs perpetrated against them and making every effort to call for legal action and change. In this way, they regained interpretive control. MacKinnon writes that in the act of naming, "the sexually harassed have been given a name for their suffering and an analysis that connects it to gender. They have been given a forum, legitimacy to speak, authority to make claims, and an avenue for possible relief."⁴⁹

IV. Legal Moves

Calls for legal action and redress emerged from a growing popular awareness of the newly conceptualized sexual harassment. Despite the fact that the term "sexual harassment" was unknown prior to 1975, the development of litigation pursuing cases of unwanted sexual advances began in 1971. In this history it becomes clear that though the term was not in existence until 1975, women and lawyers grappled with the issue and attempted to gain benefits from the courts before then. Between 1971 and 1974 women brought cases to court

that alleged discrimination in the workplace based on sex, relying on Title VII of the Civil Rights Act. Their arguments were analogous to the arguments made by those plaintiffs alleging discrimination based on race, also employing Title VII. In this sense, initial court cases brought by women who suffered sexual intimidation and coercion at work were inspired by the legal battles of the civil rights movement. In the beginning, the courts rejected many women's claims of assault, arguing that their experiences were either a private matter not to be adjudicated in the court or were the result of a biological, and therefore normal and inevitable, process.⁵⁰ These early cases of sex discrimination revealed the reticence of the courts to interpret Title VII as prohibiting acts of sexual violence in the workplace, in part, perhaps, because of the history of the "sex" amendment to the Title itself. However, by the mid-70s, courts gradually began to hear women's claims, reversing past decisions made against them. In 1980, the Equal Opportunity Employment Commission (EEOC) released a series of guidelines specifically addressing sexual harassment in the workplace, and in 1986, the Supreme Court heard and upheld its first case of sexual harassment, thereby removing ambiguity and definitively supporting women's claims of harassment. Validating law that "begins with the woman's word," the courts developed sexual harassment litigation as each case was brought.⁵¹

The initial series of court cases, heard by district courts in 1974 and 1975, had all attempted to gain redress at a lower level between 1971 and 1974. Most often these earlier actions were sex discrimination complaints filed within a departmental or occupational equal employment opportunity office. When such action failed, aided by feminist organizations, these women brought cases to district level courts, most often accompanied by counsel with a feminist or civil rights background and leanings. Arguing that unwanted sexual advances in the workplace constituted discrimination based on sex, these early cases sought to demonstrate that women's hierarchical inferiority to men in the workplace exposed their economic and sexual vulnerability to men who had the power to fire or demote them should they fail to comply.⁵² Women's economic dependence on their work, combined with employers' often-explicit expectation of attractiveness and sexual availability, placed women in an impossible bind where their sexuality became a requirement of their work. Using Title VII, Paulette Barnes, Jane Corne and Geneva DeVane, Margaret Miller, and Adrienne Tomkins all brought cases against their employers. All were dismissed.

Feminist and legal scholar Catherine MacKinnon, supported by contemporary political scientist Gwendolyn Mink, argues that in these initial cases judges relied on two arguments to frame and dismiss women's claims. One viewed sexual harassment as personal

46 Nemy, Enid. "Women Begin to Speak Out Against Sexual Harassment at Work." New York Times, August 19, 1975.

Enid Nemy, "Women Begin to Speak Out Against Sexual Harassment at Work," *New York Times*, August 19, 1975.

47 Rosalyn Fraad Baxandall and Linda Gordan, *Dear Sisters: Dispatches from the Women's Liberation Movement* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 193.

48 Catharine A. MacKinnon, *Feminism Unmodified: Discourses on Life and Law* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1987), 105.

49 Ibid., 104.

50 Mink, MacKinnon, and Baker all describe this series of arguments.

51 Mink, 4

52 "The sexual harassment of working women presents a closed system of social predation in which powerlessness builds powerlessness... Working women are defined, and survive by defining themselves, as sexually accessible and economically exploitable. Because they are economically vulnerable, they are sexually exposed; because they must be sexually accessible, they are always economically at risk." MacKinnon (1979), 55.

while the other claimed it to be natural and biological.⁵³ Both of these understandings rely on gender norms and stereotypes of male/female sexual relations. In addition, I would suggest that the judges employed a third framing device, that of history. In their opinions, judges often cited the legislative history of Title VII as a means to prove that the original legislators did not intend such claims to be covered. By incorporating historiography into judicial interpretation and argumentation, judges not only relied on gender norms about sexual relations to dismiss cases, but also used the historical record to justify their opinions.

To frame sexual harassment as personal is to render it too private, too small, and too unique for the law to address. Multiple judicial opinions, without reference to each other, continually used the word “personal” to describe the interactions between a woman and her harasser.⁵⁴ As MacKinnon argues, “one function of all the uses of the term is to individuate, devalue, pathologize, and isolate women’s reactions to an experience which is common and shared, practically without variation, by countless women.”⁵⁵ Moreover, placing harassment in the personal realm removes it from employer liability; an employer cannot be held responsible for an unfortunate romantic advance made by a clumsy individual. For example, in *Barnes v. Train*, plaintiff Paulette Barnes claimed that her supervisor abolished her position at the company after she refused to have an affair with him or to comply with his sexual demands.⁵⁶

Responding, Judge John Smith wrote: “The substance of plaintiff’s complaint is that she was discriminated against, not because she was a woman, but because she refused to engage in a sexual affair with a supervisor. This is a controversy underpinned by the subtleties of an inharmonious personal relationship.”⁵⁷ Considering this a matter of personal and private resolution, Smith argues that Barnes’s harassment was not based on her sex, but rather, on the basis that she refused to have an affair. Similarly, in *Corne v. Bausch and Lomb*, Jane Corne and Geneva DeVane alleged that their supervisor repeatedly made physical and verbal sexual advances toward them, molested them, and made their workplace environment intolerable. In dismissing the case, Judge Frey argued that the supervisor’s “conduct appears to be nothing more than a personal proclivity, peculiarity, or mannerism. By his alleged sexual advances, [he] was satisfying a personal urge.”⁵⁸ Holding that the supervisor’s actions were of a

private and unique nature, and therefore not company policy, Frey, too, dismissed the case.

Alternatively, to frame sexual harassment as biological, natural, and universal “is to render it too big, too immutable, too invariant, too universal and thus, too pre-social to be within law’s reach.”⁵⁹ Viewing sexual desire, and inevitable miscommunications about it, as an unavoidable fact of human life, judges worried that if these court cases were successful, waves of complaints would be brought and the system would be overloaded with unreasonable cases spurred on by office flirting. Here, sexual harassment law is conceptualized as “restricting normal human expression,” a universal and natural urge that should not be limited.⁶⁰ In *Tomkins v. Public Service*, Judge Stern called Adrienne Tomkins’ refusal to comply with her supervisor’s sexual demands and his eventual retaliation a “natural attraction.” Continuing this line of logic, Stern writes: “If the plaintiff’s view were to prevail, no superior could, prudently, attempt to open a social dialogue with any subordinate of either sex. An invitation to dinner could become an invitation to a federal lawsuit.”⁶¹ In this manner, human bodily desire is universalized, and placed outside of the realm of law. Despite the fact that these framing mechanisms appear contradictory, judges often combined the two arguments in their opinions to conclude that sexual harassment is neither discrimination based on sex nor a matter of employer liability.

In addition to these two alternately trivializing and monumentalizing frames that judges used to dismiss cases, I argue here that they also relied on the controversial legislative history of Title VII to claim that women’s complaints of sexual harassment are not covered under the Title.⁶² However, while judges often refer to the “sex” amendment’s passage, they follow the historiographic tradition that neglects to acknowledge the efforts of the National Women’s Party. As such, they fall into what contemporary historians realize is a flawed and incomplete understanding of the past. This interpretation makes sense in the context of judicial opinions, however, as it serves to strengthen their argument against upholding women’s claims. Additionally, judges’ stances do accurately reflect that Title VII was in fact not intended to protect women against sexual harassment. In the Congressional Record, as well as the public debate that surrounding the title in general, no mention was made of unwanted sexual advances in the workplace, let alone any attempt to regulate them. In this sense, then, the judges’ use of this argument is warranted. Nonetheless their strict adherence to this historical interpretation of the Title left little room for inventive re-readings of the Title to allow for women’s claims to be heard. For example, Judge Stern argues in *Tomkins v. Public Service*, “Title VII was enacted to remove those artificial barriers to full employment which are based upon unjust and long-encrusted prejudice... It is not intended to provide a federal tort remedy for what amounts to a physical attack motivated by sexual desire on the part of the supervisor and which

53 MacKinnon claims that “authoritative men” either trivialize or monumentalize or both women’s claims of harassment as their arguments fall into these two dismissive categories. These categories remove the issue from the socio-political arena and thereby remove them from legal intervention as well.

54 These cases include *Barnes v. Train*, *Corne v. Bausch and Lomb*, and *Tomkins v. Public Service Electric*.

55 MacKinnon, *Sexual Harassment of Working Women: A Case of Sex Discrimination*, 87.

56 This is a classic example of quid pro quo harassment (term coined by MacKinnon in the *Sexual Harassment of Working Women*), where the female employee must do something to maintain her current position or job. Another type is termed hostile environment and includes more subtle and daily forms of harassment. All early of the early sexual harassment cases that were brought were *quid pro quo*.

57 *Barnes v. Train*, 13 FEP 123 (D.D.C. 1974).

58 *Corne v. Bausch and Lomb*, 390 F. Supp. 161 (D. Arizona 1975).

59 MacKinnon, *Sexual Harassment of Working Women: A Case of Sex Discrimination*, 83.

60 Mink, *Hostile Environment: The Political Betrayal of Sexually Harassed Women*, 38.

61 *Tomkins v. Public Service*, 422 F. Supp. 553 (D.N.J. 1976).

62 *Barnes v. Train*, *Tomkins v. Public Service*

happened to occur in a corporate corridor rather than a back alley.”⁶³ Other judicial opinions referenced the difficulty in interpreting Title VII given its controversial legislative history, as well. In general, this third frame only served to bolster the other two, and all three together simultaneously enforced one another, and in doing so removed the possibility of redress for women.

1972 saw the first case to break this mold when the district court for the District of Columbia ruled in favor of Diane Williams, making it the first federal court to rule that Title VII prohibits discrimination based on sex. In his opinion, Judge Richey focused on whether or not a supervisor’s retaliation, spurred by a subordinate’s rejection “constitutes sex discrimination within the definitional parameters of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.”⁶⁴ Judge Richey argued that the behavior in question would create an artificial barrier to employment if only one gender and not another was propositioned in this way, despite the fact that the “rule or practice is conceptually sex-neutral.”⁶⁵ Finding this to be the case in the alleged incident, the court ruled in favor of Williams. This decision was a turning point in judicial decisions regarding sexual harassment. *Barnes v. Train*, *Corne v. Bausch and Lomb*, and *Tomkins v. Public Service* among others were all reversed at the circuit or appellate level, strengthening women’s legal ability to make claims of quid pro quo harassment at work. In the appeal of *Barnes v. Train*, now *Barnes v. Costle*, Judge Robinson supports this development in writing:

But for her womanhood, her participation in sexual activity would never have been solicited. To say, then, that she was victimized in her employment simply because she declined the invitation is to ignore the asserted fact that she was invited only because she was a woman subordinate to the inviter in the hierarchy of agency personnel. Put another way, she became the target of her superior’s sexual desires because she was a woman, and was asked to bow to his demands as the price for holding her job.⁶⁶

Judge Robinson not only claims that it is impossible to remove gender from conceptualizing such behavior, but also rejects the “natural urges” and “private behavior” frames of past cases, acknowledging the hierarchical power structures that enables men to make these kinds of advances.

As courts in these instances reversed past rulings, they confirmed sexual harassment as sex discrimination. And indeed, in 1977 when *Tomkins v. Public Service* was reversed, the term “sexual harassment” was finally used. Bolstered by the remarkable reversals and the entrance of the phrase sexual harassment into the legal lexicon, feminists rallied for more government action to be taken at the local, state, and federal level. In response, politicians developed remedies for harmed women, including the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission’s issuance of guidelines on sexual harassment in the work place in 1980, officially stating that sexual harassment is prohibited under Title VII. One of the primary government officials behind the

creation of the EEOC Guidelines was the department’s Chair, Eleanor Holmes Norton. Norton’s personal background and advocacy had a hand in shaping the comprehensive and sweeping Guidelines. As a civil rights advocate, African-American feminist, and lawyer, Norton has been described as a *femocrat*, arguing that sexual harassment’s unacceptability, widespread nature, and economic detriment to women warranted wide-ranging government intervention.⁶⁷ As part of the process in developing the Guidelines, hearings were held at which feminist advocates, past litigants, and legal officials testified, speaking out against sexual harassment. These hearings and the reports that came out of them made clear that sexual harassment at work was a serious issue that could not be tolerated. Though Norton’s EEOC Guidelines were met with a conservative pushback, mainly concerning the issue of employer liability, the Guidelines, with some modifications to their original manifestation, were adopted shortly after Reagan’s election victory in 1980.

The Guidelines broadly defined sexual harassment as:

Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when (1) submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual’s employment, (2) submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individual, or (3) such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual’s work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment.⁶⁸

Not only do the Guidelines explicitly link sexual harassment and Title VII, they also make clear that both quid pro quo and hostile environment harassment are covered by the Title.⁶⁹ Feminists embraced this broad definition of sexual harassment while opponents feared the scope of the definition, worrying that the inclusion of hostile environment harassment would result in frivolous charges. It is with this in mind that they argued that employer liability should be restricted to apply only when the employer should have reasonably known, and failed to act, to prevent harassment. While the Guidelines were modified little to address this notion of liability, they were modified in relation to hostile environment definition. The original language of the act defined hostile environment harassment as “substantially interfering with an individual’s work performance.” “Substantially” was replaced with “unreasonably,” leaving space for individual’s to argue that it is possible for there to be reasonable interference. Despite these changes, women’s organizations were generally satisfied with the Guidelines, as they firmly established that cases were actionable under Title VII and that both experiences of harassment would be heard. As well as this definitive legal

63 Also notice how this quote refers to both the private and natural arguments.

64 *Williams v. Saxbe*, 413 F.Supp. 654 (D. D. C. 1976).

65 Mink, *Hostile Environment: The Political Betrayal of Sexually Harassed Women*, 47.

66 *Barnes v. Costle*, 561 F.2d 983 (D.C. Cir.1977).

67 Baker, 116 and Kathrin S. Zippel, *The Politics of Sexual Harassment: A Comparative Study of the United States, the European Union, and Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 58.

68 EEOC Guidelines on Sexual Harassment

69 *Bundy v. Jackson* is the first case to rule against hostile environment harassment. The decision was made in 1981.

advancement, the EEOC Guidelines also served to bring awareness of the issue of sexual harassment to an even broader public audience. Media coverage of the Guidelines packaged the issue in much the same fashion as the judges of the early cases did and opponents of the Guidelines similarly claimed sexual harassment to be a private matter.⁷⁰ Regardless of the heated aftermath, the Guidelines represent an influential and expanding definition of sexual harassment, giving harassed women a legal, legitimate and accepted set of rules to reference in their claims of abuse.

In 1986, the Supreme Court heard its first case of sexual harassment, upholding Mechelle Vinson's claims of sexual abuse in what is widely regarded as "the crowning achievement of the early movement against sexual harassment."⁷¹ Initially brought in 1980, Vinson's case reached the Supreme Court after a series of appeals. Alleging that she had been forced to have sexual relations with her supervisor for over two years, Vinson claimed that once she refused to continue, he threatened to eliminate her position and began creating an unbearable working environment for Vinson as well as many of her other female co-workers. The Supreme Court ruled in favor of Vinson, endorsing recent interpretations of Title VII in lower court cases, explicitly referencing the EEOC Guidelines on sexual harassment, and ruling that both quid pro quo and hostile environment harassment are covered under Title VII. In this sense, "the Court confirmed many of the principles that had been developing in the lower courts for the previous ten years."⁷² However, *Vinson* did set a series of high standards and limitations on women's ability to gain relief, leaving ambiguous issues such as employer liability, the severity and pervasiveness of the harassment, and how unwelcome such conduct was. The *Vinson* decision removed uncertainty surrounding the viability of the use of Title VII and the recently established EEOC Guidelines, while simultaneously enforcing it in relation to burden of proof and corporate responsibility. Despite this, *Vinson* definitively established not only the legitimacy of the term of sexual harassment itself, but also its rightful place in the courts

V. Conclusion

Despite the developments in sexual harassment litigation charted here, even today women face intense scrutiny in the courts as lawyers and the public attempt to uncover their motives, judge the outfit they wore on the day in question, and limn the contours of their sex lives for context. Despite the fact that women have attained a space in which their claims and words can be heard, it is rare that they are heard without prejudgment or bias. Efforts to gauge women's credibility, promiscuity, and incentives do not solely stem from conservative men and women who believe the regulation of sexuality to be erroneous. Feminists and liberals alike also partake in the interrogation of women's claims, judging women for the situations that they were forced into rather than the men who abused their power. As Mink writes, "if the law now will listen to a woman's experience, it does not shield her from promiscuous public scrutiny that distorts the experience she describes."⁷³ But the stakes of this doubt are high. The near constant investigation and skepticism of

women's motives in making claims of sexual harassment, by liberals and conservatives alike, according to Mink, "betrays feminism's single legal accomplishment and compromises its future."⁷⁴ When women are discouraged from pursuing legal recourse because of these unfair and intrusive examinations, it damages the legitimacy and progress of the law as a whole for women. Now that there are laws that theoretically protect women against harassment, women must muster the courage to use them: "The law gains strength from the women who use it."⁷⁵

Catherine MacKinnon is similarly pessimistic about women's social and political advancement since the intense strivings of the women's movement. Though she acknowledges, "sexual harassment, the legal claim – the idea that the law should see it the way its victims see it – is definitely a feminist invention," she also writes: "Feminism has not changed the status of women."⁷⁶ It is not enough to observe that social change is glacial, law is inadequate to move anything basic, and power is powerful.⁷⁷ Seeming to concede to prevailing structural hierarchies, MacKinnon's path forward is vague. Mink, while similarly subdued, may offer a more hopeful solution: shifting public discourse around issues of sexuality and the law and allowing women to make claims in a way that remains true to their experience.

Here, Stephen Schulhofer's conception of the right to sexual autonomy becomes pertinent. Though writing mainly about laws relating to rape, Schulhofer argues in his book *Unwanted Sex* that the right to sexual autonomy is currently absent from legal consideration. Claiming this to be as important a right as that to property, Schulhofer spends much of the text developing the notion of this right to choose "whether and when" to be sexually intimate with another.⁷⁸ He conceives of this right as both positive, the right to choose one's own bodily lifestyle, and negative, the right to safeguard and exclude others from one's own body. Currently, the positive aspect of this right is privileged as the law is committed to supporting the right to seek intimacy, but there is no meaningful freedom to refuse it. Within the context of sexual harassment, this right to intimacy, or alternately labeled as the right to privacy, has been used to argue that sexual harassment is outside of the purview of the law. In this sense, the disproportionate and distorted focus on rights to, rather than from, has enabled harassers to evade consequence while the women whose personal and sexual autonomy has been violated must endure. Incorporating this notion of the right to refuse, be it solely in public discourse surrounding the issue, might aid in creating a more receptive space for women's claims to be heard.

If pursued, sexual autonomy, like the term "sexual harassment," will undergo intense scrutiny, debate, and attack. However, the narrative of the development of sexual harassment as a concept and as a juridical claim as outlined above, surely shows that provided the concentrated efforts of a group of dedicated activists, such a change – if only culturally – is possible. Activism

70 Baker, *The Women's Movement Against Sexual Harassment*, 119.

71 Ibid., 171.

72 Ibid., 169.

73 Ibid., 5.

74 Ibid., 3.

75 Ibid., 7.

76 MacKinnon, *Feminism Unmodified: Discourses on Life and Law*, 103.

77 Ibid., 2.

78 Stephen J. Schulhofer, *Unwanted Sex: The Culture of Intimidation and the Failure of Law* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1998), 100.

in and of itself is not enough, however. The law must respond to grassroots demands for authentic structural change to occur. From the historical narrative outlined in this paper, it appears that the feminist movement's awareness and labeling of the term "sexual harassment" came after the first court cases were contemplated and brought. Despite the fact that this language did not exist, there was still some notion that such treatment was actionable under Title VII. This first step in Title VII's evolution, namely the filing of the first cases, was based on an analogy between sex and race discrimination, building on the legal foundation of the civil rights movement. In the second step, the analogy of sex discrimination was aligned with the newly created term sexual harassment. Here, sex discrimination in the courts becomes sexual harassment in the popular media, feminist rhetoric, and movement activism. In a sense, advocacy was a short step behind the court's rulings in that the court heard cases of sexual harassment before the term was coined and popularized. This perhaps explains why once the term sexual harassment was coined and feminists became increasingly vocal and active, courts were more able to accept the validity of the arguments made in favor of the plaintiffs. Sexual harassment, without such a moniker or public awareness, had not been taken up seriously enough yet to influence the judges in early court cases. From this, we can see that there was a delicate dance in the 1970s between legal interpretations of Title VII, the feminist movement, and the definition of "sexual harassment." This murkiness makes it impossible to pin down the exact moment at which women realized that Title VII was a possible avenue for redress and how exactly their thinking on the matter formed. However, it is possible to say that once the notion was exposed, individuals worked to expand it and create an accompanying language with which to allow women to make their experiences heard. As this expansion occurred, the law began to respond, eventually legitimating women's claims and words in the 1980s.

These debates and concerns about the female body and experience proliferate around us. The female body is a contested space in which society projects its ideals and stereotypes of how women ought to act and behave. In the development of sexual harassment definition and jurisprudence, women had to resist traditional Anglo-American views that placed them in the home and out of gainful employment. Fighting stereotypes about gender and sexuality, women made clear that a new paradigm of female existence was needed to correspond to the reality that women faced on a daily basis. Naming an experience for themselves for the first time, women sought recognition of it in the legal realm with success. Despite the fact that there is much to be done for women to feel comfortable bringing such claims, especially when faced with intense scrutiny, the history of sexual harassment reveals that women have the power and ability to speak of their own bodily experience, and declare and demand that the law to reply.

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Adopting the American Racial Lens: A history of Mexican migration to Chicago from the town of Arandas, Jalisco¹

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Introduction: Migration and Its Effects on Notions of Race and Community

During his interview with researcher Paul S. Taylor in November of 1931, a young man who had recently returned to the Mexican town of Arandas, Jalisco after working for the steel industry in Chicago was asked if the people of his community were good people (*buena gente*). “Yes, they are”, he responded, “and that is because they are white”. Similarly, another

returning migrant also cited whiteness when reminiscing about his baby boy who had been born and died in the United States: “He was good— he was white.”² In the notes accompanying his interview transcripts, Taylor observed that the terminology employed by both of these individuals indicated a direct American influence upon their racial outlook. These men of predominantly “Spanish type”, as Taylor described them, used the familiar distinguishing term “white” (or *blanco*) as it was customarily employed by white Americans to describe themselves in the Spanish language while in the presence of large numbers of Mexican laborers.³

1 A special ‘thank-you’ to Mrs. Carol Montag and the Montag Family for their generous award which made possible my study of the Paul S. Taylor Manuscript Collection at the Bancroft Library of the University of California Berkeley in the summer of 2011. I would also like to acknowledge Thomas C. Holt and Darryl Heller for their careful revisions of initial drafts of this project.

2 Paul S. Taylor, *A Spanish-Mexican Peasant Community: Arandas in Jalisco, Mexico* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1933), p. 18-19.

3 Ibid., p. 19.

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The fact that neither of the men used the term “Spanish” or “European”⁴ (as was customary in Arandas) when referring to those of lighter skin suggests that, as Taylor suspected, the two were affected by U.S. racial discourse and American racial practices and norms. Something about their experiences in Chicago had led these individuals to shed the verbal customs of the townspeople of Arandas. Taylor’s interviews evince crucial alterations in the racial thought of these returning migrants and connote their appropriation of the American black-white racial lens as a tool by which to analyze the “goodness” of a community. Manifesting an internalization of the American black-white racial order, the two men identified themselves, their peers, and their progeny by means of the racialized American usage of the Spanish term *blanco* (meaning, literally, “the color white”).

The impact of migration on the racial thought and communal ideology of these men remains largely misunderstood within its historical context—that is to say, within the living framework of its respective time and spaces. This is because historians of Mexican migration to the United States have not comprehensively approached the issue of migrant racial identity, both individual and collective, through a transnational lens of analysis that takes into consideration the racial cultures, systems, and attitudes of early-twentieth-century Mexican society and its American counterpart. Furthermore, there is currently little historical examination of the manner in which notions of race and community *within* groups of Mexican emigrants were altered by the movement of people to, and eventually back from, racially polarized host societies in the United States. This paper looks to thoroughly address this issue, which has been largely neglected by previous historical inquiry on the topic of migration to the United States from Mexico.

The analyses offered in traditional migration histories tend to represent migration as a linear phenomenon; one with a stationary origin (i.e. a “home society”), a clear trajectory, and a fixed end point (the “host society”). In the case of Mexican migration to the United States, the home society represented is either Mexico at large (which is too vast a historical space to offer clear examination), or certain regions or states of Mexico (which are also large and diverse). The trajectory across the border is usually portrayed as both a one-way trip and a one-time journey ending in American rural or urban centers. Given that the bulk of historical examination tends to focus on the migrants’ experience in the host society, migration historians usually forgo any substantial examination of social conditions in specific home societies.

As a result of their emphasis on the conditions of migrants in their host society, most traditional migration historians documenting the mass movement of Mexicans into the United States tend to write accounts that pay little to no attention to key developments in particular communities in Mexico that eventually produced the bulk of U.S.-bound

migrants. Instead, their histories focus only upon a handful of basic, yet crucial, themes pertinent to Mexican migrant communities within the United States. Heavily discussed topics include broad (as opposed to more local or regional) historical factors influencing the movement of Mexican emigrants, the occupational and residential patterns of migrants within American cities and/or agricultural areas, and their reception by those already living in the United States—white and non-white, American and foreign. Though these subjects of inquiry are diverse, the majority of historical accounts treating the topic of Mexican migration to the United States follows a standard formula when addressing these themes and rarely ventures outside of its bounds.

Furthermore, traditional migration histories examine in great detail the manner in which Mexicans, as a whole, moved from their home country to certain regions of the United States. They do so by delineating complex “push” factors that instigated emigration from Mexico and “pull” factors that inspired immigration north of the Rio Grande. Looking past the plurality of factors influencing the movement of individuals, families, and entire communities, these historical accounts produce general overviews that are, at times, too vague to produce a history that truly captures the nuance inherent to the migration of specific communities (like that of the townspeople of Arandas) to particular localities (i.e. the Chicago stockyards). Though such conventional accounts of Mexican migration offer thoughtful examination, they nevertheless possess a combination of linearity and generalization that cannot yield a truly comprehensive understanding of the complex migratory phenomenon.

The originality and significance of my study thus arise from the scarcity of scholarship devoted specifically to the understanding of migration as a *circular* phenomenon between countries; an ongoing process through which historical actors evolve and change in terms of social outlook, racial ideology, and worldview. My project’s main focus is the transnational analysis of the constant evolution of racial identity as it pertains to one *particular* community of Mexican migrants—mainly, those emigrants who left Arandas, Jalisco for the city of Chicago in the 1920s and eventually returned to their hometown amidst American repatriation campaigns in the early 1930s. This paper thus engages in the type of transnational migration micro-history that places itself in direct opposition to the traditional, U.S.-centric macro-histories that have dominated late-twentieth-century migration scholarship. The narrower and more focused scope of my work lends a more nuanced portrayal of Mexican migration to the United States, as well as its subsequent effects upon individual and collective racial identities.

This essay aims to better understand the manner in which certain aspects of immigrant life in Chicago transformed prevalent conceptions of race, “whiteness”, “blackness”, and community that were held by Mexicans migrating to Chicago from the town of Arandas. In this study, I focus primarily on the period ranging roughly from 1919 to 1929—the first decade of heavy Mexican migration from Arandas, Jalisco to

4 “Español” or “Europeo” in the Spanish language.

the Chicago area. In terms of historical space, a comparative transnational approach is crucial to this study in order to fully comprehend the relationship between perceptions of race and community held by Mexican immigrants prior to, and after, migration to the United States.

By examining changing racial dynamics *within* a particular group of Mexican migrants and the effects of transformations in racial outlook upon notions of community, my study goes beyond the customary practice of analyzing racial tensions between Mexican immigrants and other ethnic groups. Thus far, historians have primarily focused on examining the complicated relationships that existed between Mexican migrants and white Anglo-Americans in rural and urban settings. The information gathered from Paul S. Taylor Manuscript Collection at the University of California Berkeley is pivotal to my investigation. Taylor, a prominent economist from Berkeley, conducted extensive field research in both Mexico and the U.S. pertinent to the issue of Mexican labor in the United States and the surge in Mexican migration during the two decades prior to the Great Depression. Though chiefly economic in focus, Taylor's studies of Mexican laborers in cities like Chicago and in towns like Arandas, Jalisco are filled with rich anthropological material useful to any historian of labor and Mexican migration. Taking the shape of extensive interview collections, manuscripts, field notes, maps, charts, etc., Taylor's findings on this subject offer invaluable historical insight into issues of nationality, class, gender, and race.

Through their respective remarks, the two returning migrants interviewed by Taylor in the fall of 1931 demonstrated a conscious intellectual appropriation of North American racial attitudes and ideas that differed greatly from those of their native land. This essay looks to elucidate these differences in racial outlook through a comparison of Mexican and American racial cultures, and to determine the precise effects of Chicago's urban experience upon the racial attitudes of newly-arrived Mexican immigrants from the town of Arandas, Jalisco. Mexican immigrants in industrial Chicago adopted America's negative perceptions of 'blackness' as a result of (1) their relative inexperience with a black-white racial order prior to migration to the U.S., (2) the lack of any major acknowledgment and employment of conceptions of 'blackness' by the Mexican government, and (3) the pervasive influence of racially motivated labor and housing practices that instigated polarization among ethnic communities. Given that Chicago's unique racial climate during the 1920s presented a situation in which the racial identity of Mexicans became "ambiguous" to American eyes, Arandian migrants ceased regarding race as a biologically-determined concept. Instead, migration to Chicago transformed the concept race, and therefore conceptions of 'whiteness' and 'blackness', into something that could be determined by one's engagement in certain kinds of community activity.

The Home Society: Examining the Racial Lens in Mexico and Arandas, Jalisco

Mexico: A Historically Complex Racial System

Prior to their arrival in Chicago, Mexican emigrants departing from the town of Arandas had little experience with the type of bipolar system of racial categorization that existed in the United States. One explanation for this is the fact that, as a whole, Mexico had historically been home to a significantly small Afro-Mexican⁵ population and was therefore incapable of developing a solidified black-white racial order similar to that emerging in the U.S. as a result of massive slave importations in the late eighteenth century. Some estimates like those put forth by Odile Hoffman of the *Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México* suggest that Mexico received not even five percent of Spanish slave shipments in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.⁶

In the colonial era, Mexico's mostly-arid landscape failed to produce large amounts of profitable plantation crops, such as sugar cane and rice, whose cultivation required the labor and toil of enslaved Africans. During decades marking the height of slave importation by the Spanish Crown, therefore, the number of imported Africans in Mexico paled in comparison to the black populations of other Spanish colonies like Cuba, Hispaniola, Puerto Rico, and Colombia. As decades passed, physically-distinct communities of Afro-Mexicans gradually disappeared because of their intermingling with Spaniards, Mestizos⁷, and Native Americans—the latter representing the more common of the three combinations by a substantial margin.⁸ Some historians thus estimate that, by the end of the nineteenth century, Afro-Mexican individuals who remained relatively untouched by marital or sexual associations with other racial groups comprised less than one half of one percent of Mexico's total population.⁹

Given the prevalence of interracial mixture among Mexico's historically small Afro-Mexican population, the Spanish term *Negro* (meaning, literally, "the color black") was not an adequate label, nor did it become a customarily utilized

5 Here, the term "Afro-Mexican" (a product of modern academic discourse) is used to reference the descendants of African slaves brought to Mexico by the Spanish Empire. The label serves as an umbrella term under which fall older racial categorizations pertinent to African slave descendants in New Spain and Mexico that will be further explored in this essay. These labels include the terms "Mulatto" (Spanish-Negro mixture), "Zambo" (Indian-Negro mixture), "Morisco" (Spanish-mulatto mixture), and "Lobo" (Spanish-Indian-Negro mixture) among others.

6 Odile Hoffman, "Negros y Afromestizos en México: Viejas y nuevas lecturas de un mundo olvidado", *Revista Mexicana de Sociología* 68, no.1 (Jan.- March 2006) p. 103.

7 The term "Mestizo" denotes people of mixed Spanish and Native American ancestry.

8 Odile Hoffman "Negros y Afromestizos en Mexico", p. 110.

9 Ibid., p. 107-10.

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designation, by which to identify the Mexican descendants of African slaves. Instead, Spaniards and Mexicans of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries contrived various labels of racial categorization that contested notions of universal “blackness” by placing emphasis on biological and physiognomic differences among individuals of African ancestry. Through their usage and distribution, these racial classifications ultimately served as descriptors of the historical biological mixtures that occurred between the progeny of African slaves and members of Mexico’s three dominant racial groups: the Spaniards, Indians¹⁰, and Mestizos. Early Mexican society thus saw the emergence of numerous black identities and a corresponding array of racial labels by which to arrange them.

Church records accumulated by Spanish officials in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries attest to the appearance of a diverse series of terms within the Spanish racial nomenclature to describe individuals of mixed-race heritage. The word “Mulatto”, for instance, referenced baptized infants who were of Spanish and black ancestry, while the designation “Lobo” distinguished those who were of combined Spanish, Indian, and African descent. The term “Zambo” marked an African and Indian mixture while the label “Morisco” denoted the presence of both Spanish and Mulatto blood within a child.^{11 12}

Because Mexico’s black population had been historically minute and racial intermixture was prevalent, the Mexican racial system emerged as one that was far more complicated and nuanced than the American black-white racial binary of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In highlighting the differences that appeared within Afro-Mexican populations as a result of their mixture with Mexico’s three dominant racial groups, the aforementioned Mexican terms of racial categorization inadvertently linked Afro-Mexicans to the country’s historic, trichotomous *mélange* between Spaniards, Native Americans, and Mestizos. Since this combination represented the monumental mixture of people grounding Mexico’s national identity, the argument can be made that, unlike their American counterparts, Mexico’s racial labels indirectly incorporated Afro-Mexicans into the historical identity-narrative of their home society.

Mexico: The “Negro” Race in Government Records

In the “Critique of the Official Statistics of Mexican Migration to and from the United States”, Paul S. Taylor noted

that, during the first three decades of the twentieth century, Mexican individuals who claimed any sort of African descent were *not* classified as “Negro” in the Mexican government’s census and migration records.¹³ Instead, wrote Taylor, Afro-Mexicans were grouped together with Indians and Mestizos as a result of their mixture with indigenous populations. “The Mexican race”, Taylor claimed, “has thus come to be defined in government statistics as being solely comprised of the mixture of European and Indian blood”.¹⁴ Both the minimal presence of African slaves in Mexico and the ubiquity of mixture between Afro-Mexicans and other racial groups served as the foundation of another historical phenomenon accounting for the relative inexperience of the people of Arandas with an established biracial system of classification: By the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the Mexican government did not recognize “the black race” as one which remained wholly separate from and untouched by white Spaniards, Native Americans, and mixed-race Mestizos. Although the category of “Negro” did appear in national census and migration records, the label was notably inaccurate in its portrayal of Mexico’s black citizenry because a majority of Afro-Mexicans were not classified as “Negro”. Mexican officials tended to classify most Afro-Mexicans as either “Indian” or “Mestizo” due to the prevalence of mixed-race physical features and characteristics within Afro-Mexican communities.¹⁵

As demonstrated in Arandas’ baptismal records and the Mexican government’s statistics, Mexicans regarded race as the outcome of complex biological combinations that produced a diverse array of individuals. Given the lack of an established Mexican practice of classifying most Afro-Mexicans as strictly “Negro”, Arandians migrating to Chicago in the early twentieth century did not possess the same kind, or degree, of black-white race consciousness that was prevalent throughout the United States. Though more binary racial relationships did exist among individuals of Spanish, Indigenous, and African descent in the more ethnically diverse sectors of Mexico City and the Mexican southern states¹⁶, the collective racial thought in predominantly Spanish-white Mexican towns like that of Arandas, Jalisco greatly differed from the American binary racial system that pitted black against white. Furthermore, the fact that the Mexican government largely refrained from utilizing ‘blackness’ and the term “Negro” as a tool of classification suggests that there was little room in Mexico for prejudice

10 The terms “Native American” and “Indian” will be used interchangeably.

11 Paul S. Taylor, *A Spanish-Mexican Peasant Community: Arandas in Jalisco, Mexico* (Berkeley California: The University of California Press, 1933), p. 15.

12 For a fuller history of these racial categories and their origins consult María Elena Martínez, *Genealogical Fictions: Limpieza de Sangre, Religion, and Gender in Colonial Mexico* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2008).

13 Paul S. Taylor. “Critique of the Official Statistics of Mexican Migration to and from the United States,” in *International Migrations, Volume II: Interpretations*, ed. Walter F. Willcox, (New York: National Bureau of Economic Research, 1931), p. 581-590.

14 Ibid., p 587.

15 Odile Hoffman “Negros y Afromestizos en Mexico”, p. 110.

16 For a fuller history of the more binary racial divisions that emerged in some parts of Mexico consult Neil Foley, *Quest for Equality: The Failed Promise of Black-Brown Solidarity* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2010).

against Afro-Mexican individuals to become institutionalized and socio-politically embedded, as was the case with segregation and discrimination against African-Americans in the United States.

Race in Arandas, Jalisco: A Predominantly Spanish-White Township

Throughout centuries of imperial rule, and even decades after the attainment of independence, black Mexicans failed to penetrate the country's inlands and populate Mexico's northern and central plateau¹⁷. The latter region, which includes the town of Arandas, comprised an area of predominantly white European settlement. By and large, African slaves in Mexico confined their inhabitance to small sections of the eastern seaboard regions in what later became the coastal states of Veracruz, Tabasco, Campeche, and Yucatán, as well as small port settlements in the states of Guerrero and Oaxaca in the Mexican southwest. Although independence from Spain in 1821 brought about the emancipation of slaves and the rise of prominent Afro-Mexican leaders like President Vicente Guerrero in 1829, Mexico's minute Afro-Mexican population confined itself to life in coastal territories. Some settlements like those in Costa Chica, Oaxaca and Cuajinicuilapa, Guerrero, for example, housed Afro-Mexican populations that managed to retain some African customs well into the nineteenth century.¹⁸

As consequence of this history, Arandas' 7,000¹⁹ inhabitants circa 1921 generally regarded themselves as "being of Spanish stock". The great majority of them possessed a light skin color that was often accompanied by blue eyes and physical characteristics (such as height and build for the men, and fair skin for the women) that were telling of a predominantly Spanish ancestry.²⁰ In his unpublished manuscript "The Mexican Peasantry of Los Altos", Paul S. Taylor noted that the women of Arandas demonstrated "delicate and strong Spanish and mixed Mexican types of beauty". Taylor even voiced agreement with the local custom of referencing the women of Jalisco as *reinas moliendo*, or "queens grinding corn".²¹

Though documentary evidence of their origin in Spain remains lacking, inquiries by Taylor of persons who knew this particular region of Mexico and who claimed to have known Spanish types indicated that the ancestors of the people of Arandas had come from Northern Spain. These statements



The People of Arandas, Jalisco. Men and women of Spanish ancestry in the town of Arandas, Jalisco as pictured by Taylor (circa 1921). Taken from Paul S. Taylor, *A Spanish-Mexican Peasant Community: Arandas in Jalisco, Mexico*, p.48.

hold considerable veracity, as the region's colonial name of "Nueva Galicia" (meaning "New Galicia" in Spanish) denoted settlement by Spaniards from the northwestern Spanish province of Galicia. So extensive was the Spanish colonization in Nueva Galicia, and so prolific were the colonists, that the racial composition of the region's population was calculated in 1810 by Mexican historians Navarro and Noriega to be 32 percent Spanish, 33 percent Indian, and the remaining balance of mixed castes. These figures represented the highest proportion of Spanish stock reported in any of the heavily populated parts of New Spain.²²

Despite the predominance of Spanish ancestry and Spanish physical features in Arandas, however, a noticeable segment of the population was comprised of individuals who bore traces of Indian, Mestizo, and Mulatto heritage. According to one of Taylor's interviewees, some of these men and women possessed strong Indian attributes while others expressed physical traits, such as light pigmentation and eye color, indicating a mixed background. "Occasionally, but less often", wrote Taylor, "one also sees Negro characteristics among the people".²³

The earliest statistical data on races in the population of Arandas was found in church archives. One table from

17 Area of Mexico that included the largely populated Mexican states of Michoacán, Guanajuato, Zacatecas, the Federal District, the state of Mexico, and Jalisco. See map above.

18 Odile Hoffman, "Negros y Afromestizos en México", p. 124-26.

19 Figure taken from Paul S. Taylor, *A Spanish-Mexican Peasant Community: Arandas in Jalisco, Mexico*, p. 20.

20 Paul S. Taylor, *A Spanish-Mexican Peasant Community: Arandas in Jalisco, Mexico*, p. 14.

21 Paul S. Taylor, "The Mexican Peasantry of Los Altos", p. 3. Taken from Paul Schuster Taylor Papers, BANC MSS 84/38 c, The Bancroft Library; University of California Berkeley, Series 3, Carton 5, Folder 6.

22 Paul S. Taylor, "The Mexican Peasantry of Los Altos", p. 2.

23 Paul S. Taylor, *A Spanish-Mexican Peasant Community: Arandas in Jalisco, Mexico*, p. 14.

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the *Registro de Bautismo de la Capilla de Arandas, Nueva Galicia*²⁴ presented the racial castes of children baptized during the six years immediately following the establishment of the congregation of Arandas—roughly, the period between 1768 and 1774. According to the records, well over two-thirds of children baptized during the six-year span were classed as “Spanish”. Contrastingly, less than one in seven infants was categorized as “Mestizo” while only one in every ten was labeled as “Mulatto”. The respective categories of “Zambo”, “Morisco”, and “Lobo”, all referencing children who possessed some type of African ancestry, were utilized to identify less than one percent of the infants baptized at this time.²⁵

During the last decades of Spanish imperial presence Nueva Galicia, intermixture between the races of Arandas was also documented in records kept by the chapel’s marital registry on legal marriages between persons of different racial backgrounds. Between May of 1802 and May of 1806, one in seven marriages in the town of Arandas were of mixed race.²⁶ The chapel’s statistics demonstrate that the town’s sizeable Spanish community intermingled heavily with minority populations. From forty-nine mixed-race marriages in Arandas recorded between 1802 and 1806, twenty-eight matrimonies joined individuals of Spanish descent with Mestizos, Indians, and Mulattoes.²⁷ Though the great majority of mixed marriages involving Mulattos linked the descendants of African slaves with Native Americans, figures indicate that the absorption of all minority groups in Arandas by the town’s dominant Spanish-white community was proceeding at a rapid rate, even by legalized racial intermarriage alone.²⁸

Although one can and should scrutinize the ability of marital and baptismal data obtained from the *Capilla de Arandas* to adequately represent the township of Arandas, it must be noted that the populations of all racial castes in the town were so thoroughly Catholic in the late eighteenth and early twentieth centuries that the *Capilla*’s records should be regarded as accurately representing the community at large. Aside from the prevalence of Spanish ancestry and Spanish physical features throughout the town, harmony among the races (both historical and contemporary) was a key feature of the township of Arandas circa 1921. More important than the town’s religious uniformity, occupational diversity attested to the peaceful coexistence between the races. Men of every racial background were found in all of the town’s occupations and, therefore, in each of the town’s social strata—though this had not always been the case.

Though eventually Arandians of all racial backgrounds progressed economically, Arandas’ predominantly ranch-based

economy historically favored Spanish-born colonists who served as overseers to a lower class of indentured laborers and slaves comprised of *Criollos*²⁹, Indians, Mestizos, and a small number of Africans and Mulattoes. Once independence was attained and the slaves were emancipated, the dichotomous old order was virtually destroyed by the new Mexican government’s practice of granting land to peasant workers. As a result, the racially diverse lower class that had been forced to toil under the abuse, corruption, and favoritism of Spanish *Peninsulares*³⁰ was given a chance to attain wealth and capital.³¹

Unlike their oppressed African-American counterparts in Chicago and the United States, Afro-Mexicans in turn-of-the-century Arandas effectively owned land and were employed in almost all of the township’s different occupations. Furthermore, the participation of Afro-Mexicans in certain lines of employment appears to have been proportional to the size of their community, as statistics gathered by Taylor show that the number of Afro-Mexican *rancheros* present in Arandas—i.e. black males who owned land and employed workers—accurately represented their share of the general population.³² The same appeared to have been the case for Native Americans, Mestizos, and Spaniards, as each group was represented across the occupational spectrum in accordance to its size.

Although occupational diversity within each race-group served as a stabilizing force among Arandas’ numerous ethnic cohorts, the chief factor preventing the formation of polarizing ethnocentric factions was the town’s interracial cultural alignment. Exerting equally as much influence (if not more) over the citizens of Arandas as their common Catholic faith and their shared Spanish ancestry were the prevalent social values, customs, and leisure activities of people in the township. Shaped by *both* of the aforementioned forces, these elements of collective culture acted as a potent adhesive that exerted its power in all aspects of quotidian life.

In the *Ensayo Estadístico de la Municipalidad de Arandas* (1889), Mexican anthropologist and geographer Ramón Sánchez described the township of Arandas as one whose inhabitants were unified not only by their religion and language, but also by their customs, pastimes, ideologies, education, and character. “The people of Arandas are lovers of morality, intellectual development, and material progress”,

24 “The Registry of Baptism from the Chapel of Arandas, New Galicia”

25 Paul S. Taylor, *A Spanish-Mexican Peasant Community: Arandas in Jalisco, Mexico*, 15.

26 *Ibid.*, 16.

27 *Ibid.*

28 *Ibid.*

29 The term “Criollo” denotes a social class in the Spanish colonial caste system constituted by individuals of pure Spanish ancestry that were born in the Americas.

30 The term “Peninsulares” references Spanish colonists’ origins in the Iberian Peninsula.

31 Paul S. Taylor, *A Spanish-Mexican Peasant Community: Arandas in Jalisco, Mexico*, p. 26.

32 *Ibid.*, p. 28.

wrote Sánchez, “who also regard vice with repugnance”.³³ Sánchez observed that the prevalence of vice in Arandas was miniscule when compared to that of other towns. He attributed this to the fact that townsmen dedicated most of their time to their work, mothers kept a watchful eye on their children, and police authorities zealously persecuted crime, gambling, and drinking.

In terms of family life, Sánchez noted that most men held some capital and were thus able to provide for their wives and children. Regarding recreation, he described the manner in which more than one thousand Arandians congregated in the town square every Sunday to listen to serenades while others (mostly boys and young men) engaged in foot races and friendly games of billiards.³⁴ When describing Arandas’ schools, Sánchez remarked upon the fact that the town had allocated public funds for the establishment of two separate institutions—one for boys and another for girls. The former held courses in reading, writing, arithmetic, algebra, grammar, geometry, geography, cosmography, history, and ethics. The latter offered classes in the same subjects as well as courses in natural history, drawing, calligraphy, English, Italian, music, and embroidery. Both genders attended a parochial school on the weekends to be instructed on religion and morality.³⁵

In the end, the rich customs and traditions of Arandas, as well as the high moral values of its citizens, led Sánchez to conclude that the township was home to “citizens of distinction”. Emigration from Arandas to other parts of Mexico, he thought, served only to notably enrich the country. “It is no idle compliment paid the people of Arandas, nor a mere expression of political or religious sympathy,” wrote Sánchez, “when other Mexicans exclaim of them *The best people in the Republic*”.³⁶ Despite slight differences in racial make-up, the people of Arandas had engendered a united community with a unified collective culture.

The analysis presented in this section exposes two phenomena that are vital in order to understand the changes in racial ideology that occurred within migrant communities as a result of migration from Arandas to Chicago. The first, as explored in the sections on Mexico and the Mexican government, is the emergence of *mestizaje*³⁷—the process by which Mexico’s political and intellectual elites sought to forge one Mexican identity out of the historical Spanish-Indian mixture so as to effectively incorporate all of its diverse ethnic groups into one socio-political identity myth. The second

phenomenon, as seen in the recurring theme of bloodline ancestry in Arandas’ church records, is the collective tendency to perceive race and racial identity as concepts determined by mixtures of blood. Borrowing from their Spanish predecessors of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and the centuries-old notion of *pureza de sangre*³⁸, the Catholic citizens of Arandas were trained to regard race and ethnicity as fixed entities inherent to one’s biology. As Arandians made their way through Chicago’s racially charged neighborhoods and work environments, however, racial ideas crucial to Arandian identity would be tested and shattered.

The Migrants: Origins, Demography, and Destinations

According to the results of a research study conducted by Taylor titled *Mexican Labor in the United States*, approximately 73.7 percent of Mexicans settling in Chicago from 1919 to 1929 held origins in the central plateau region of Mexico.³⁹ This area covered hundreds of thousands of kilometers in land and included the largely populated Mexican states of Michoacán, Guanajuato, Zacatecas, the Federal District, and Jalisco among others. Of the five, Jalisco was home to approximately 20 percent of the Mexican immigrants who settled in Chicago from 1919 to 1929.⁴⁰ Jalisco, the state in which the town of Arandas is located, thus became the largest contributor to Chicago’s Mexican population in the decade prior to the Great Depression.

In the yearly *Diario Oficial de Estadística de Migración*⁴¹ published by the Mexican government, the demography of Mexican emigrants traveling to the United States was sharply delineated. Each year, the Office of the Mexican Secretary of the Interior (*Secretario de Gobernación*) would put forth a collection of lists, tables, and charts that grouped emigrants exiting Mexico according to their state of origin, sex, occupation, literacy, and racial make-up. Other categories of classification included age, marital status, country of destination, and reasons for leaving Mexico that year.

In the 1926 *Diario Oficial*, Mexican border officials counted approximately fifty-eight thousand emigrants of Mexican birth, both male and female, entering the United States.⁴² Out of these fifty-eight thousand Mexican migrants, approximately 9500 (or 16 percent) held origins in the state of Jalisco, the largest single-state contributor of Mexican

33 Ramón Sánchez, *Ensayo Estadístico de la Municipalidad de Arandas*, (Publisher M. Pérez Lete: Guadalajara, 1889), p. 56. Paul Schuster Taylor Papers, BANC MSS 84/38 c, The Bancroft Library; University of California Berkeley, Series 3, Carton 1, Folder 27.

34 Ibid., p. 66.

35 Ibid., p. 68.

36 Ibid.

37 The term “Mestizaje” literally refers to the process of becoming Mestizo, the Spanish-Indigenous mixture.

38 Meaning “purity of blood”.

39 Paul S. Taylor, “Chicago and the Calumet Region” in *Mexican Labor in the United States*, vol. 7 of *University of California Publications in Economics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1932), pp. 48-50.

40 Ibid.

41 Translates to “Official Diary of Migration Statistics”

42 Taken directly from the *Diario Oficial de Estadística de Migración 1926* found in Paul Schuster Taylor Papers, BANC MSS 84/38 c, The Bancroft Library; University of California Berkeley, Series 3, Carton 13, Folder 14 “Migration Study, Statistics 1926”.

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emigrants to the U.S. that year.⁴³ Of those 9500 Jaliscoan emigrants, a little over 7800 (82 percent) were men from which approximately 5900 (or 62 percent) held ages between 21 and 45.⁴⁴ Of the 7800 male emigrants, about 7600 (80 percent) were literate while only 130 (1.6 percent) knew how to speak English.⁴⁵ Furthermore, well over 4,000 of the 9500 Jaliscoan men were married (approx. 54 percent) and 7,016 of them (90 percent) claimed to have left Mexico “in search for work”.⁴⁶

Regarding occupation, 80 percent of Jalisco's male emigrants had prior experience in agriculture. Contrastingly, 15 percent were classified as “domestic servants” and barely 2 percent boasted past employment in industry— e.g. railroads, chemical plants, textiles, oil, etc.⁴⁷ In terms of race, 53 percent of Jalisco's emigrants, male and female, were classified as being “Spanish-white” while 47 percent were deemed “Mestizo”. Virtually no Jaliscoan emigrant was classified by Mexican officials as being “Indigenous”, “Negro”, or “Yellow”.⁴⁸

The surge of Mexican migration to the United States followed the displacement of President Porfirio Diaz in 1910. From 1905 to 1910, the U.S. Immigration Service had reported an estimated 21,732 immigrants from Mexico.⁴⁹ Between 1915 and 1920, however, the number rose to 91,075.⁵⁰ The Mexican Revolution, U.S. entry into World War I, and the enactment of quota laws in the 1920's limiting immigration from Europe stimulated migration from Mexico. As a result, the number of recorded Mexican immigrants reached 238,527 between 1925 and 1930— ten times the number that had come 20 years earlier.⁵¹

Nevertheless, the tightening of border controls and the Great Depression brought heavy return movement to Mexico. The time period between 1930 and 1935 thus saw emigration *from* the U.S. expand while migration from Mexico fell to a low of 19,200.⁵² The level of Mexican immigration to the United States would not increase again until the 1950s.

Mexicans statistics published in the 1926 *Diario Oficial* matched their American counterparts, as U.S. government officials claimed that 58,423 Mexicans had entered the United States that year.⁵³ Within a six-year span (1924-1929), the peak of Mexican migration to the U.S. occurred

in 1927 when well over 77,000 Mexicans entered the United States.⁵⁴ Despite a steady flow of yearly migration showing approximately fifty-five to sixty thousand Mexicans entering the U.S. yearly in 1924, 1925, 1926, and 1928, the lowest point of migrant movement during the six-year period came in 1929 when barely 40,000 Mexican emigrants made their way across the border.⁵⁵ Though the tide of migrants traveling from Mexico to the U.S. fluctuated throughout the decade, the *Diario's* published from 1924 to 1931 presented figures similar to those of 1926: Despite changes in numbers, the overwhelming majority of Mexican migrants to Chicago and the rest of the U.S. remained literate, “white-Spanish” males from Mexico's central plateau region (in particular, the state of Jalisco) who held work experience in agriculture.

Among those who migrated from Arandas to labor in the United States, almost all occupations and classes in the community were represented. Although wealthier merchants, professional men, *rancheros*⁵⁶, and *hacendados*⁵⁷ largely refrained from joining the ranks of the emigrants, it would often be the case that their sons, driven by economic incentive, would become part of large regional migrations to the United States.⁵⁸ The occupational groups most frequently represented among migrants, however, were those of small street vendors, small *rancheros*, craftsmen, and agricultural day laborers with little to no property. Though most Arandian migrants were not married, they coincided with fellow Jaliscoan emigrants depicted in the *Diario* in terms sex, age, literacy, and race. Arandian emigrants were predominantly single, young, “white Spanish” males who knew how to read but did not speak English.⁵⁹

Although a complete list of the places and jobs at which Mexican migrants from Arandas worked during the 1920s is yet to be obtained, Taylor provided an illuminating summary while studying a representative sample of Arandian migrants in *A Spanish-Mexican Peasant Community: Arandas in Jalisco, Mexico*. According to Taylor's findings, Arandas Mexicans had found employment in twenty-four U.S. states scattered throughout the American west coast, the Southwest, the Great Plains, and the Midwest.⁶⁰ Although employment in the railroad industry was the most common experience shared by Arandian emigrants, large numbers of Arandians also performed hard labor in the meat and steel plants of Indiana Harbor and Chicago. As the decade progressed, Chicago and the Calumet region became the most common destination for migrants from Arandas and Jalisco at large.⁶¹

43 Ibid.

44 Ibid.

45 Ibid.

46 Ibid.

47 Ibid.

48 Ibid.

49 Paul Schuster Taylor Papers, BANC MSS 84/38 c, The Bancroft Library; University of California Berkeley, Series 3, Carton 5, Folder 6.

50 Ibid.

51 Ibid.

52 Paul Schuster Taylor Papers, BANC MSS 84/38 c, The Bancroft Library; University of California Berkeley, Series 3, Carton 13, Folder 14 “Migration Study, U.S. Statistics”.

53 Ibid.

54 Ibid.

55 Ibid.

56 “Rancheros”- term denoting ranch owners

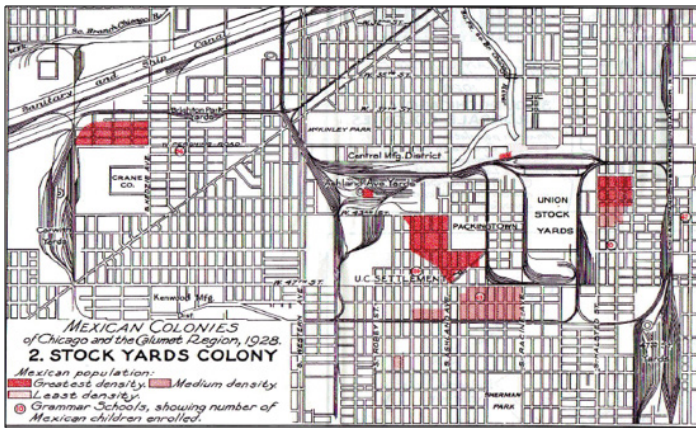
57 “Hacendados”- term denoting large property owners

58 Paul S. Taylor, *A Spanish-Mexican Peasant Community: Arandas in Jalisco, Mexico*, p.35.

59 Ibid., p. 36.

60 Ibid., p. 41

61 Ibid., p. 42.



The Chicago Stockyards. Map of the Chicago Stock Yards; includes Mexican neighborhood in Back of the Yards (shaded area immediately west of the union stock yards). Ashland Ave. (the location of the Blanco and González attacks) runs through from North to South. The map also includes the neighborhoods of Canaryville (east of the stock yards), and Brighton Park (farther west). Taken from Paul S. Taylor, *Mexican Labor in the United States*.

Racial Ambiguity: A Lesson to Mexican Migrants from the Chicago Race Riot of 1919

On Wednesday, July 30th, 1919, two Mexican men, José Blanco and Fidencio González, were attacked in Chicago's Back of the Yards neighborhood⁶²—a predominantly Polish and Lithuanian neighborhood just west of the Chicago stockyards district. The two separate attacks occurred along Ashland Avenue within an hour of one another during the afternoon work hours. This was the fourth day of the Chicago Race Riot, by which time white residents in Back of the Yards had largely succeeded in clearing their neighborhood and workplaces of African-Americans.⁶³

The descriptions of both attacks offered by the *Chicago Daily Tribune* suggest that the assaults occurred as the two Mexican men were returning home from work in the stockyards. The incidents endured by the men, claimed the *Daily Tribune*, mirrored attacks made on blacks over the previous two days. Fidencio González was attacked first, within a block of his home between 42nd and 43rd Streets. The nature of the attack—a large group of men attacking an isolated victim with bricks and other weapons—closely paralleled similar attacks by whites on blacks during the race riot. Within an hour after González's attack, José Blanco was accosted in nearly the same location by a single attacker whom Blanco managed to stab with a knife.⁶⁴ According to *The Negro*

in Chicago⁶⁵, the time was approximately 5:00 or 5:30 when a white man named Joseph Schoff accosted Blanco repeatedly while he walked along Ashland Avenue. "Are you a Negro?" Schoff asked. Receiving no response, Schoff swung at Blanco with his fist, leading Blanco to stab Schoff under the heart and walk on before being arrested by the police.⁶⁶

According to the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, the two Mexicans were attacked by white mobs because they had been confused for blacks. "González's white attackers," stated the paper, "mistook Gonzalez, a Mexican, for a Negro on July 30 and assaulted him."⁶⁷ Similarly, Spanish-speaking newspapers in Chicago attributed the attacks to a chaotic, city-wide state of "racial confusion". As a result, they urged Mexicans to be wary of their behavior and surroundings.⁶⁸

The arrival of Mexican immigrants in Chicago coincided with a period of pronounced racial tension between the city's black and white populations marking the consolidation of a binary racial order. The most visible and dramatic indicator of this tension was the Chicago Race Riot of 1919. The fact that two of the roughly 365 victims of white violence were Mexican is often forgotten and overlooked by most accounts of the race riot. Though this figure may initially appear relatively insignificant, the two Mexicans attacked (González and Blanco) represented the only non-African-American victims of white racial violence during the riot.⁶⁹

The attacks González and Blanco during the Chicago Race Riot dramatically exposed the dangers faced by Mexican migrants at the moment of their arrival in Chicago. The possibility of being mistaken for African-Americans made Mexicans of all ethnicities (even "Spanish-white" Arandians arriving years later) vulnerable to racial violence affecting the city's black population. Given Mexican migrants' racial ambiguity in the eyes of white Chicagoans, imprecise distinctions were made between Mexicans and blacks regarding their position in Chicago's racial hierarchy. Stories like those of González and Blanco, in fact, reveal that Mexicans' racial status in Chicago's black-white order was anything but certain. Media portrayal of the Blanco-González attacks as incidents induced by Mexican migrants' racial ambiguity instilled a valuable racial lesson in migrants' collective consciousness: In Chicago, race and "blackness" mattered.

65 Chicago Commission on Race Relations, *Negro in Chicago*, p. 662 as cited in Michael McCoyer, "Darkness of a Different Color: Mexicans and Racial Formation in Greater Chicago, 1916 to 1960", p. 99.

66 Michael McCoyer, "Darkness of a Different Color: Mexicans and Racial Formation in Greater Chicago, 1916 to 1960", p. 98-99.

67 Ibid.

68 Ibid.

69 Ibid., p. 102.

62 See map for location.

63 Michael McCoyer, "Darkness of a Different Color: Mexicans and Racial Formation in Greater Chicago, 1916 to 1960" (Northwestern University: Chicago, 2007), p. 96.

64 Ibid., p. 97.

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Anti-Mexican Sentiment and Racial Disunity: Lessons from Chicago Neighborhoods

In an interview with Taylor in 1927, an American living in the Back of the Yards neighborhood discussed friction that had fueled physical clashes between Mexican laborers and other segments of the population. "Each group has snubbed the newest comer", he began, "first the Poles, then the Italians, and now the Negroes and the Mexicans".⁷⁰ According to the man, the Poles were frustrated with the Mexicans because they were taking their jobs in the stockyards. He went on to claim that, as a result, the Poles had been "knocking down" isolated Mexicans and "leaving them unconscious on the street." Taylor's informant then went on to recount a story:

One night, a wild shot from a Mexican killed a Pole. This angered the Poles and they decided to clean the neighborhood of Mexicans because the Mexicans had been attacking Polish kinsmen and taking Polish jobs. The Poles called in the '42s', a gang from 12th Street and Ashland. Police had to step in to prevent a riot.⁷¹

Similarly, when speaking to Taylor of tensions with the Poles, a Mexican woman who had migrated to the same neighborhood from Arandas also complained that she had a great deal of trouble with Polish gang violence. A group of Polish boys had been beating up her teenage son for frequenting a Polish woman.⁷²

Unlike the town of Arandas, the city of Chicago in the 1920s could not boast widespread interethnic harmony. Physical encounters like those in the testimonies of Taylor's interviewees involved violence between Mexican men and their Polish, African-American, Irish, and Anglo-American counterparts. Criminal incidents usually included assaults on Mexicans and, less often, shootings or knifings by Mexicans themselves.⁷³ Though robbery was occasionally the motive behind interracial violence, economic competition and interracial sexual relations were the main cause of racial violence.⁷⁴

Deemed as residential "invaders", Arandas' young male migrants and other Mexican immigrants arriving in Chicago during the 1920s experienced active resistance to their entry into certain neighborhoods. As conflicts over jobs and women resulted in escalating individual hostilities, personal prejudices quickly evolved into ethno-racial antipathies that were adopted by male aggressors, landlords, real estate agents, and even police officials. Exemplifying the latter, an Irish policeman told Taylor the following when interviewed in 1928:

The Mexicans depreciate property values and take the jobs and women of others. That's why when the Mexicans come in, the others say they want to get out.⁷⁵

Though individual animosities against Mexicans were rampant, institutional antagonism to Mexican residence in Chicago neighborhoods also emerged from landlords; particularly those who resided in a locality being freshly entered by Mexicans. Other modes of formal resistance came from real estate men who were largely moved by neighborhood hostilities toward Mexicans, and from organizations (i.e. churches, urban leagues, etc.) representing nationalities or ethnic groups already predominant in a specific area.⁷⁶ Violence against Mexicans included direct physical assaults and property damage. Other techniques of discrimination included the refusal to rent or sell to Mexicans either by individual landlords or by entire neighborhoods, and the charging of exceptionally high rents to prospective Mexican tenants.⁷⁷

Though reasons for opposition were diverse in nature, objections to Mexican residence, and even that of "Spanish-white" Arandians, were frequently founded upon charges that Mexicans, *as a race*, were "Niggerish" (i.e. aesthetically "too dark") and thus undesirable.⁷⁸ Frequent accusations brought forth against Mexicans attempting to move into a new neighborhood included their tendency for fighting and failure to assimilate, as well as the depreciation of property values.⁷⁹ The prejudices behind these powerful charges, however, were fueled by tensions over women and the appearance of newly-arrived Mexicans as job competitors in the community.

Violent friction involving Mexican immigrants was noticeably most frequent in neighborhoods inhabited by Poles, as the most vigorous opposition to Mexican residence was encountered from Polish residents in the Back of the Yards neighborhood and Polish laborers in the meatpacking industry.⁸⁰ In living spaces like Back of the Yards, the competition for jobs drove Poles to develop a vehement hostility toward Mexicans despite the two groups' shared Catholic faith. It was often the case, in fact, that Polish residents looking to exclude Mexican migrants from moving into predominantly Polish neighborhoods formed alliances with local churches whose congregations were chiefly Eastern-European in origin.

According to a social worker's testimony⁸¹, for example, the summer of 1926 witnessed numerous violent attacks against Mexicans from Poles as a result of Mexican residential expansion west of the union stock yards (i.e. the zone west of

70 Paul S. Taylor, "Chicago and the Calumet Region" in *Mexican Labor in the United States*, p. 229.

71 Ibid., p. 230.

72 Ibid., p. 229.

73 Paul S. Taylor, "Chicago and the Calumet Region" in *Mexican Labor in the United States*, p. 231.

74 Ibid., p. 225.

75 Ibid., p. 222.

76 Ibid., p. 220-21.

77 Ibid., p. 220.

78 Ibid., p. 228.

79 Ibid., p. 223.

80 Ibid., p. 225.

81 Ibid., p. 223.

Ashland Avenue along 46th Street). As Mexicans continued to settle in Back of the Yards and Polish laborers began to fear unemployment in nearby meat-packing plants as a result of cheap labor, Poles and Lithuanians allied themselves with nearby Catholic churches on 45th and 48th Streets. Together, Polish residents and Eastern-European church congregations posed strong institutional resistance to Mexican penetration west of Ashland Avenue. Ultimately, the Catholic churches coerced Irish-American landlords to decline any rental of property in the area to Mexicans.⁸²

Regarding tensions between Poles and Mexicans over women, a 1925 anecdote shared by “Miss Dennis”, an employee at the University of Chicago settlement in the Back of the Yards neighborhood on 46th Street, illustrates the manner in which Polish men feared any prospect of sexual relations between Polish girls and Mexican males.⁸³ Though liaisons between Mexicans and Poles existed, Polish women rarely became the partners of Mexican men and vice versa.⁸⁴

We decided to have a dance to which some young, upper Mexicans were coming— clerks mostly, rather than laborers. But shortly before the dance, a young Polish male said ‘*No decent Polish girl would dance with a Mexican, whatever his occupation may be... Mexicans are all dirty and dangerous. They [the Mexicans] will steal the [Polish] girls and rape them if they dance.*’⁸⁵

Given the Pole’s remarks in Miss Dennis’ account, a conflation between social stereotype (the Mexican male as a thief) and sexual myth (the Mexican as a dangerous sexual predator) becomes evident. Ultimately, this type of negative racial imagery produced the prejudices that fueled resistance to Mexican residency in certain neighborhoods. Though Miss Dennis resolved the conflict by inviting University of Chicago sorority girls to dance with the Mexican men, this particular situation stood out from others like it. Incidents involving socially inappropriate sexual relations between Mexicans and Poles usually ended in violence and death.⁸⁶

In contrast to their counterparts in the Back of the Yards neighborhood, Arandians and other Mexicans living in the Hull House area⁸⁷ experienced less animosity. Located in a relatively depopulated area, the Hull House neighborhood’s great demand for tenants mitigated residential competition.⁸⁸ Furthermore, when Mexicans entered the area, Italians represented the largest single nationality group among Hull House inhabitants. Since the languages and cultures held by Italians and Mexicans were significantly close to one another, the possibility for interracial tension diminished greatly.

Despite cultural and linguistic ties, nonetheless, Italian hostility to Mexican settlement in the Hull House neighborhood persisted. An Italian woman interviewed by Taylor on De Koven Street near Halstead Avenue, for instance, claimed the following:

We don’t like to have Mexicans moving in. Some people are afraid of them. It is better for each nationality to live by itself.⁸⁹

An Arandian woman in the same neighborhood described the difficulties she faced as a result of Italian resistance:

We came to this side of town on account of the Italians. They were very bad to us and some of the other Mexican families had trouble with them. They were always trying to do something to us. They called us dogs and threw things [at us] when we were not looking. They would crowd us off the sidewalks and make insulting remarks about us when we were not looking.⁹⁰

However bitter the conflict among Mexicans and Italians in the Hull House neighborhood, Italian resistance in this area to newly-arrived Mexicans was less vigorous than Italian opposition to African-Americans; the latter group being forced to remain south of Roosevelt Road.⁹¹ This phenomenon reflected the existence of a perverted racial ladder in Chicago’s neighborhoods; a hierarchy accounting for the preference of (and resistance against) certain ethnic groups in particular residential areas. Though the racial order was powerful in Chicago’s neighborhoods, Arandians and other Mexican migrants learned that the hierarchy did not confine itself to the living place. Instead, Chicago’s racial hierarchy also manifested itself, and thrived, in the industrial workplace.

82 For a fuller history of the role of Chicago’s Catholic churches in exacerbating and/or preventing segregation consult John T. McGreevy, *Parish Boundaries: The Catholic Encounter with Race in the Twentieth-Century Urban North* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1996).

83 Paul Schuster Taylor Papers, BANC MSS 84/38 c, The Bancroft Library; University of California Berkeley, Series 3, Carton 11, Folder 32, “Chicago and Calumet Area Field Notes—Typescript 1928”.

84 Paul S. Taylor, “Chicago and the Calumet Region” in *Mexican Labor in the United States*, p. 230-31.

85 Paul Schuster Taylor Papers, BANC MSS 84/38 c, The Bancroft Library; University of California Berkeley, Series 3, Carton 11, Folder 32, “Chicago and Calumet Area Field Notes—Typescript 1928”.

86 Paul S. Taylor, “Chicago and the Calumet Region” in *Mexican Labor in the United States*, p. 230

87 See map on page 41.

88 Paul S. Taylor, “Chicago and the Calumet Region” in *Mexican Labor in the United States*, p. 221.

89 Ibid.

90 Ibid.

91 Ibid., p. 222.

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Mexican Ambiguity in the Racial Hierarchy: A Lesson from the Chicago Workplace

When describing a typical start to his workday at a Chicago steel plant, Enrique Rincón, a Mexican migrant from Arandas, Jalisco, detailed the manner in which employers instructed workers to stand in line while supervisors hand-picked laborers to work for the day:

I line up with the rest of the Mexicans... the Negroes with the Negroes, the Poles with the Poles [etc.]... Sometimes we [the Mexicans] are chosen to work and we are usually paired with the Negroes. Even if we work with the Negroes, we still don't like them and they don't like us...⁹²

Similarly, Juan Pérez, an Arandian migrant employed by a local meat-packing plant, described the way in which employers divided different types of work amongst laborers:

The Poles, Czechs, and Lithuanians are picked first for the easier jobs while the Mexicans, the Negroes, and some Italians usually get the difficult work... In the plant, the Poles work with the Poles and the Czechs work with the Czechs even if they have the same job... The Mexicans always work in stations with other Mexicans...⁹³

Through their testimonies, Rincón and Pérez offered a glimpse to some of the complex racial dynamics at play in the Chicago workplace. In his description of laborers lining up according to ethnicity and nationality, for example, Rincón spoke to the existence of deep racial divisions among migrant groups. Likewise, in recounting the way in which laborers opted to work alongside those of similar background while knowing that workers of other ethnicities performed similar tasks, Pérez attested to the predominance of racial and ethno-national allegiances over a universal labor-related identity.

Regarding Chicago's racial hierarchy, Pérez's distinction between "easier jobs" and "difficult work" delineated the manner in which the city's racial ladder functioned. Whereas white-Americans and white migrants claimed the top spots in the employment ladder, those of darker skin had no choice but to perform physically strenuous labor in exchange for significantly lower wages. Though this perverse division of labor could have potentially engendered a sense of solidarity between Mexican laborers and their African-American counterparts, Rincón's observation of animosity between Mexicans and blacks proved that images of worker cohesion did not accurately represent reality. Unlike the union-led and Depression-motivated

multi-racial collaboration of the 1930s and 40s, the Chicago workplace in the 1920s was a racial free for all.

Despite their relatively low position in the employment hierarchy and their frequent pairing with African-Americans, Chicago's lighter-skinned Mexican migrants were sometimes allowed access to jobs that were above the occupational norm. This was especially the case after the passage of the Johnson-Reed Act of 1924, which limited the annual number of Eastern and Southern European migrants who were allowed to enter the United States. As a consequence of the immigration law, several white Arandians circa 1927-28 boasted employment in upper-level industrial jobs. Those migrants who learned English even obtained traditionally-white managerial positions.⁹⁴

Rather than provide clarity to the racial dilemma faced by Mexican migrants, however, the dynamics of the Chicago workplace only affirmed Mexicans' racial ambiguity. Whether they worked in management or alongside African-Americans as strikebreakers, Mexican migrants of all skin tones (including "Spanish-white" Arandians) continued to hold a precarious position in the city's racial ladder. As Mexicans made their way through Chicago's various industries, they learned the ways of their American employers by picking up on their racial prejudices. Arandian migrants and other Mexican immigrants ultimately adopted negative perceptions of blackness so as to advance through the city's racial hierarchy and procure their standing as superior laborers.

Adopting Negative Perceptions of "Blackness" in the Workplace

In his study of Chicago and the Calumet region, Taylor recorded an interview from 1925 with the superintendent of a bedding factory that employed a high proportion of Mexican women on its sewing machines. This particular employer found the Mexicans to be "rapid workers" and claimed the following:

The Mexicans are as good as any nationality except possibly the Germans. I like them better than the Italians. On the same machine we are now getting 35 percent more output than we did in 1910... The Mexicans don't have to be driven as much as the others. For this reason I prefer the Mexicans to the Italians, Croatians, Serbs, etc.⁹⁵

Similarly, the manager of a confectionery factory cited characteristics he deemed intrinsic to Mexicans (as opposed to other ethnic groups) when maintaining that:

The Mexican men are either very good or very poor; they stay well or not at all. They are not so clannish as the Italians. Unlike them, they don't form gangs and fight among themselves. They work in heat, which

92 Paul Schuster Taylor Papers, BANC MSS 84/38 c, The Bancroft Library; University of California Berkeley, Series 3, Carton 11, Folder 32, "Chicago and Calumet Area Field Notes-Typewritten 1928".

93 Ibid.

94 Paul S. Taylor, "Chicago and the Calumet Region" in *Mexican Labor in the United States*, p. 99.

95 Ibid., p. 81.

they stand well.⁹⁶

As illustrated by these statements, race-consciousness and racial motivation figure prominently in the employment practices of Chicago industrialists. The latter regarded the abilities of their workers as something that was inseparable from, and determined by, the racial make-up of laborers. The claims put forth by these two employers speak for the larger, widespread tendency of industrialists in Chicago to associate a worker's ethnicity or nationality with their level of output. The remarks also attest to the inclination of labor managers to make generalizations about the character of their laborers along racial lines, and the predisposition of supervisors to use these abstractions as a way of measuring the productivity of the rest of their employees.

Regarding the comparisons made between Mexican and African-American labor by Chicago industrialists, it is crucial to pay attention to the observations made by employers in the meat-packing and steel industries. This is because Chicago's steel and meatpacking plants witnessed significant increases in both Mexican and African-American presence in the period ranging from 1915 to 1930. A steel plant studied by Taylor, for example, saw its Mexican labor population increase from less than 1,000 employees in 1916 to well over 6,600 by 1928.⁹⁷ Whereas Mexicans comprised approximately 4.5 percent of the plant's total workforce in 1916, they grew to represent 29.9 percent twelve years later. In 1929, Taylor noted that the make-up of a meat-packing plant's labor population changed from being virtually 0 percent Mexican in 1916 to 23.3 percent Mexican in 1928.⁹⁸ That same year, Taylor estimated that 29.5 percent of laborers in the meat-packing industry at large were African-American while 9 percent were Mexican. Furthermore, he approximated that 12.3 percent of workers in the steel industry were black while their Mexican counterparts comprised 9.4 percent of the industry's labor force.⁹⁹

In his interviews with the employment managers of two meat-packing plants in Chicago, Taylor recorded the industrialists' impressions of the labor of Mexican immigrants in contrast to that of their black counterparts. One of them expressed the following sentiment:

The Mexicans seem to have less absenteeism than the Negroes and to have a little more ambition than the low grade colored. The colored are satisfied with two or three days' work per week, but the Mexican wants more... The Mexicans don't go South as readily as the Negroes. We also don't have much trouble with the Mexicans as we do with Negroes because of lack of sobriety.¹⁰⁰

Similarly, the employment manager of one of Chicago's largest steel works generalized along racial lines and claimed:

The foremen like the Mexicans because of their unsatisfactory experience with the Negroes. They say 'Give us some more Mexicans'. The Mexicans are better than the Negroes; the Negroes are no good. We replace the Negroes gradually by Mexicans because the Mexicans are grateful and honest.¹⁰¹

The supervisors' statements reveal that Chicago industrialists were race-conscious insofar as they regarded the abilities, attitudes, and work habits of their laborers as qualities determined by racial make-up. The remarks also demonstrate the tendency of employers to rely on racial observations to make racially motivated judgments; the former acting as a lens through which industrial employers determined which group of people deserved to work in their plants.

In his documentation of interviews with Mexican laborers, Taylor noted that Arandians quickly became sensitive to the importance of the color line in American employment practice. Given the divisive and racially motivated labor practices of Chicago employers, Arandas' migrants adopted negative attitudes toward African-Americans and the concept of 'blackness' as a means by which to advance in the city's racial hierarchy. "In some cases", wrote Taylor, "the Arandas Mexicans recognize that the strong antipathy toward Negroes by Americans actually increased their employment opportunities".¹⁰²

Given the racially ambiguous situation of Arandas migrants and other Mexicans in Chicago and the presence of the city's racial hierarchy in the minds of both employers and workers, Arandians went to great lengths to elude the race handicap they could potentially be subjected to if grouped together with African-Americans. Such measures included distancing themselves from blacks in the workplace and developing new ideologies regarding their place in the racial ladder. "Characteristically," noted Taylor, "the Mexicans felt themselves as natives of the American continent and thus entitled to preferential treatment over Negroes and Europeans rather than adverse discrimination". One Mexican worker exemplified this notion by claiming:

We get the worst jobs and no chance to go ahead; the others get it. We that are next door neighbors and from the American continent are slighted in favor of Negroes and Europeans.

Ultimately, a large portion of Mexicans in Chicago came to adopt racial antipathies toward African-Americans. One Mexican in a steel plant who had migrated from Arandas,

96 Ibid., p. 82.

97 Ibid., pp. 37-38.

98 Ibid.

99 Ibid., pp. 40, 42.

100 Ibid., p. 88.

101 Ibid., p. 89.

102 Ibid., p. 109.

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Jalisco expressed the following sentiment:

When I come to Chicago from Mexico in 1920... there were a lot of Negroes and I did not like it. Since then I have never liked them and I try never to get work near the Negroes. They are *gente mala y grosera*.^{103 104}

Similarly, another migrant worker from the township of Arandas working in the meat-packing industry conveyed discontent toward his African-American counterparts:

I don't like the Negroes one bit... The boss says they're lazy when it comes to their work and so it must be so... I try my best to get away from them because I don't want to be mistaken for a Negro... The work of a Mexican is clearly superior¹⁰⁵

Although the workplace provided a breeding ground for racial animosity between Mexicans and blacks to flourish, a great deal of Mexican prejudice toward African-Americans arose from Chicago's neighborhoods. As competition for employment and residential tensions ingrained and emphasized the powerful consequences of race (particularly "blackness") in the collective consciousness of Arandians, communities of Arandian migrants began to prioritize separation and disassociation from African-Americans in all aspects of everyday life. Ultimately, everyday community activity became a means through which Arandians minimized interaction with blacks and established racial isolation.

Appeals to "Whiteness" in Chicago Neighborhoods

As Arandians moved into neighborhoods in South Chicago¹⁰⁶ throughout the mid-1920s, workplace hostilities toward African-American laborers translated into enmity towards black neighbors. "The Negroes are very dirty and always disorderly", said one Arandian migrant who worked for the steel industry and lived on 89th street, "the house across the street was a pretty good house until the Negroes moved in."¹⁰⁷ Given that Mexicans and African-Americans shared living spaces in the more restricted and poorer localities of South Chicago, violence erupted frequently between the two groups as a result of conflict over housing. A Mexican clergyman recalled frequent shootings along 87th and 90th Streets as a result of constant infighting between Mexicans and African-Americans living in the same housing settlement. "A few Mexicans have been shot and a few Negroes have been cut up," claimed the clergyman, "sometimes that can be ascribed to

moonshine [alcohol], but that is rarely the case."¹⁰⁸

Although the attitudes of employers served as a catalyst for Arandians and other Mexicans to distance themselves from African-Americans in Chicago's meat-packing and steel plants, the effects of industrialists' racially-driven judgments were not confined to the workplace or the workday. Instead, the weight of racial attitudes associated with the city's workplace racial hierarchy merged with powerful housing tensions and neighborhood violence to further implant the wedge between Mexicans and their black counterparts. Throughout their everyday lives, Arandians and other Mexican migrants expressed their aversion to association with African-Americans through their engagement in community activity.

In a 1924 interview session with Taylor, for instance, José Rodríguez, an Arandian migrant, asked a fellow Mexican from Jalisco named Andrés Frejias why he had married an African-American woman. Frejias responded: "I asked a Mexican girl and she wouldn't, and I don't know any whites, so I married a Negress."¹⁰⁹ To this, Rodríguez replied: "We the Mexicans don't like to see our people getting involved with Negroes. They are inferior, they perform inferior work and don't live like us... we don't want to degrade our race."¹¹⁰

The exchange between Rodríguez and Frejias exemplified the type of racial ideology that Arandians and other Mexican migrants in Chicago developed after settlement and employment. In their mind, Mexicans came to represent a race of their own and looked to prolong racial fitness by marrying, and only having sexual relations with, other Mexicans. If this could not be achieved, then "white" Anglo-Americans (*not* white migrants; i.e. Poles, Lithuanians, etc.) embodied a suitable, though not highly desirable, alternative. Any form of romantic or sexual involvement outside those boundaries was deemed inappropriate by the majority of Mexican migrant communities. Individuals like Frejias were ostracized for their choice of spouse.

The desire of Arandians and other Mexicans to establish a firm separation between themselves and their black counterparts extended well beyond the realms of sex and marriage. Arandian migrant Manuel Doran, for example, claimed that he was not fond of living in Chicago because "here they try to make me sit with Negroes in the street cars when I go to work."¹¹¹ Another Arandian, Miguel Sánchez, fervently complained about having to eat in the same restaurants as Negroes on account of their smell. "I only eat with Mexicans now," stated Sánchez, "because the smell of the Negroes made

103 Translated by Taylor as "Bad and coarse people".

104 Paul S. Taylor, "Chicago and the Calumet Region" in *Mexican Labor in the United States*, p. 115.

105 Ibid.

106 Area labeled as number "3" in the map on page 34.

107 Paul S. Taylor, "Chicago and the Calumet Region" in *Mexican Labor in the United States*, p. 224.

108 Ibid., p.230.

109 Paul Schuster Taylor Papers, BANC MSS 84/38 c, The Bancroft Library; University of California Berkeley, Series 3, Carton 11, Folder 32, "Chicago and Calumet Area Field Notes-Typscript 1928", p. 35.

110 Ibid.

111 Ibid., p. 36.

me lose my appetite.”¹¹² Like Doran and Sánchez, Arandians and other Mexican migrants longed to use communal spaces (e.g. streetcars and restaurants) and corresponding community activities (like traveling to work or eating lunch) to distance themselves from African-Americans. Community activity, therefore, became an important agent in influencing racial status.

As racial animosities held by Arandians and other Mexicans toward African-Americans heightened, Mexican migrants began to make appeals to “whiteness” in order to affirm their racial superiority to blacks. When forced to sit with African-Americans in a movie theater, for example, Arandian migrant Agustin Angel exclaimed, “but I am white in my ways!”¹¹³ Similarly, fellow Arandian Felipe Ibañez identified his enrollment and participation in a Hull-House English class as an attempt to rapidly assimilate into the white world. “Being white here is good and that is what I want,” claimed Ibañez, “the only way one can achieve that is by learning the proper English of whites and speaking it with them [white Anglo-Americans].”¹¹⁴

The appeals to ‘whiteness’ made by Angel and Ibañez reflected the manner in which Arandians began to shed their regional and national allegiances for the sake of a white identity that guaranteed advancement in employment and better social treatment. As Chicago’s racial climate exposed Arandians to their racially ambiguous position in the city’s racial ladder, life in neighborhoods and the Chicago workplace conveyed negative perceptions of blackness to newly-arriving Arandian laborers. The message that Arandians received was clear: In Chicago, race and ‘blackness’ mattered, and being black was a detriment to social mobility. Arandians and their Mexican compatriots thus opted to pursue whiteness through everyday relationships, activity, and speech so as to distance themselves from the difficulties that ensued from association with African-Americans. Nevertheless, though this approach appeared to be strategically advantageous, it eventually ruptured Chicago’s community of Arandas migrants.

The interethnic unity documented in Sánchez’s 1889 anthropological work on the township of Arandas died in Chicago sometime during the 1920s. As Arandians became obsessed with procuring whiteness in order to attain the benefits that came with an advantageous racial status, they sowed the seeds of division among themselves by doing that which they had failed to do in Mexico: they began to discriminate against their own on the basis of color, ancestry, physiognomy, etc. As had been the case with African-Americans, community activity once again became the medium through which the new “white” Arandians (having abandoned the label of “Spanish-white”

and adopted the term *blanco*) distanced themselves from their fellow townsmen and other Mexicans. Race had thus become something that could be determined by one’s engagement in certain kinds of community activity, and ceased to be a fixed and inherently biological entity.

In the summer of 1928, for example, Arandas’ migrant Miguel Pacheco was asked by Hull House staff help organize an annual Fourth of July celebration in his neighborhood. Pacheco, a light-skinned Mexican bank clerk, said the following relative to inviting some of the darker-skinned Mexican laborers from the factory to the settlement party:

I will not invite these men because they are too primitive... At first the Mexicans came in overalls but now we have suits and dress our women in furs, etc. Most Mexicans who ask me about technical school were they can learn auto mechanics, etc. are dark... They [the darker Mexicans] don’t take the English class here because they don’t have good enough clothes to come to class. I don’t want them at the event... they do not dress well or speak any English...¹¹⁵

When analyzed alongside Frejias’ commentary on interracial marriage, Pacheco’s racial reasoning (as illustrated in his selection criteria for the Hull House event) attests to the changing social dynamics present within Chicago’s Arandian migrant community. Whereas Frejias (circa 1924) spoke of a unified Mexican race seeking to perpetuate ethnic purity, Pacheco’s remarks (uttered only four years after Frejias’ interview) revealed the presence of racial tensions *within* Chicago’s Mexican community. Unlike Frejias, a fellow Arandian migrant whose race consciousness seemed to be fixated upon the undesirability of Mexicans to be associated with African-Americans, Pacheco imagined complex divisions among Mexicans based on skin tone. According to Pacheco’s racial logic, a Mexican migrant’s physical traits (mainly, his skin color) served as an indicator of occupation, language proficiency, and material wealth relative that of other fellow migrants.

Taking cues from Chicago’s binary racial order, the racial hierarchy that emerged *within* Arandian migrant communities like Pacheco’s omitted the diverse racial classifications of the home society and overwhelmingly favored North American “whiteness” over “blackness”. As a result, mutual aid societies frequented by Arandas’ migrants like the *Benito Juarez Society*, the *Sociedad Cuauhtemoc*, and the *Obreros Libres* (Free Workers Society) instituted membership requirements that stymied participation by those of darker skin both explicitly or indirectly.¹¹⁶ One organization known as the *Sociedad Hispanoamericana*, for example, required members to pay monthly fees and possess English proficiency while limiting its membership to Mexicans in managerial and/or administrative

112 Paul Schuster Taylor Papers, BANC MSS 84/38 c, The Bancroft Library; University of California Berkeley, Series 3, Carton 10, Folder 8, “Mexican Labor in the United States, Field Notes, Series-E Set I”, p. 72 (582).

113 Ibid., p. 71 (581).

114 Ibid., p. 50 (560).

115 Ibid.

116 Ibid., p. 44 (554).

ADOPTING THE AMERICAN RACIAL LENS

positions (i.e. light-skinned Mexican employees).¹¹⁷ The *Azteca Society* went farthest, claiming to admit only “white Mexicans” and denying many self-proclaimed Mestizos (including some Arandian men) access to its services.¹¹⁸ Though the majority of Mexican community organizations did not operate in a discriminatory manner, the appearance of black-white racial divisions within community outlets (i.e. popular organizations, social events) reveals that whiteness had become something for which to aspire. Motivated by their longing for social mobility in a black-white society, Arandians looked to distance themselves from the ethnically diverse peers with whom they had once harmoniously coexisted.

Conclusion: Adopting the American Racial Lens

When describing the selection process by which he hired farmhands to aid him on the ranch in a 1930 interview, Lu s Garc a, a land-owning migrant who had recently returned to Arandas from Chicago, noted that he relied upon a laborer’s physical appearance when making judgments about his character. “Sometimes a worker can seem suspicious,” claimed Garc a, “those who look darker and more indigenous than us are not as trustworthy.”¹¹⁹ Similarly, another returning rancher named Ram n Gutierrez admitted to keeping a more watchful eye on “dirty workers” because they seemed more likely to steal from food supplies.¹²⁰

Whether done purposefully or subconsciously, Garc a and Gutierrez employed racial mentalities similar to those of their employers in Chicago’s meat-packing plants. Nevertheless, though both Garc a and Gutierrez made appeals to physical traits (i.e. skin tone) in their formulations of character judgments, Garc a’s employment of the term “us” evinces the emergence of black-white racial division in the town of Arandas. Many more of Taylor’s interviewees made similar distinctions, demonstrating that migrants had indeed adopted the American racial lens and brought it home.

Although not all Arandian migrants were affected by the American racial system in the same manner and degree as Garc a and Gutierrez, it would be incorrect to assume that migration had no direct effect on the many social divisions that arose among returning migrants and fellow townsmen. The influence of migration and changing perceptions of race on growing social tensions was frequently evident, for example, in the attitudes about dress that were adopted by returning Arandian migrants. Upon their return to Arandas, many of those coming from the U.S. wore somewhat better clothes than they would have otherwise. Whether on a ranch or in town, suits purchased north of the border were taken out of trunks and exhibited with pride. One *ranchero* interviewed by Taylor, Emilio Moreno, bragged about his two hats and his

pair of oxfords: “I like good clothes,” he remarked, “but here [in Arandas] nobody wears them... Only those of us who have been to America can truly appreciate their significance.”¹²¹ Juan Mart nez, another *ranchero* of a similar migration background, admitted to have excluded “darker, more primitive” Arandians from a social gathering at his ranch on the grounds that people of that particular race-type could seldom afford the proper attire.¹²²

Much like the significance of material wealth and the importance of status symbols (i.e. clothing), the American binary racial outlook was learned from the migratory experience in Chicago and imported to the home society. Unlike race consciousness prior to migration, the latter mentality was more dramatic and aggressive partially because, as evidence by Mart nez’s testimony, racial antipathies rapidly became conflated with the emergence of class divisions between non-migrants and those returning from the United States. The stationary biological nature of race became a thing of the past, as Garc a, Gutierrez, and other *ranchero* interviewees replaced their Spanish and Mestizo blood ancestry with a new white identity—one which the individual could create for his or her self by means of social activity, material wealth, and community associations. Though race consciousness had existed in the township of Arandas long before migration to the United States took hold of its citizenry, migration to and from racially polarized communities such as the city of Chicago created and exacerbated new interethnic tensions.

Having left a mark on their home and host societies, the story of Arandas’ migrants and their journey to and from the city of Chicago is one of historical agents acting as transnational citizens and dynamic beings. Throughout the entirety of the migratory experience, the racial ideologies and self-proclaimed identities of Arandian migrants underwent continuous change so as to allow individuals to adapt to new historical spaces and advance in various social contexts. Race and identity thus became all-important tools in the quest for social mobility on both sides of the border, whether in the Chicago’s Back of the Yards neighborhood or in Arandas’ *ranchos*. More importantly, race and identity ceased to be the static, rigid, and biologically determined entities of the migrants’ Mexican past, and were instead transformed into more dynamic conceptions that individuals could mold and reshape by means of their engagement in community activity.

For the first time, an Arandian’s racial identity was no longer strictly bound to complex blood relations, marriages, and centuries-old lineage dating back to the age of Spanish conquest. In the midst of Chicago’s turbulent racial climate, Arandian migrants learned that they too could assume the more advantageous *blanco* (white) identity by taking the right jobs, marrying “the right people”, learning English, dressing in certain ways, frequenting specific places of leisure, etc. Migration, therefore, enabled race to become part of the

117 Ibid.

118 Ibid., p. 45 (555).

119 Paul S. Taylor, *A Spanish-Mexican Peasant Community: Arandas in Jalisco, Mexico*, p.55.

120 Ibid., p. 56.

121 Ibid.

122 Ibid., p 57.

individual experience—that is to say, to become subject to the individual and his or her actions.

In terms of methodology, the history put forth in this essay aimed to establish that a narrower and more nuanced analysis of migration offers the most comprehensive answers to key historical questions. The transnational micro-history presented in this examination of Arandian migration to Chicago, I believe, best captures the essence of what happened to this particular Mexican community during its transnational racial transformation, as well as the manner in which this shift in identity occurred and *why* the change came to be. Furthermore, my approach has now opened the possibility to further explore the reason (or reasons) behind the dominance of migrants' adopted "white" identity over the old "Spanish-white" self even after repatriation.

Ultimately, if historians can develop a more rigorous method of examination by which to better interpret the difficulties of the past, then society will be better equipped to comprehend the daunting challenges of present. Given the complexities surrounding the migration of numerous individual communities from Mexico to the city of Chicago, I strongly believe that a more localized historical analysis of each community's individual migration is an extremely useful approach to understanding the appearance of historical racial tensions between specific Mexican-American communities and other ethnic groups, as well as among Mexican-Americans themselves. Contrary to the ideas that have long dominated migration scholarship and immigration politics, homogeneity in any and all aspects of migration is non-existent. As demonstrated in Taylor's interviews with the townspeople of Arandas in 1920s, each particular migrating community and each individual migrant has stitched their own story in their respective time and historical spaces.

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