TEACHER’S INTRODUCTION

In New Jersey we teach American history over the course of two years. I teach US History I which goes up to the end of Reconstruction. Inspired by Josh Brown’s lessons on visual essays at the National Endowment for Humanities program America's Reconstruction: The Untold Story in 2017, I created a similar plan and project for my own students to serve as a culminating activity in the course. Two of my fellow teachers at Hillsborough High School, Rob Longo and Matt Mosko, liked the approach enough to use it in their classrooms as well. The project was for students to create their own visual essays on a subject related to race or ethnicity in America at some point outside their knowledge base; in others words, they had to do research about subjects in US History II. Students chose five or six graphics to focus on and had to tie the essay back to the Reconstruction era. About half of the students wrote about issues affecting African-Americans, while the remainder chose a different group to focus on. All were able to draw connections between the aftermath of the Civil War and Reconstruction eras and their chosen subject matter. There were over 120 essays submitted between the three teachers. The ten examples provided here represent both the high quality of the student work and the diversity of the subject matter.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Eniola Aramide, “Cultural Appropriation of Native Americans” 2-10
Brandon Corcoran, “Black Labor During World War II” 21-30
Ailyn Del Rio, “The Bad Blood Between Puerto Rico and America” 31-38
Kaitlyn Dundorf, “The Little Desegregation Superheroes” 48-56
Alan Ji, “Discrimination and Success: Directly Proportional” 57-64
Jasmine Khosla, “The Injustice Syrian Refugees Faced in America” 65-75
Alicia Liu, “PR Prodigies: The WKKK” 76-84
Caitlin Park, “Diversity in the Hollywood Film Industry” 85-93
In a survey conducted by *Medium*, two-thirds of the respondents claimed to understand the concept of cultural appropriation (Jones). Upon closer examination, their definitions of the term varied greatly. The debate about cultural appropriation has increased as the society mixes in different cultures, including Native American cultures. Some of the debate revolves around the difference between appreciation and appropriation. People’s lack of understanding of what appropriation is merely worsens the conflict between Native Americans and those who offend them. Moreover, the Fourteenth Amendment protects people from the government mistreating them on the basis of race; however, it does not protect individual citizens from cultural insensitivity. By a reasonable definition of appropriation - a racial majority adopting elements from a minority in ways that harm the minority - much of people’s perceived cultural appreciation is actually appropriation. The distinction between appropriation and appreciation lies within the power dynamic for the two cultural groups. An unequal balance of power shifts behavior from appreciation to appropriation.
The cartoon above represents Senator Elizabeth Warren applying to Harvard Law School and recording her race as Native American. The cartoonist is implying that she did so in order to have a greater chance at acceptance into the university. The revelation of her application has caused controversy with questions arising about the validity of her claim with no evidence that she has ever made an attempt to join a tribe before she applied to the school and no documentation of Native American ancestry. Warren claimed that “being Native American has been part of [her] story,” and that her family had always told her about her Native American ancestry (Franke-Ruta). If Warren is lying or incorrect about being Native American, then her actions are a clear example of cultural appropriation, potentially taking the spot of a real Native American applying to the same school. Being a part of a racial group also comes with the struggles it may experience. Thus, lying about being Native American on an academic application is appropriation, not appreciation.

Source: Bok, “Appropriation vs Racial Slur” Dec 1, 2017
Adam Zyglis depicts cultural appropriation in sports, specifically referencing the Washington Redskins. The team name had created significant controversy. Many Native Americans are offended by the team name, although some are not. Nevertheless, the name is an example of cultural appropriation. In the picture, a referee - who represents the U.S. Trademark Office - is pointing to a member on the Redskins team. Above him shows the words “offensive line,” which shows the artist’s viewpoint of the controversy. The term “Redskins” has a negative history, for it is associated with Native Americans being hostile savages. It originated in a time where the common notion was that white people were superior to Native Americans (“Native American Cultural Appropriation Is a War of Meaning”). Native American journalist Debra Krol argued that referring to Native Americans as “redskins” promotes the idea that Native Americans are not truly Americans (Miller). Thus, by the Washington Redskins embracing the slur, they are conveying to the population that the term is acceptable to use - despite the fact that many Native Americans take offense to it and are requesting the U.S. Trademark Office rescind the football
team’s rights to use the name. On the other hand, some argue that football is honoring and thus appreciating Native Americans by adopting a name that pays tribute to the race. However, the team name fails to honor Native Americans in any way. It does not educate the public on the history of Native Americans; in fact, it merely ignores the negative history behind the term. It has always been used as a word to offend or degrade Native Americans. Hence, the team name is cultural appropriation.

Source: Dr. Abernathy, Dr. Sonner, and Dr. Wells, “Everyone SMILES in the same language!” May 10, 2018

This controversial advertisement represents cultural appropriation through clothing. Three women are posing to advertise their dentistry practice, each wearing garments from a specific culture. The woman in the middle - Dr. Sonner - is appropriating Native American culture. After the ad was released and the dentists received complaints about the appropriation, they apologized for the “ignorant and offensive” advertisement (Miller). Although they may have had good intentions in appreciating diversity, they were exploiting the idea for personal benefit and profit. With more cultural representation, people may be more likely to invest in a product -
hence the slogan that promotes everyone being happy no matter their ethnicity. However, Dr. Sonner crossed the line into appropriating Native American culture. She wore the Native American clothing for the benefit of the advertisement; nowhere in the ad does it give information on the significance or history of the clothing. Although the dentists were located near two tribes, they did not bother to ask them to pose or ask if their advertisement was appropriate (Gambino). A common stereotype is ‘Native Americans who do not wear traditional clothing are inauthentic’, and the ad merely promotes the idea. Thus, by harming the world’s perception of Native Americans, Sonner appropriated Native culture.

Source: Tyler Amato, “Untitled Political Cartoon” November 24, 2016

Artist Tyler Amato created a political cartoon that represents cultural appropriation through social media. It showcases two girls: one Native on the left and one white on the right. The white girl is wearing Native American clothing in an attempt to acknowledge and appreciate Native American culture. On the other hand, the Native girl is dressed in a t-shirt that states “No
Dakota Access Pipeline”; her t-shirt may appear simple, but the words on it have much more meaning. The No Dakota Access Pipeline movement is a dispute between Native Americans and the authorities about the construction of an oil pipeline within North Dakota (“Finders Keepers? Adulteration of Native American Cultures in the Name of Profit”). With such a pipeline added, the water from the Missouri river could be contaminated (“Finders Keepers? Adulteration of Native American Cultures in the Name of Profit”). The Native American girl is trying to share this message with the world, but she gets ignored and even made fun of - as represented by the pepper spray being put on her face. Through the red paint, it is evident how the Native American girl is being harmed for fighting for her community; meanwhile the white girl is being glorified solely for dressing in Native clothes. She may be trying to appreciate culture, but by its definition, she is really appropriating it. She is wearing Native American clothing while not acknowledging the struggles that Native Americans are going through at the moment. She is merely focusing on the garments that she is wearing and the praise that she gets from wearing them, thus taking attention away from the race’s struggle. Because she is a part of the majority group, she has a great effect on what the population’s view of Native Americans is. Rather than seeing the native girl on the right fighting for clean water, the population - represented by the cell phone - sees the girl wearing the clothing and posing for social approval. The power dynamic is not even, as it would be for cultural appreciation. The white girl - a part of the majority group - is adopting elements of a minority race, harming the minority race in the process. Therefore, she is appropriating culture rather than appreciating it.
The final image is a political cartoon by John Branch that demonstrates the effects of cultural appropriation. It also shows the direction society will move in if people do not recognize appropriation and how it differs from appreciation. In the cartoon, a boy and a girl are walking to school. One is Native American and the other is presumably any other race. Due to cultural appropriation and the media’s inaccurate portrayal of Native Americans, the boy has his own thoughts of what a Native American is supposed to be and applies those stereotypes to his peer. If society does not acknowledge the existence of cultural appropriation, people will continue to apply false stereotypes to Native Americans around them. Native American culture has been appropriated by the media to such an extent that now, he believes his peers are not Native Americans if they don’t have any relations to Pocahontas, the Cleveland Indians, the Washington Redskins, or any other false portrayals given by the media.

Not everyone agrees that cultural appropriation is an existing problem. Some argue that America is a melting pot, making the mixing of cultures inevitable; thus making non-Native
Americans adopting Native American clothing a positive thing. However, just because one has never experienced cultural appropriation, does not mean it is non-existent. If individuals are ignorant towards the difference of appreciation and appropriation, people will continue to see Native Americans in the manner aforementioned, and the rights of Native Americans cannot be understood, let alone defended (“Finders Keepers? Adulteration of Native American Cultures in the Name of Profit”). Stating that the Fourteenth Amendment merely protects the rights of individuals is an oversimplification. Today, a violation of the Fourteenth Amendment would be the government discriminating against a group of people. It does not have any content that prevents people from offending others. Therefore, society must understand that cultural appropriation offends Native Americans; and that they may be appropriating culture when they are trying to appreciate it. That way, more than two-thirds of the population will have a common understanding of what it is, and Native American culture will be acknowledged in the proper way.
Works Cited


Discrimination in Sports

The Civil War developed in the United States of America as the outcome of a divided nation; the so-called “United States” was separating due to the issue of slavery. Once President Abraham Lincoln was elected as the 16th president, southern states feared their fate, and eleven states seceded from the Union. Fighting between the Union and Confederacy resulted in one of the bloodiest and most impactful wars in American history. Following the Union's victory, a time of restoration and reconstruction was put into place not only for the South but for the nation as a whole. The era of Reconstruction questioned many former regulations, and the leaders of this period aimed to solve these issues with the creation of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth amendments. Slavery was abolished and former male slaves were granted citizenship and the right to vote. All white men and African American men were said to be equal. However, even over 50 years after the Reconstruction Era, African Americans in the world of sports were still treated poorly regardless of their impressive skills. Although African Americans began to be integrated into the world of sports in the 1940s, blacks still experienced severe racism, on and off the field. Throughout time— the 1940s to the 1960s in particular— African American athletes were taunted with slurs and death threats from fans, limited to few national sports teams, and attacked by their own teammates and the opposing teams. Even though legal segregation was beginning to end in this era, racism remained very prevalent in sports with the continued degradation of African Americans.
Prior to 1947, baseball players were separated in leagues based on their race; Jackie Robinson broke this race barrier, and the public was ignited with anger. Within a month of starting his Major League Baseball career, he received death threats. The anonymous letter above was sent to Robinson before playing a game in Cincinnati. Before the authors addressed Robinson directly, they reminded him of the recent maltreatment of blacks. The authors threatened to kill Robinson if he dared to play ball. “The Three Travelers” aimed to prevent him and future African American athletes from playing alongside whites. Countless of other African American players were brutally targeted and received similar letters from fans.

The letter is written in all capital letters, almost as if they are yelling at him. Certain sections of the letter— the most violent areas in particular— are composed in a larger font to emphasize the power of the white men and their extreme grudge towards blacks. Along with that, “if” is bolded to stress the consequences Jackie will face if he just steps onto the field. As a whole, the authors of the letter are direct and demanding in effort to further prove their superiority to African Americans.
Hatred towards minority athletes did not end with the fans. African Americans also experienced mistreatment from their own teammates and the opposing team. Taken in 1947, the first year African American men were permitted in the Major Leagues, this photograph shows an African American player wincing in pain after being hit by a pitch. Although the pitcher of the opposing team is not pictured, it is evident that he must be a white male. Not only were the majority of athletes white in the 1940s, but also it was common for white players to try to hurt black rookies. White athletes who had been playing in the major leagues for years were not welcoming to black athletes, who sometimes proved to be more skilled (Ethnicity and Racism in Sport). Oftentimes, white athletes would intentionally attack their black opponent, or even their own teammate by purposefully spitting on them, sliding into them, or throwing a ball at them, as shown in the picture (J.D). It is evident that the player was in an unbearable amount of pain as he stands hobbling on one leg and grabbing his arm; the man’s agony is distressing especially because this was common among many African Americans in the years following 1947. Within this picture, the photographer was able to capture an accurate action commonly taken by white athletes towards black athletes.
Not only did black men face racism in baseball, but every other sport. Most sports during this time did not even permit blacks from stepping of the same field as white men. In the 1940s teams simply disregarded the athlete’s skill and prohibited them from playing professionally due to the color of their skin. Kenny Washington—a former star football player for the University of California at Los Angeles—was not allowed to play alongside white men in the National Football League. It explains the admirable skills of Washington, which were far superior to his white teammates; however, his teammates were recruited to the national league while Washington was denied. Only the title of the article is clearly legible leaving the remaining part of the article blurry. Although this is due to the poorly taken photograph, it further emphasizes the impact of the title and the powerful words that express the racist rejection. Due to the constant racism in sports—even after the Reconstruction Era—African Americans were limited to few national sports teams because of their skin color.

Within the title of the article, uncommon but jarring words were used to express the content of the piece. When discussing the rejection of something, barred is rarely used. Most
commonly barred is used to express a closed and secured place, like a prison; in this case, barred means to forbid the entrance of Washington into the professional league. The double meaning of this word could have been intended by the author to represent a deeper meaning. The word choice symbolizes Washington basically being locked up in a prison, preventing him from entering the world of sports. Along with that, merit is used within the title to reiterate Kenny’s skill. Merit is a powerful word that represents someone who is highly qualified. Despite his qualifications, he was still banned from the national league. In both cases, the use of diction stresses the mistreatment towards African American athletes even though they constantly prove themselves on the field or court.

Although Jackie Robinson was permitted onto the field with white athletes it remained difficult for other minorities to do so in the world of professional sports. As expressed on the back of the African American's jersey, all minority men within America faced segregation within
sports. The African American baseball player in the drawing is hitting a ball that reads “Democracy in action.” The man continues staring at the ball he hit, as it goes far into the outfield, maybe even for a home run. The message in the ball represents the man’s wish for all of America. Democracy, and equality for all, was theoretically granted during the Reconstruction Era, but failed to become a reality. African Americans during this time deeply wanted a true democracy where black people’s votes counted and there were no limits to their success based on individual merit. Very few blacks were granted access to play professionally, as presented in the picture with the small tag on the leg of the batter. This tag is a minor detail to the drawing and is written in small font to present the limited amount of black players in sports. Through this political cartoon, the artist emphasizing the blacks push towards democracy since they are continuously segregated and unequal to whites.

Source: Anonymous letter, “Retire or Die!”, 1950
Change was crucial in order for African Americans to become equal and accepted on the field. Once again fans directly address and attack African American men due to their playing alongside white men. In this case, Hank Aaron received a death threat if he did not retire from the game of baseball. The writer of the letter gets straight to the point that Aaron will be killed if he does not hang up his cleats for good. The letter is very specific and detailed with exact dates and locations, as if the writer had carefully planned out Aaron’s murder. The author of the letter then reinforces the superiority of Babe Ruth, a white player. A crude drawing is included to further stress the methodical plan to kill Aaron. Within the letter, certain areas of text stand out from the rest in an effort to emphasize key parts to Aaron. The word “die” is fully capitalized, making it prominent compared to the rest. Eventually, the author concluded the death threat with, “see you later.” This is written in small font making it a subtle but deadly reminder to Aaron that he will soon cross paths with the author of the letter.

Figure 1Source: Milwaukee Sentinel, “AFL Negro Stars Bolt Game”, 11 January 1965
Due to the endless discrimination and hatred towards African American athletes, the core of every American sport was lost; the desire to win as a team was forgotten and the main focus was race. Sports within America aimed to create character and culture for the nation through integrity and morality. However, this was quickly lost along with the quality of the game when race was the sole focus. The article from a newspaper clearly shows the impact segregation can have on the game; 22 African American AFL players—some of the best of the league—announced their refusal to play due to racial discrimination. The athletes had recently experienced insults and rejection to enter establishments because of their race. The article does not, however, go into full detail about the racial discrimination, to prevent the public from penalizing the whites for inhumane behavior. Yet again the whites are protected even though it is evident the discrimination had to be severe. As a result of the uncontrollable abuse towards blacks and their refusal to play in the All-Star game, the game was ultimately canceled. Not only were the blacks hurt by this segregation, but the beloved game of football received the impact of this hatred. This article showed the reader the actual effect these racist slurs and actions could have on blacks and the game. One of the many components of any sports game is to show admiration to all rather than disrespect to a race of people.

As proven in the world of sports throughout history, especially in the 1940s through 1960s, discrimination towards African Americans was frequent. On and off the field or court, that majority of African American athletes were forbidden the allowance to play professionally. The few players who were permitted to play in the national leagues experience discrimination from the fans, opposing team and even their own teammates. Considering all of these factors and amount of people who contributed to this racist hatred, sports became centered around race rather than the great game. All sports were created with a purpose and with the goal to
competitively compete with a team while providing enjoyment for the athletes along with the spectators. Unfortunately, the purpose of athletics was destroyed when racism became the pivotal focal point, even after the continuous efforts to dismantle discrimination during the Reconstruction Period.
Works Cited


During the Great Depression, black unemployment was more than twice as much as that of whites. Blacks earned less income and worked more unskilled jobs than their white counterparts. This was in part due to the collapse of the agricultural economy that left blacks without a way to support themselves or their families. Racial violence increased during the 1930s, as job positions were often fought over (Hodges). As the 1930s came to a close, a second World War was beginning. The United States joined the war at the end of 1941 after Japan’s attack on Pearl Harbor. The United States needed to step up its production rates in order to mobilize. Contributions from all walks of life were going to be needed, but not all groups, such as blacks, were reached out to by whites for aid (“Take A Closer Look: America Goes to War”). Women were now welcomed into the workforce. Blacks, however, were not so readily welcomed. Many cartoonists and artists saw the need of new labor and began to spread awareness for more equal job opportunities for blacks. Through their action, the increased attention to this issue would eventually lead into the Civil Rights movement. World War II is therefore a precursor for more equal rights between blacks and whites as the idea of cooperation between white and black labor began.
One figure who advocated for the joint use of white and black labor was Theodor Geisel, more commonly known as, Dr. Seuss. After drawing cartoons during World War I, he found himself unable to continue writing children’s books while the second World War raged. Instead, he decided to create political cartoons. Although he drew over 400 political cartoons during the war, one topic that he decided to tackle was racism (Klein). The U.S. had discriminated against blacks and now that the war had begun and more labor was needed, Geisel was one of many to start a movement for change. One of his first political cartoons attacking racism was titled “What This Country Needs Is a Good Mental Insecticide.” It was published around seven months after the U.S. entered the war, on June 11, 1942. Seen below and at the left, the cartoon depicts Uncle Sam holding a sprayer for pesticides. Behind him is a long line of white people who are each getting sprayed with this solution. Upon doing so, the extra “pesticide” is sprayed out the other
ear along with a bug labeled as “Racial Prejudice Bug.” The white person in the foreground is exclaiming “Gracious! Was That In My Head?” as Uncle Sam performs this procedure. The entire cartoon is a large metaphor. Geisel is trying to say that all whites are filled with prejudices and racism, and that mindset needs to be eliminated. An interesting part of the cartoon is that the bug itself appears to be black. This may just be how he drew the bug as most others would, but it could also be taking the cartoon to a deeper level, by saying how whites are specifically prejudiced towards blacks. This cartoon became a strong lead-up to another cartoon that he would publish just fifteen days later that would address blacks attempting to find jobs.

Source: Dr. Seuss, “The Old Run-Around,” *PM Magazine*, June 26, 1942.

Titled “The Old Run-Around,” it shows a line of blacks entering a maze labeled “Negro Job-Hunters Enter Here.” At the center of the maze is a factory labeled “U.S. War Industries” that the blacks are trying to reach. Upon further investigation, it can be seen that none of the blacks have
been able to make it to the center of the maze, unable to secure a job. Many figures, in fact, are lost. The steady inflow of blacks into the maze shows their eagerness to help out the country, but the maze is symbolic of racism and discrimination. If one looks closely at the center of the maze, there is actually no way to enter the front door of the building, which further shows how difficult it was for blacks to find jobs. This cartoon ties into the first one, as blacks wanted to help during the war, but white prejudice forbade it.

![Cartoon of Uncle Sam tapping a pianist labeled "War Industry" who is playing only the white keys labeled "White Labor." a pipe labeled "Black Labor."](image)

Source: Dr. Seuss, “Listen, maestro… if you want to get real harmony, use the black keys as well as the white!” *PM Magazine*, June 30, 1942.

Four days after “The Old Run-Around,” on June 30, 1942, Geisel published another powerful cartoon in the *PM Magazine*. Like the first cartoon, this one again includes Uncle Sam, who is acting as a symbol of the United States and what needs to be happening to improve the country. Uncle Sam can be seen tapping the pianist, who is labeled “War Industry,” on the shoulder. As it is, the musician is using only the white keys, which are labeled as “White Labor.”
The black keys, on the other hand, are covered in cobwebs and appear as though they have not been touched in ages. They are labeled “Black Labor.” Uncle Sam speaks to the musician about how he is playing and says “‘Listen, maestro… if you want to get real harmony, use the black keys as well as the white!’” The organ that the pianist is playing has steam to show that he is playing, but once again, it could be symbolic of a factory, considering that he is wearing a coat labeled “War Industry.” Overall, the cartoon is using symbolism to make the point that blacks and whites need to work together to get through the war. By using a piano/organ, it makes the cartoon more relatable to a wider group of people, as many know that to play music both types of keys are typically used.

Bill Chase was another cartoonist whose work shows that he advocated for more equal rights. Chase’s cartoon titled “Be Careful, Uncle Sam” was published two years before Geisel’s
cartoons in *Amsterdam News*. It depicts Uncle Sam staring across a body of water to some cannons and smoke that are labeled “War in Europe.” Uncle Sam is standing atop four papers that are labeled “Lack of Equal Educational Facilities,” “Unemployment,” “Lynching,” and “No Social Security Menials.” While doing so, Uncle Sam is also saying “George Washington once said — ‘No entangling alliances.’” This quotation can be interpreted in different ways. One is the literal meaning that the U.S. should not be aligning with other European countries or involving themselves with the war. However, there is also another, more subtle meaning. It is symbolic of the rights between whites and blacks. Here, the artist is warning Uncle Sam, who is trying to separate whites and blacks because of the line “no entangling alliances,” which could refer to relations between these two races. This idea is supported by Uncle Sam standing on papers that present discrimination against blacks, as if he is ignoring them. This is a bold statement made by Chase, as he is saying that the government is not doing anything to help solve this issue.

According to Section One of the Fourteenth Amendment, it states that “[a]ll persons born or naturalized in the United States...are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside.” As long as the blacks were born in the U.S. they should be considered citizens. The amendment also promises that “[n]o State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges... of citizens... nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property...” (The 14th Amendment). Because the blacks are citizens, this statement shows that the state cannot violate the rights of blacks to deprive them of their rights. Without employment these blacks are unable to earn enough money to purchase necessities to survive. Some blacks might not have tried to get a job or wanted one, but those that did were being discriminated against, which could have been in violation of their rights.
Jan Jackson’s cartoon, “We’ll Be Back” takes a more broad but still impactful stand on the topic of discrimination. Published in *Defender* on June 17, 1944, this cartoon was created towards the end of World War II. It shows troops from the United States labeled “Liberation Forces” running away from a black woman in chains and heading to what is labeled as “Enslaved Europe” where there is a white woman who is also in chains. Jackson is suggesting that the U.S. needs to deal with its more serious and prominent racial issues on its own soil before it goes to help other countries that might not even need that much assistance. In the cartoon, a black woman in the U.S. is in chains, denoting slavery and racial discrimination. These people were physically harmed and went through difficult times. A white woman is across the ocean also seemingly oppressed. The title “We’ll Be Back” could be an empty promise or it could be that the troops will return, but they will not do anything to help the oppressed blacks. The fact that the U.S. is fixing other countries’ less pressing issues before its own is the focus of the cartoon, and shows that the U.S. has some work to do. This can once again be related back
to discrimination in blacks finding jobs during the time. Much like Chase’s cartoon, this one is also blaming the government, as the military is a part of the government. Jackson is saying that the government is not doing enough to solve the issue of discrimination in the U.S.

The photograph shows a black man looking at a sign that reads “Help Wanted / White Only.” This image exemplifies the main message of all the cartoons, showing how large of an issue this was during World War II. The man is clearly looking for a job, so he can make a living and possibly want to help with the war effort. However, the sign says that it is only looking for white labor, making someone’s willing labor virtually useless and unusable. However, with the assistance of the above cartoons and other supporters, blacks would begin to gain more civil rights after the war’s conclusion. After the war, the rights of blacks began to be focused on more. President Truman created a committee to investigate racial conditions and, later, an order that
abolished racial discrimination in the military as well. Other groups began to also push for more equal rights and there were notable firsts for blacks. These include Jackie Robinson’s entry into baseball and other civil rights activists, such as Bayard Rustin and George Houser, who challenged segregation on buses. By the time the 1950s and 60s came around, the landmark Brown v. Board of Education case that granted blacks the right to study alongside whites in primary and secondary schools had been determined. Martin Luther King Jr. was at the forefront of the protests, including the Montgomery bus boycott. Eventually, in 1964, the Civil Rights Act would be passed, prohibiting discrimination in the workplace and in many public places as well. It also increased the strength on prohibiting discrimination in schools and voting (“The Civil Rights Act of 1964: A Long Struggle for Freedom”). Clearly, World War II can be seen as a precursor for other movements of supporting black rights and would lead into the Civil Rights movement.
Works Cited


The Bad Blood Between Puerto Rico and America

Puerto Rico has been a territory owned by the United States since 1898, after the United States won the Spanish-American War and took control of the island (Lewis). With the addition of Puerto Rico to the powerful country, it was decided that Puerto Rican citizens would become American citizens by default and share many of the rights that American citizens have on the mainland. The Puerto Rican race is a combination of Taino Indians, Africans, and European Spaniards, a unique blend of ethnicities that is very different from classic American citizens. Especially from 2015 to the present day, Puerto Rico has faced many hardships. Despite the thought that Puerto Rico would be treated as equal as the rest of the United States citizens, unfair outcomes such as high taxes, the inability to vote, and being forgotten as a territory were challenges that citizens of Puerto Rico faced. All of these aspects can be traced to Puerto Rican citizens being alienated from the rest of the United States and being ethnically different from other American citizens.


When a territory that is owned by a larger country is experiencing a financial crisis, the
best decision that the larger country can make is to provide aid to the territory in their time of
need. After all, the territory is a part of the larger country in the first place. The graphic, “The
Puerto Rico Problem” depicts an elephant and a donkey resting on a beach with an umbrella with
the pattern of the American flag over them. To the left is a person deep inside a hole that he is
digging, with the sand he is digging up landing on the elephant and donkey. The two animals
have annoyed expressions as a result. This image is referring to the major debts that Puerto Rico
faced in 2015 that resulted in the territory asking the United States for assistance. The elephant
and donkey represent the United States and the country’s annoyance towards Puerto Rico, as the
island seemed to be continuously digging itself into a hole of problems that the United States had
to keep saving them from. While the territory is a part of the United States, Americans may have
felt that Puerto Rico should have been responsible enough to take on their own problems instead
of always relying on the United States for help with everything. This may have led to the United
States pushing Puerto Rico away from the country’s priority list.


Recovering from a major blow to finances is not an easy task in any situation. In order to
be loyal to anyone in need, it is important to establish trust and acknowledgement to the person or group. The image “Corporate Welfare” illustrates a pig wearing a suit and being showered with money from Uncle Sam. The pig seems to be getting everything he wants because he is a rich American citizen, but there is a group of people off to the side holding up signs that read “We Need A Living Wage” and “Raise The Minimum Wage.” These people represent working class Americans, as well as Puerto Ricans. Both of these groups of people were in need of financial stability due to their class, but Puerto Ricans were especially affected after facing heavy debts and high taxes from the United States. However, Uncle Sam is ignoring the people in need and focusing on giving the rich pig as much money and luxuries as possible. This image is portraying America’s priorities being out of order. America is trying to please the rich citizens of the country much more than Puerto Ricans, and the country is ignoring or possibly forgetting about the territory altogether. Instead of helping the people that need more stabilization with their economic system and have turned to the higher power for change, the higher power is neglecting the people and pretending that they do not exist. The taxes that America collects from Puerto Rico appear to be going towards the rich instead of going back into helping the island.

SOURCE: “Are They Talking About Us Yet?” OCRegister, 26 September 2017
After a natural disaster devastates a country or territory, the physical and emotional state of the people and of the land are aspects that need to be addressed as soon as possible. Hurricane Maria was one of these events that negatively impacted the United States and Puerto Rico in different ways. Puerto Rico was hit the hardest, losing power across the entire island and seeing everything they owned and built destroyed. The image depicts two men wearing Puerto Rican shirts and kneeling in a prayer position, surrounded by debris and ruins. They face what appears to be the White House that looks to be in pristine condition, and the caption “Are They Talking About Us Yet?” is underneath the image. The artist is trying to express concern for the unnecessarily long amount of time that the United States took to address the issue of Puerto Rico being devastated from the hurricane. The Puerto Rican people could not fix everything themselves, as it was too big of a job for them to take on alone and their government was broke at the time. In response, they had to rely on the United States to get them out of the terrible situation.

Puerto Ricans are American citizens, but they do not have the right to vote in federal elections on the island because the island is not a state (Campbell). This is breaking the 15th Amendment, which states that all citizens, regardless of race or color, receive the right to vote. Puerto Rico misses out on presidential elections, representation in Congress, and other American government democracies that citizens on the mainland are privileged with. Because the federal government does not provide the island with a voice, Puerto Ricans feel more motivated to give themselves an opportunity to be heard. In order to find a loophole in the system, many Puerto Ricans will go to the mainland of the United States in November to vote for the next president and return to the island after the conclusion of the election.
After a natural disaster, a territory or country is in need of resources from response teams that are designed and trained to move as quickly as possible in order to reach the people in need as soon as they can. This allows more hands to get involved in the help and cleanup of the situation and speed up the process of restoring the area to its former state. The response team of the United States government that was assigned to bring resources to Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria caused the amount of food and clean water on the island to diminish greatly. They were slow and did not give the suffering people what they needed in its entirety. This visual depicts how the Puerto Ricans viewed the response team: as snails. Their slow speed and lack of motivation to help made the people of Puerto Rico wonder if the United States was ever going to properly help them in the ways that they needed. As the president of the United States has the authority to order more resources and people to help in cases like this from the Stafford Act, President Trump is mainly to blame as he did not take the situation as seriously as he could have (Campbell).
Hurricane Harvey was another devastating natural disaster that hit Texas only a few weeks prior to Hurricane Maria. Before this storm even hit the state, FEMA “had pre-positioned supplies and personnel in the state, ready to join the Texas Division of Emergency Management, local agencies, nonprofit and faith-based organizations and the private sector in responding to the devastation caused by the storm” (“Historic”). The swiftness of the response teams before Harvey began is much more efficient than the length of time it took for the response teams to reach Puerto Rico. President Trump and FEMA could have been much faster with sending help and resources to the island than they were if they were able to have everything Texas needed with them before the storm hit.


The United States took pride in all of the territories that the country owned over the years and established their great amount of power in the world by owning multiple islands. The ones included in this 1898 political cartoon are Eastport Maine, Puerto Rico, Hawaii, Sammids, Ladnones, Carolinas, and Manila. The addition of these islands to America asserted to the rest of
the world that America was not a country to be messed with. The eagle spreading its wings over
the islands expresses this point, as the eagle represented the power of the United States.

However, owning territories comes with the responsibility of taking care of them and the people
that live there, and the United States has not always followed through on that responsibility,
especially after Hurricane Maria. The artist of this image is trying to explain that though the
United States is a large power with smaller powers under its control, it is a hefty task to maintain
the smaller powers. These islands are a great distance away from the mainland of the United
States, so it is understandable that it is difficult for the country to communicate with and reach
the islands when they need assistance. At the same time, the responsibilities of owning smaller
powers were no surprise from the beginning, so the United States is seen to repeatedly push the
smaller territories aside in priority. From a modern perspective, seeing Puerto Rico labeled as
“Porto Rico” also says that the United States did not even call the island by its appropriate name
until much later, and this can show that the country did not have any respect for the island’s
culture, only the wealth and power that would come with owning it.

While Puerto Rico has been neglected by the United States and put under the burden of
carrying high taxes and not having the ability to vote, the territory has persevered through these
difficulties and deserves a break from the hardships. While Puerto Ricans are legally American
citizens, these many experiences suggest that Puerto Rico does not seem like a true part of the
United States. All American citizens are meant to be treated equally, yet the United States seems
to alienate Puerto Ricans from them and shun them as a result.
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The Roots of A Grassroots Movement: 
Racism & Police Brutality

During the Reconstruction era, several laws and constitutional amendments were passed in order to achieve equality between white and black people. A few months after the war ended, the Thirteenth Amendment was ratified in 1865, which abolished slavery. The Fourteenth Amendment, though many governmental conflicts occurred leading up to this compromise, was ratified in 1868, which outlined the parameters of citizenship and allowed former slaves to be American citizens in the eyes of the law. The Fifteenth Amendment, ratified in 1870, allowed former slaves to vote. Despite these efforts, there still was the concept that black people were inhuman and inferior compared to white people, but this issue has not gone away. This is especially the case with the issue of racially charged attacks from law enforcement in the 21st century. Modern day police brutality stems from a contorted system of racism against people of color.

During the civil rights movement, black people rose up and fought for their rights as a result of the harsh discriminatory policies. A popular series of protests was called the Birmingham Campaign, also known as Project C. The protests took place in the spring of 1963 in Birmingham, Alabama wherein civil rights activists spent hours upon hours protesting through various types of peaceful demonstrations. These activists cried out for equal rights among blacks and whites, but their tears were nothing compared to the water power from the police. White law enforcement officers responded with violent attacks on black people using powerful fire hoses to scare and to harm the activists (PBS). Though this issue had an eventually positive resolution—a gradual removal of prejudiced policies in Alabama in May of 1963—concerns with the police actions towards people of color continues to occur and cause controversy.
Through the eyes of the law, people of color, including African-Americans, are equal in regards to their rights in the 21st century. However, what the law claims does not always align with the behavior of police officers and private citizens. On February 26, 2012, Trayvon Martin, an unarmed black 17 year old walking the streets of Florida, was murdered by white, 29 year old George Zimmerman, the neighborhood security captain at the time (Simon). Zimmerman claimed that he saw “a real suspicious guy… This guy looks like he’s up to no good, or he’s on drugs or something,” on the phone with the 911 dispatcher (Baldwin). Feeling uneasy about the presence of Martin in his neighborhood, Zimmerman proceeded to follow Martin, and a conflict ensued (“Trayvon Martin”). Zimmerman ended up shooting Martin out of “self defense,” though Martin was unarmed (Simon). In 2013, Zimmerman was found not guilty of murdering Martin (“Trayvon”).

After the verdict was announced, the hashtag “#BlackLivesMatter” began. The mantra was not initially popular, but when another black teenager named Michael Brown was shot and killed by a white police officer in Ferguson, Missouri, the phrase caught on (Anderson). As the
hashtag grew, the movement and amount of protests grew as well. Taking place in 2015, this photograph shows the growth of the movement. Along with a banner in the mid-ground of the photo, homemade posters of victims were raised in memoriam and phrases held up as a rallying cry.

Unfortunately, the movement, like many movements in the past have fallen victim to, is being distorted by its opponents. Many question the title of the movement and the reason as to why it references a specific race as opposed to other races, or why it does not reference lives in general. Counter-movements have been created as a result. The most popular one, called “All Lives Matter,” calls for a change in the movement’s focus in order to include other races. This anti-movement, however, has not picked up steam, due to the fact that black lives have constantly been subject to unwarranted violence. By saying “All Lives Matter,” it ignores the discrimination and cruelty towards black people, and becomes counterproductive. All lives do matter, but this isn’t reflected in the actions in American society in regards to black lives.

In this political cartoon, the cop yells “don’t shoot!” at the cameraman as he points a gun towards people of color, who are crying for the same thing. On the officer’s vest says the word “Ferguson,” in reference to the murder of black and unarmed Michael Brown by a white police officer that occurred on August 9, 2014. After the shooting, several riots in Ferguson as well as around the nation occurred (Buchanan, et al). The media’s portrayal of the events surrounding racial shootings, especially the one in Ferguson, tends to focus on the point of view of the consequences (or lack thereof) for the white officers, rather than the effect on racially charged assaults, on the victim’s family, and on the nation.

With the numerous attacks against unarmed black men by law enforcement, it can be difficult for people of color to trust the police. From speakers during Black Lives Matter rallies to tweets online, people of color often express fear for their lives when in the presence of an officer. As a result of this fear, many have begun to record officers when they are detained. In the Philando Castile case, he, his fiancée, and his four-year-old daughter were pulled over on July 6, 2016 by officer Jeronimo Yanez because of a broken tail light (Park). Before reaching for an item in the car, Castile admits to being an owner of a firearm (Park). Yanez, overcome by this thought, assumes that Castile was reaching for his firearm. Due to this fear, Yanez fatally shoots Castile seven times (Park). Castile’s last words were “I wasn’t reaching for it,” referring to his gun (Park). In the immediate aftermath of the shooting, Castile’s fiancée, Diamond Reynolds, live-streamed on Facebook, explaining the situation while Yanez repeatedly swore in the background. (Park).
Due to events like these, police credibility has decreased. This political cartoon shows a police officer shooting another unidentifiable person, who is bleeding to death on the ground. The officer bears a “police brutality” patch on his shoulder; the patch has more red and white on it, symbolizing courage and innocence in accordance with the American flag, but not nearly enough blue, which represents justice. Though there is a lack of blue with the police officer, there is an abundance of blue in the deceased character, who bears the words “police credibility” on their body. The colors associated with the police officer could suggest the law enforcement’s view after a police brutality attack: self-defense, stemming from their need to resort to violence. Very few of these cases are brought to court as a result. According to this theory, the blue in the deceased’s outfit shows the justice that has been shot, along with police credibility.
As these assaults persist in the 21st century, the majority of youth in America and their beliefs have altered -- and will continue to alter-- their outlook on the world. It has become normalized to see violent attacks committed using guns for some of these children. Not only do children of color have to be wary on their streets, but also in their schools and in their homes. The next generation of teenagers has begun to fight for the eradication of these attacks, since generations before have failed to do so. A major reason why the Black Lives Matter movement started is because of the threat to teens and future children. They are the ones being targeted, so they feel like they are the ones to do something that adults have neglected.

Despite current efforts, children continue to fear for their lives. In this political cartoon, a black teacher asks her students what they would like to be when they grow up. A child of color of about 8 years of age responds with “Alive!” The fear of the youth does not only affect to those above the age of 13, but affects those even younger. Outside of the school, a sign reading...
“ANOTHER SCHOOL MURDER” can be seen, referring to the hate crimes and violence to the youth of the country in schools. Children of color, like the one in this cartoon, constantly are surrounded by threats. They are hyper-aware of the dire situations in front of them as more human beings are murdered and the threat to them and their race increases.

![Image of people holding signs](source: Airbnb Design and Black@, “Visualizing Our Unity.”)

Black teenagers and adults alike are under perpetual scrutiny for every move that they make because they could be a “threat” to society, but they are not the only ones who are fighting against it. The Black Lives Matter movement isn’t simply for blacks, by blacks. There are tremendous amounts of allies from all walks of the earth. Caucasians, Hispanics, Asians, and other groups rally behind the movement in order to achieve racial equality in the United States, and not just by law. This photograph, part of a project with Airbnb Design and Black@, showcases this type of unity between the races. Each of the five people are a part of different ethnicities, but they hold similar signs. They read “I AM AN ALLY,” “BLACK LIVES MATTER,” and “I WILL TAKE A STAND,” to show their similarities in their beliefs. These people holding up signs also enforces the idea of peace. Though there have been riots and anti-protests in response to the movement, those participating simply want peace between black lives and blue lives. By not exhibiting hostile expressions, they show the longing for racial harmony.
Racism is the cause of many police brutality attacks. The movement, Black Lives Matter, wishes to eradicate this problem. In the eyes of the law, specifically the amendments created during the Reconstruction era, black lives are equivalent to white lives, but from the time those laws were enacted to now, it does not seem so. With this movement in progress, all the people of the United States of America can perhaps one day feel safe again.
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Kaitlyn Dundorf

The Little Desegregation Superheroes

When considering the leaders who are going to break boundaries, challenge injustice, and change the world, children are often overlooked. When people think of great leaders, they don’t often see a 15-year-old school girl or an immigrant child desperate for an education. However, history has shown repeatedly how schools have served as the foundation of the nation. History has also proven an even more impactful truth: schools are often powerful reflections of the climate of the country. Through challenging the U.S. public school system, students have been able to challenge the foundation and values of the entire country.

How much impact can one picture have on the world? This picture challenged that question when it rapidly spread across the United States and became an infamous symbol of not only the Little Rock Nine’s fight for desegregation in schools, but a symbol of the simmering
intolerance and hate that was rampant during Jim Crow times. Captured on September 4, 1957, the first day of school at Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, the picture depicts Elizabeth Eckford walking alone through a mob of angry white spectators (History.com Staff). The other eight students chosen to challenge Arkansas’ claims for desegregation had planned to meet and enter the school as a group, but Eckford had not received the message, and instead was forced to brave the hostile mob alone (History.com Staff). The picture also shows 15-year-old Hazel Bryan, gritting her teeth in anger and disgust as she spits racial slurs at Eckford. Like Bryan, many others in the crowd were extremely hostile, both physically—with one black reporter getting hit in the head with a brick—and verbally, with chants of encouragement to lynch the black students echoing through the streets, according to James Hicks, the executive editor of Amsterdam News who was covering the event. While this picture will forever stand as a symbol of the intolerance prevalent during that time, it also goes down in history as one of the most heroic examples of a teenager challenging the foundations of racial division in a school, town, and ultimately an entire country.
If one takes a moment to consider this photo they will see the obvious: white students circled around an effigy of a black student hanging from a tree, glancing leisurely at the spectacle with pleasure, some with hands in their pockets, others with smiles plastered on their faces. If viewed more carefully, a person might see a different picture: a crowd of students who walked out of school protesting against the nine black students who walked in their halls and disrupted the world they knew (Nelsson). But if the viewer really looks, they will see a reflection of the culture and climate of the United States during this time. They will see students who walked out of school to protect the values a large part of their country set forth. They walked out in protection of these values that said it was acceptable to allow an angry mob to hang a law abiding 15-year-old from a tree for showing up to school. They walked out to preserve the foundation of segregation that had always been protected, though on paper it had been outlawed for three years (History.com Staff). And they walked out in protection of the values their state set
forth when it sent its National Guardsmen to bar black students from attending a previously all white school (History.com Staff). When a person really looks at this photo, they will not see angry students, but a divided country.

A picture can have an extraordinary impact on the world, and similarly, political cartoons can use art to raise up the voices and concerns of thousands who may otherwise be overlooked. Khalil Bendib’s “School Resegregation” does just that as he criticizes U.S. education while also drawing parallels to the spirit of desegregation. The picture shows the teacher, labeled as “U.S. Education” standing at the board teaching the class a simple math problem; however, this equation is actually teaching a very different lesson than one might expect. Instead of simple arithmetic, the equation delivers a poignant blow, criticizing the U.S. for resegregating it’s schools through the separation of black and white students into “well-funded white schools” or “under-funded ghetto schools.” This sentiment dates all the way back to desegregation when students like the Little Rock Nine put their lives on the line to break the same cycle of
segregation highlighted here. A direct connection is made to this time, with a dialogue bubble in the bottom right referencing the Brown vs. Board of Education case that outlawed segregation in schools (History.com Staff). The cartoon comments that not even a major Supreme Court ruling has been able to control the division prevalent between white and black. Similarly, though the ratification of the 14 amendment during the Reconstruction Era was meant to ensure all citizens had equal rights protected under federal law, artists such as Bendib use their art to highlight how this amendment is not being put in action. The cartoon criticizes the U.S. for under preparing students and only equipping one demographic with the skills necessary to succeed, despite the government’s written intention to provide equal protection of rights for all citizens. The line written across the top of the image reading, “U.S. kids not so good at math:” further supports this idea. It exemplifies how the current approach that has brought about resegregation is not only illogical, but preparing even the privileged with false information. The teacher appears to be teaching this lesson to a group of both black and white students, which might suggest how every U.S. student is being affected by the unfair absurdity of resegregation. Furthermore, the image depicts dots of blood, a needle, and a condom laying on the floor beside the garbage can, which might comment on the ineffectiveness of the education system, using these items as symbols of the dangerous lifestyle choices of many students in underprivileged schools. Though these items are near the garbage, they have fallen short of being thrown away, which also might symbolize how the U.S. has fallen short of protecting its students and eliminating these and similar problems.
Khalil Bendib sends another strong message to the public school system with this political cartoon comparing Alabama public schools from 1963 to 2011. The drawing shows two different children standing frightened at the doorstep of a public school that has barred them from entering due to their race. The pictures are near parallels, with signs pointing any “colored” and “illegals” away from the school, though the second image features a few differences. For example, the artist features his signature “Jim Crow” in the bottom corner, with a dialogue bubble reading, “Jim Crow is dead, long live Jim Crow!” This important symbol is used to comment on how even though the U.S. has moved forward from Jim Crow times, the struggle for equal rights has taken on a new form. The artist is showcasing the hypocritical nature of the country’s supposed claims at social reform. Bendib comments on how new anti-immigration laws have forced immigrants, specifically latinos, to endure the same type of social rejection and unfairness that black people during 1960s were subjected to. This cartoon shows how the
grounds of a school have served and continue to serve as a reflection of the times, illuminating the deep rooted problems that are ingrained in the foundation of society, with schools as a center of that foundation.

Source: John Thompson, “Are We Seeing Light at the End of the Re-Segregation Tunnel?” 20 August 2015

Similar to the work of Khalil Bendib, John Thompson’s “Are We Seeing Light at the end of the Re-Segregation Tunnel?” sheds light on the issue of segregation in schools, while also commenting on how racial bias affects minorities. The comic depicts a young black boy pleading with the Supreme Court to protect his school from segregation. In a powerful statement, the Brown vs. Board of Education case is referenced as the boy reminds the Supreme Court of its decision to integrate schools. However, instead of considering the student’s appeal, the Supreme Court complains about the so called “preferential treatment” black people get, as they point towards buildings labeled as “prison, military, death row and pollution alley.” By highlighting the ways racial bias affects minorities, Thompson is criticizing the U.S. government for ignoring
the pleas of its people, and instead supporting a system that leads minorities down an unfair path to suffering. Though the student depicted here is challenging the Supreme Court to protect his school, he is also embracing the spirit of people like Elizabeth Eckford, and challenging the government to re-evaluate what it stands for. Once again, the comic is an example of how schools serve as the foundation for the country and have been the battle grounds for extreme social reform throughout history.

Social reform has long been an integral part of United States history, and has been prevalent on many different platforms. Perhaps one of the most memorable eras that would set the stage for social reform in the U.S. was the Reconstruction Era. Even now as the country still faces heated social division, the values and efforts from this time live on and represent the very essence of American democracy. One integral idea from this time was that every citizen, regardless of race, was guaranteed a vote, and therefore a say in the future of the country. In a similar way, students have embodied this idea and used their own platform to raise their voices against injustice within the school system and within the country. With schools as an integral part of the country and reflection of the times, children have been able to evoke change inside and outside the classroom.
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Discrimination and Success: Directly Proportional

Immigrants from across the world view the United States as a land of opportunity where liberty and democracy are upheld and all people enjoy the same rights and chances for success. While many immigrants are cognizant of the discrimination they may face at the beginning, many believe that social and economic success will lessen the racial prejudice they face. However, successful immigrants often find that life is harder for them after their successes than it was before, as was the case with many Chinese immigrants during the late nineteenth century. Although immigrants are given an opportunity to work for success, they are not expected to attain it; immigrants are expected to remain at a lower social and economic class than native-born Americans. When immigrants succeed, the dominance of the majority is suddenly threatened, and as a result, many immigrant groups experience the effects of racial discrimination more profoundly after gaining success than when they first immigrated. Chinese Americans, as a successful minority group, are a notable example of the effect of socioeconomic success on racial prejudice. Discrimination against Chinese businesses in the nineteenth century, including the fining of Chinese business owners, demonstrated American fears of eastern domination and constituted an attempt by white Americans to uphold their supremacy by attempting to suppress a successful minority group.
One especially striking image of the period is “The Magic Washer” produced by The George Dee Magic Washing Machine Company. The image features a white Uncle Sam kicking a Chinese laundry worker off a cliff, towards the ocean, where a boat is waiting to take them back to China. The image, intended as an advertisement for the Magic Washing Company, clearly demonstrates the prominent anti-Chinese sentiment of the time, and the product is marketed as a means to remove Chinese laundry workers from the country. While Uncle Sam is depicted as noble and righteous, the images of the Chinese men are animalistic and mocking, demonstrating an attempt to suppress the group through dehumanization. This image would not have been published if the Chinese had not been successful in the laundry industry, since there would have been no need to combat Chinese labor with a new product if the Chinese had been unsuccessful. Clearly, the image showcases the anti-Chinese sentiment of the time period and demonstrates that such sentiment was felt more strongly after the Chinese became successful.
In the same year that this image was published, the case of *Yick Wo v. Hopkins* was decided by the Supreme Court. The city of San Francisco passed an ordinance requiring wooden laundry shops to require operating permits, but gave the city full discretion to grant or withhold the permits. Approximately two-thirds of wooden laundries in the city were operated by Chinese people, and while almost all owners applied for a permit, only one out of two hundred Chinese applicants was granted a permit. The court eventually struck down the law, saying that its racist enforcement constituted racial discrimination, but the case prompted renewed efforts to remove Chinese immigrants from the country and undermine Chinese businesses, usually through the use of new technologies (Oyez).

![Image: The Missouri Steam Washer Company, “The Chinese Must Go,” 1883.](image)

This image, published by The Missouri Steam Washer Company as an advertisement, shows a Chinese man being chased by a living steam washer. It is inferred that the Chinese man is running from San Francisco to China, showing that many wanted the Chinese to go back to China. Many white Americans believed that the only way to accomplish this was to put the
Chinese out of business using new inventions, such as the steam washer. The fact that the Missouri Steam Washer was helping to remove Chinese people from California demonstrates how the discriminatory sentiment was not limited to only a few states, showing that the removal of ethnic Chinese was a collaborative effort by white Americans across the country. Additionally, the fleeing Chinese man holds a bag of coins in his hand, further reinforcing the notion that minority groups face the most discrimination after they achieve early successes and are seen as a threat to the dominance of the majority group.


This image, from The Celluloid Company, was created as a trading card. The image shows a Chinese laundry worker crying while two patriotic Americans look on; the American woman is pointing at the word “celluloid” on the wall. This card was meant to promote celluloid
fabric, which is more resistant to water and oils than cotton, allowing people to go to the laundry store less. The promotion of celluloid as a way to combat cheap Chinese labor clearly demonstrates anti-Chinese public sentiment. The clothing of the two white figures suggests that they represent the American government, showing that, while government actions were not outwardly discriminatory, the government still did not want Chinese immigrants in the country so therefore resorted to other means, including discriminatory enforcement of the law and supporting new innovation that would put the Chinese out of business.


The creator of this image, like many other white Americans, wanted Chinese immigrants to leave the country, but the message of the image is that the whites are keeping the Chinese in
the country by doing business with them. Around the image are six vignettes, each depicting successful Chinese workers in different industries, making money off white Americans. The Chinese immigrants’ success in the United States threatened the business ventures of many white Americans, leading to the anti-Chinese sentiment of the time. If the Chinese had not been so successful, many would likely have gone back to China. However, the immigrants’ success kept them in America and dramatically increased the discrimination against them. Clearly, the Chinese were more heavily discriminated against after their successes, showing that, while Americans accept immigrants, they are expected to remain at lower socioeconomic states, and those who succeed often face the most racial prejudice.

Source: Frank Leslie, “The Only One Barred Out,” Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper, 1 April 1882.

This image shows a Chinese man who is unable to pass through the “Golden Gate of Liberty,” in reference to the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. The Chinese Exclusion Act
prohibited the immigration of any Chinese laborers to the United States, in response to white citizens’ fears that the Chinese were taking jobs away from the white citizens; in reality, the Chinese composed only 0.002 percent of the nation’s population and could not have posed a significant threat to white employment (Harvard). The image shows that the Chinese were unfairly excluded from entering the country. The economic fears behind this exclusion demonstrate that discrimination against a group increases with the group’s success.

Although the Chinese Exclusion Act was racially discriminatory, at the time it did not constitute a violation of the Fourteenth Amendment. In fact, the Chinese Exclusion Act was upheld by the Supreme Court in the case Chae Chan Ping v. United States, where the court ruled that the federal government was entitled to “the right of the exclusion of foreigners” (Cornell). While the Fourteenth Amendment states that no state shall deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, the Chinese Exclusion Act was passed as a federal law and was therefore not subject to these terms. Additionally, Chinese immigrants were not yet citizens of the United States, and therefore they did not have all of the rights that citizens had.

Discrimination against Chinese businesses and immigrants in the nineteenth century demonstrated western fears of eastern domination and constituted an attempt by the white majority to suppress a successful immigrant group that threatened white dominance. To combat racial discrimination, it is important to understand not only how discrimination occurs and what it is, but why and when it occurs as well. Clearly, racial discrimination does not always decrease after a group achieves success; as a result, we must be cognizant of the reality that successful minority groups may still face discrimination, often more strongly as a result of their successes.
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Jasmine Khosla

The Injustice Syrian Refugees Faced in America

Political cartoons visually reveal a unique perspective on particular topics. These cartoons help clarify an event to the public eye and denote its significance and effects. Individuals possess the ability to interpret these visuals in their own perspective that allows the topic at hand to be presented in various manners. Since 2011, terrorist groups have turned the country of Syria into a deadly war zone where more than half the population has been killed or forced to leave the region. These Syrians have been fleeing from their families, homes, and nation to seek refuge in foreign countries such as the United States, as well as other first world nations. In response to these innocent people seeking safety and protection, America has placed bans, such as President Trump’s Executive Order 13769, restricting Syrian refugees from entering the country for an indefinite time. This is the government’s attempt to “protect” the nation from any outside affiliation with terrorism. However, the fact of the matter is, Syrian refugees are being denied admittance into the United States, freedom, and safety because Americans—specifically the government—are discriminating against the refugees and thus abandoning the American ideal of “liberty and justice for all.”

Source: John Cole, “Know the Enemy.” 18 November 2015
This political cartoon, illustrated by John Cole, compares an individual from the terrorist group, ISIS, to a Syrian family. The animated terrorist is seen possessing a gun that has been fired—indicated by the smoke—as he represents the terrorist group ISIS. The family of four is surrounded by suitcases that state, “Syrian Refugees,” suggesting they have been directly affected by the violence in Syria and are relocating in order to escape the terrorism. The artist’s intention when creating this illustration was to suggest through the title, “Know the Enemy,” that people should be able to discern a clear difference between groups that impose a menacing threat and innocent Syrians that do not. Indeed, Cole hoped that his art would catch the eye, and positively influence the public’s perspective of Syrians. However, people who are unaware of this distinction often categorize all Syrians under the label of “terrorists,” unjustly stereotyping them for their religion and affiliation with the nation of Syria. This discrimination degrades the U.S. value of “justice for all,” as Americans are excluding a group of people from freedom due to their ethnicity and association with a religion. Therefore, the family representing the entirety of Syrian Refugees demonstrate the innocence and benign motives of the people who are attempting to escape war and the individuals like the man from ISIS who should be considered an enemy.
Furthermore, this political cartoon portrays the United States’ reaction at the beginning of the Syrian war concerning admitting Syrian Refugees into the country. A group of Syrian Refugees are illustrated expressing their abhorrence towards the actions occurring in the war-torn country and thus declare they are not a part of the terrorism associated with the area, merely people seeking protection. However, the man representing U.S politics stepping on the nation’s flag is refusing to grant entry to the group, stating that their remarks are “anti-Christian, terrorist talk,” and aggressively demanding that they leave. The behavior demonstrated is not far from the reality of the situation. Through this cartoon, it is implied that Americans ignorantly believe people who are from religions associated with terrorist groups are automatically involved with the violence and participate in the murderous actions executed by terrorists. Therefore, in fear, U.S government officials passed the Executive Order 13769, or more commonly known as the Travel Ban, to restrict the admittance of refugees from predominantly Muslim countries (Executive Order). This ban indefinitely prohibited Syrian refugees from entering the country.
and lowered the number of accepted refugees from 110,000 to 50,000 people. The current president argued that the ban was not meant to discriminate against any particular religion, yet as mentioned in this image, and in various interviews with President Trump, he gave preference to Christian refugees; also, the Travel Ban did not include any non-Muslim countries, further suggesting the ban was directed to outlaw Muslim refugees (Trump's New Executive Order).

Additionally, the American man is illustrated standing on top of the United States flag, which has the word “freedom” labeled on it; this indicates that the U.S government is literally stepping on the rights of the Syrian refugees, unjustly denying them freedom and protection, by ethnically and racially profiling the Syrians. Moreover, by standing on the American flag, the author suggests the United States is rejecting their “liberty and justice for all” ideals that once built the foundation of the country and allowed the nation to flourish.

This image depicts a Syrian family with a finger pointed at them on one side and a hand pointing a sharp-bladed knife at the other end. Since the family is carrying bags, it implies they are attempting to move, yet the two hands are impeding them from moving forward. The hand on
the left side of the cartoon is wearing a blue sleeve connected to white fabric that has a red star attached to it, saying “security fears.” This indicates that the hand is representing the U.S government which has passed laws restricting Syrian refugees from entering their country, out of “fear” of terrorism spreading; ever since the 9/11 attacks in 2001, the U.S government has enforced stricter laws regarding admittance into the country, and this has caused hatred and stereotypes to develop amongst Americans towards particular ethnic and religious groups from the Middle East including Syrians. The finger pointed at a refugee’s head not only obstructs the family from their passage, but the action demonstrates the U.S forcing Syrian refugees to return to their country, denying them safety as the finger points in the direction of the knife labeled “ISIS.” The knife on the right is dripping black liquid suggesting death or devastation as the terrorist group ISIS is associated with negative concepts such as those. As the point of the knife faces the Syrian family, the assumed father figure states from the bubble, “We could really use a ‘safe space’ right now!” indicating neither Syria or America will provide protection to the refugees; if they were admitted into the United States, Americans would oppress the refugees as they stereotype Syrians as terrorists and the country of Syria is in unsuitable conditions for people, so refugees are at a crossroads, having nowhere to go.
In this cartoon, the artist illustrates people in the crown of the Statue of Liberty angrily protesting with signs, pitchforks, and bats in their hands. Also, there is a tear shedding from Lady Liberty’s eye. On various signs, there are threats written such as, “Keep Out!”, “Terrorists Not Admitted,” “War Refugees Go Home,” and “No Syrians.” The tear appearing from Lady Liberty’s eye signifies how the U.S no longer abides with the morals and principles they are known for such as the idea of freedom that the statue stands for. Additionally, the signs and pitchforks emphasizes the extent to which the men and women are prepared to go, to keep refugees out of the country. The violence and threatening actions to force refugees to return to their country demonstrate Americans abandoning their ideals and reveals the hatred that is emerging towards innocent people. Similarly, this hatred has been targeted towards various groups in America’s past and present, such as African-Americans as well as other racial and ethnic minorities. It is ironic how the artist portrays the American men and women protesting against admitting the Syrian refugees into the country inside the Statue of Liberty which has so
often been used as a symbol representing enlightenment and helping to guide people to a path of liberty.

In this powerful image from 2012, three men carry a corpse away from the site of twin blasts in the city of Damascus. This heartbreaking photograph manifests the magnitude of the Syrian Civil War and its effects on the people. The citizens of Syria experience the same devastating outcomes of terrorist attacks, equivalent to the ones which have occurred in countries such as the United States. In the image, there is an immense amount of smoke rising from burning vehicles and buildings. People in Syria are victims of the horrific terrorist attacks and are struggling to survive in their own country. Similarly, in April of 2018, President Trump threatened to discharge missile strikes in Syria in response to the chemical weapon attack which occurred on April 8, 2018 in the city of Douma (VOA). Although this would be an action
towards weakening terrorist groups such as ISIS, it would still be harming Syrian citizens not affiliated with these treasonous acts by destroying homes and possibly killing innocents. The dreadful attacks have created unsuitable living conditions. Therefore, Syrians are forced to seek refuge in other foreign countries, yet are denied acceptance because they are stereotyped as the terrorists they are attempting to flee. This distressing image remains to reveal the tragedies occurring day by day to the country, and what Americans seem to ignore when refusing to help and discriminating against these sufferers. The actions in this photograph tell a harrowing story about the violence affecting men, women, and children in Syria, indicating they are victims as well, not terrorists.

Source: David Ryder, Foreign Affairs (magazine), 20 November 2015

This photograph showcases Americans gathering in front of the United States Capitol in Washington State to protest against the United States’ acceptance of Syrian refugees in 2015.
People hold up signs stating, “Why Put Us in Danger,” “No Refugees,” and “Vets Before Refugees,” while carrying the nation’s flag. Under Obama’s presidency, he attempted to focus on admitting Syrians fleeing the Syrian Civil War, yet Americans did not agree with his ideas and protested, believing that refugees should not be accepted because they would bring “danger” and “hostility.” The reason many expressed these thoughts is because of the terrorism associated with the religious extremist groups from the country of Syria. People unjustly ethnically and religiously profiled these humans, discriminating against them for their religion. Later on, when President Trump was elected, he reduced the rate of admitting Syrian refugees at 80% mostly allowing Christians in rather than Muslims (Dinan). President Trump claimed he placed the Travel Ban to protect the country from “radical Islamic terrorists,” yet a majority of the mass killings in the United States have been conducted by white Americans, revealing how Syrian refugees were just stereotyped as “threatening” (Williams). The “Vets before Refugees” sign suggests that the government should be taking care of veterans before others from different countries. Although taking care of veterans is a priority, helping humanity is as well, another basic human principle Americans disregarded at the time. Americans became apathetic to the idea of helping refugees find protection because they were afraid of them committing harmful acts to the nation, yet did not realize Syrians were running away from those who had true desires to commit terrorism. Therefore, the ideas Americans had in their minds about refugees bringing a danger to the country was immoral and proves the injustice refugees faced at the time.

Overall, in history, Syrian refugees have had a difficult time being victims of both violence in their own country and unjust discrimination from people in foreign countries such as the United States. Similarly, during the Reconstruction era in the 1800s, after the long and hard fought Civil War, African-Americans had gained deserved rights such as being allowed to vote,
actively participating in politics, acquiring land, and seeking employment. However, even after the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendment were passed into the Constitution granting freed African Americans these rights, white Americans still demonstrated hostility towards them. They began protesting and rallying against providing people of color freedom and wanted to cease their acquired rights through enforcing Black Codes. In this century, Syrian refugees have been denied freedom and protection because of stereotypes compelling people to believe they are a part of the terrorism they are fleeing from. The U.S government has shown this behavior by denying refugees admittance through the Executive Order 13769 and American citizens have demonstrated resentment towards innocent people by protesting. Therefore, both events—racism towards the freed African-Americans during Reconstruction and the ethnic and religious profiling of Syrian refugees as terrorists—exhibit the United States’s habit of repeating its past and not learn from previous mistakes of discriminating against minorities.

These images portray the actuality of what has occurred in our past and what continues to occur today. The artists and photographers have captured a significant issue and portrayed it in an enduring way to emphasizes the effects it had on particular groups of people. Even as the Syrian Civil War develops, people will perceive a new perspective through political cartoons and images, realizing the injustice that Syrian refugees have to endure and prevent it from repeating.
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Historians identify three distinctive waves of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK): the first in the South during Reconstruction, the second throughout the United States in the 1920s, and the third in retaliation to the civil rights movement of the 1960s. The Klan reached its peak during the second wave with several million members and even more sympathizers. Their members were whites of both genders, diverse occupations, and varied geographic locations. Many of them were open with their allegiance, and the KKK would often hold parades with no hoods, a distinct difference from the first and third wave. They had outreach for children such as the Three K Klub, and they also had a sister organization called the Women of the Ku Klux Klan (WKKK). The WKKK had nearly a half million women, who worked with their male counterparts to create a beast of political machinations that was intent on preserving white and Protestant dominance. The women of the Ku Klux Klan provided social and moral legitimacy that bolstered the power and numbers of the KKK in the 1920s.

Source: Branford Clarke, “The Lifeboat to the Rescue,” Heroes of the Fiery Cross (book), 1925

The first KKK, led by former Confederate general Nathan Bedford Forrest, was a hate group comprised of mainly former Confederate soldiers that were intent on obstructing the efforts of Reconstruction. They would terrorize and kill black men who tried to take advantage of
their voting rights, and this terrorism, along with other measures, worked to effectively make the 15th Amendment nonexistent for blacks. It was a club of fear mongers hell-bent on preserving the antebellum Southern life. In contrast, the second wave of the Klan that appeared in the 20s seemed to focus on preserving the white, Protestant values of America that they felt to be infringed upon, not just by blacks, but the KKK widened their scope during the second wave to include Jews, Catholics, Communists, and other groups. Alma White, a pastor that proudly supported the KKK, wrote a book (the cartoon comes from this book) that claimed that Catholic parochial or private schools were taking the Bible away from the public schools. In order to limit Catholic influence in schools, the Klan would often donate American flags and Bible to public schools. This shift into a social issue shows how the KKK shifted its priority to more socially acceptable causes, and this decision was made by women. The KKK, in conjunction with its sister, the WKKK, decided to be known for their crusades for causes, rather than the racist violence that was seen in the first wave and in themselves. These causes were often rooted in “American” ideals and freedoms. This shift is also seen in a later document, which is an advertisement from the KKK.


Regarding the mission of the Klan, Branford Clarke makes his views quite clear. The Klanswoman is
on a crusade to cleanse America from the degenerative influence of the Catholics, the alcohol, and the combination of “corrupting movies”, and “immodest fashions”, and in the process, the Klanswoman cleanses the lynching, racism, and hatred from the Klan. It is interesting that the cartoonist uses a female figure for his hero. However, given the notion that women were the moral guardians of America, it is not surprising that he chose a woman. It clarifies the position of women in the KKK, and that is to serve as moral “cleansers” both of America and of themselves. Secondly, the woman is not wearing a mask. This detail seems mundane, but since the mask is a famous characteristic of the Klan during Bedford Forrest, it shows a distinctive break from that movement. Furthermore, this openness occurred because people in the 20s found the Klan more socially permissible, and in many of the events, members would be maskless, blatantly and unabashedly proclaiming that they were part of the KKK. However, this boldness would have never occurred if not for social tolerance, and sometimes, support. Lastly, the weapon the woman carries proudly says “BALLOT” on it. This is arguably the most important detail in the cartoon. If the “BALLOT” is what the KKK is using to push away all the harmful influence of America, they must not only have politicians supporting them, but the politicians that are supporting them must also be politicians that were elected. However, these politicians would have never been elected without a majority of the votes. “BALLOT” is not simply saying the democracy or voting will destroy these influences; instead, it is saying that the KKK has enough power and legitimate support through votes to destroy these influences. It is a flaunting of power that is so subtle, yet indicative of the power the KKK believed they had, or they actually did. The hypocrisy in this is that the Klan was notorious for infringing on the rights of others to vote, infringing on the implied rights of the 14th Amendment and on the rights explicitly given to all men in the 15th Amendment. The effects of their actions became quite clear, when in Georgia during
Reconstruction, there was a dramatic drop in voting Republican (the party that most black people supported) when the KKK began its intimidation around the voting areas. Other than the right to vote, black people where the KKK had power had their rights of “life, liberty, and property” taken from them, as the Klan under Bedford Forrest and the Klan in the 1920s was notorious for murder and property destruction. In the 20s, the government did little to prevent these actions, as many politicians were sympathetic to the front of the KKK, which was defending American conservative values.

**KNIGHTS of the KU KLUX KLAN**

**and**

**WOMEN of the KU KLUX KLAN**

**Their Principles and Ideals**

2. Upholding the Constitution of the United States.
4. Separation of Church and State.
5. Religious Liberty.
7. Compulsory Education in Free Public Schools.
10. Limitation of foreign immigration.
11. Closer Relationship between Capital and American Labor.

This organization is not anti-Jew, anti-Catholic nor anti-Negro but we do restrict our membership to native born white, Protestant, Gentile, American citizens. In exercising this right we do not become “anti” in any respect. Consider the fact that the Jewish people have their B’nai Brith, the Catholics their organizations known as the Knights of Columbus and the Daughters of America. Consider also that every organization in the United States places some limitation of one nature or another upon its membership.

**ARE WE NOT ENTITLED TO THE SAME PRIVILEGE?**

We stand for law enforcement by the legally constituted officers of the law. At no time do we take the law into our own hands.

In contrast to the terrorizing scallywags that comprised the first wave of the KKK, the second wave’s power arose in their ability to portray themselves as defenders of these white ideals, not the hateful and discriminatory group they were. Women provide a unique position in

*Source: Miles City Star (newspaper), October 12, 1924*
defense of ideals, as women were, and are sometimes still, seen as moral guardians, paragons of pure, uncorrupted virtue that would be lost if America continued in its degenerate shift away from these Christian, or more specifically, white Protestant values. Other than white supremacy, none of these values are very, if at all, controversial, and white supremacy is not considered part of the far right as it is today; it was instead considered rather normal. They also vehemently remind people that they are not “anti-Jew, anti-Catholic nor anti-Negro.” When explaining their specificity for members, they compare themselves to Catholic and Jewish groups that only allow Catholics and Jews, respectively. The Klan is trying to rationalize themselves by arguing that their practice of having only white, Gentile, Protestants was not discriminatory since other groups were allowed that “privilege.” The inclusion of the WKKK is important, as it shows their gender inclusivity, which is fitting the era, as the 1910s and the 20s saw the rise of first wave feminism. By including women, the Klan had more of an argument, since women, as mentioned before, were still seen as moral guardians. With just men, the KKK could seem like a “boys’ club,” but with women, the KKK could truly embrace the role of a social defender. With this advertisement shows the Klan’s attempts to be socially accepted as “knights” of ideals that were considered and are still considered “American.”

Source: Advertising Pin for the WKKK Radio Station and Orphanage, Klan Haven, 1923
The advertising pin above demonstrates that the Klan was attempting and succeeding to be seen as defenders of “American” ideals and freedoms, but the WKKK took it a step further by portraying themselves as a proactively altruistic group. Klan Haven, which is being fundraised with this pin, was an orphanage founded by the WKKK in Pennsylvania. This is an example of charity that would glorify the WKKK in the eyes of the public, bolstering their membership, and effacing any vestige of hate and barbarism that lurked under the surface. It is important to focus on the fact that this was WKKK alone, not the KKK. The KKK under Bedford Forrest had no outreach like this, and the power of the women shone, as this was a helpful contribution to the community. Klan Haven could very easily be used as a front to recruit wives into their cause. After all, the Klan could not have been the wicked group of former soldiers they once were, as they were now actively working to help the community. This initiative not only made them seem morally “acceptable”; it made them seem “good,” as they were intent on helping others.

Source: Bettman Photo Collection, Getty Images, 1956

The KKK declined after the mid-1920s, but in the wake of the civil rights movement, it began to
rise again in the 1960s. The people are viewing a cross burning, a common ritual for the KKK and the WKKK. However, the most staggering part of this image is the woman who stands obstinate in the face of the smoke, arms crossed, handbag in the crook of her arm, with a prideful defiance. Her visage is of a leader, which is in contrast to the men who are cowering behind the smoke and are in plain clothes. The women are in the position of power here, as they are the ones in the robes, and yet, there are children present, indicating that the women have transformed a cross burning, once looked down upon and for men only, into a social gathering to which children can be brought, and food can be eaten (as indicated by the bottles of drink some women are holding). The women have transformed one of the Klan’s most important rituals into a picnic that can be viewed by all whites, into a social gathering that, like many of the efforts in the 1920s, cleansed the KKK, made them “G” rated. This “cleansing” is responsible for the rise in the numbers, and the outward displays of hatred from common people, as it was in a socially and morally acceptable environment. It just foretells of a movement that was socially legitimized and used that to wreak havoc on the lives of countless people.

The women of the KKK managed to pull off one of the greatest PR illusions in the 20th century. In creating this facade of defending “American values,” they hid the racism, hatred, and violence that was the true KKK. With their community outreach, parades, and events, they hid their lynchings, murders, and festering vitriol against all who were not white or Protestant. Their actions serve as a warning, a reminder of how surreptitious and camouflaged hatred can be. There were warning signs such as the 1921 reveal of over 100 acts of KKK vigilante “justice,” yet more Americans were so infatuated with the glossy form of defending American values that they ignored the signs from the press. The actions of the women and their male counterparts and
their resulting power is a smear on American history that demonstrates how disaster arises when hatred is socially, politically, and morally embraced.
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Diversity in the Hollywood Film Industry

Hollywood has had a long, difficult history of racism. Although the obvious racism comes in many different forms, a prevalent type is whitewashing. Whitewashing is when a character of color is portrayed by a Caucasian person. One of the most well-known instances of whitewashing was in 1961 in the famous film *Breakfast at Tiffany’s* (Yang). The white actor Mickey Rooney portrayed a Japanese character named Mr. Yunioshi, complete with horrifyingly buck teeth, yellowed skin, pinched eyes, and an offensive accent (Yang). One might expect that distasteful and unbelievably blind actions such as this are unable to occur now due to a newfound awareness; however, that is not the case. Although atrocities like this occurred almost six decades ago, a lack of racial diversity and representation in the Hollywood film industry is still at large.
It’s Not About the Money: The Lack of Racial Diversity in Hollywood

In 2014, global box office earnings show that films with 41-50% minorities represented have the potential to be just as successful, if not more, as the films with less minority representation.

FACT: In the Top Ten Box Office films of 2014, 48.9% of audiences consisted of minorities.

Yet in 2015, out of the 100 top-grossing films:

- 73.7% - White
- 12.2% - Black
- 5.3% - Latino
- 4.9% - Other (Middle Eastern, American Indian/Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander)
- 3.9% - Asian

14 films had minority leads/co-leads, 9 of which were African American, 4 of which were mixed race, and 1 of which was Latino. Out of the top 100 films, there were no Asian leads.

From 2007 to 2015, these percentages have not changed.

“One of the things that people misunderstand is you have to separate opportunity from talent. That people feel if the roles aren’t there, that means there’s no talent out there. That’s not true. That’s true is that if you create those narratives, then those roles can open up to people who are waiting in line. Listen, I always say that Meryl Streep would not be Meryl Streep without Sophie’s Choice, without Kramer vs. Kramer, without The Devil Wears Prada. You can’t be a Meryl Streep if you are the third girl from the left in a narrative with two scenes. So you write it, and we will come...People in positions of power have the imagination, but the thing that stops us sometimes is fear, fear of doing anything different.” – Viola Davis, Academy Award nominee, Emmy Award Winner, and star of the hit show, How to Get Away With Murder

Don’t be on the wrong side of history. Diversity is the future.

Source: Ralph J. Bunche Center for African American Studies at UCLA, “It’s Not About the Money: The Lack of Racial Diversity in Hollywood”
As an introduction to the deficiency of racial representation in Hollywood, these visually mapped statistics from the Ralph J. Bunche Center at the University of California Los Angeles can help one understand how serious the issue is. From the year 2007 to 2015, out of the 100 top-grossing films an overwhelming 73.7% of characters were white, followed by 12.2% black, 5.3% Latino, 4.9% other, and 3.9% Asian. Not only that, but the study was merely for character portrayals, not lead roles, meaning there that is a large possibility that the percentages for the non-white characters were just for token black, Latino, and Asian characters, usually harmful and stereotypical. One could argue that this was because films starring white actors always come out on top in the box office, but even that is a false statement. As stated in the image, “In 2014, global box office earnings show that films with 41-50% minorities represented have the potential to be just as successful, if not more, as the films with less minority representation.” This further goes to prove that this under-appreciation and representation is the fault of Hollywood.

In this cartoon, Jimmy Margulies illustrates a white male awards show announcer who is about to introduce the year’s Academy Award nominees. In the background, the iconic Hollywood Hills stand tall—however, instead of spelling the usual “HOLLYWOOD”, the sign now says “WHOLLY WHITE”. The image demonstrates a satirical stance on Hollywood exclusivity and diversity. Not only is the announcer a white, likely cisgender male, but “WHOLLY WHITE” means completely or fully white. Therefore, the message Margulies is getting across is that all award show nominees, and consequently, all winners, are white. It is evident that this drawing was created only a few years ago, in 2015, because in the past few years there has been a spreading awareness of the lack of diversity in the American film industry.

Hollywood has had a diversity issue throughout its whole narrative.

The absurdity in the concept of this image by Peyton Stotelmyre is clear at first sight. It is titled “Hollywood’s Favorite Asian American Actors/Actresses” and the drawn headshots of the famous Caucasian actors and actress Tom Cruise, Scarlett Johansson, and Matt Damon are featured. The sarcasm and irony are strong in this piece.

Source: Peyton Stotelmyre, “Hollywood’s Favorite Asian American Actors/Actresses” December 2017
Johansson’s stint as a Japanese character was received extremely negatively. She was cast as the main role of Major Motoko Kusanagi in the Hollywood film adaptation of the popular Japanese anime *Ghost in the Shell* (2017) (Berman). Immediately after the announcement, fans of the anime were outraged at the whitewashing of Kusanagi and called for a recasting (Berman). However, their attempts were unsuccessful and the film was released to less than mediocre reviews and ratings (Berman).

Damon starred as a white mercenary in *The Great Wall* (2016), a movie set in China that follows a white savior narrative in which a glamorous White Man saves the country (Guerrasio). Although not whitewashing, the trope that only a white man can do anything heroic is false and toxic thinking.

Cruise participated in both whitewashing and the white savior role. In 2014, he was cast as the protagonist William Cage in the blockbuster film *Edge of Tomorrow* (de Guzman). This caused an issue because the novel from which the story was adapted originally had a Japanese protagonist named Keiji Kiriya (de Guzman). The film’s producers had completely replaced the popular Asian character. Even earlier, in 2003, he starred in *The Last Samurai* as American military officer Nathan Algren, who had been hired by the Emperor of Japan to better the Japanese army (Wang Yuen). Again, the harmful narrative that only a white man can save and do good is shown.

These are only a few examples, but they all strengthen the claim that the blatant lack of diversity in Hollywood is extensive.
This cartoon panel by Eric J. Garcia is demonstrative of how Hollywood discriminates against people of color. The image features a woman with a “POC”—person or people of color—shirt on holding a script, attempting to open a locked door to “HOLLYWOOD”. Two large, imposing, emotionless Oscar statues holding swords guard the entrance, one figure holding up his arm in an effort to send the woman away. It is evident the image is symbolism for how the Hollywood film industry does not have opportunities for POC and (quite literally) “locks them out”, preferring white actors to take roles from colored actors, as seen in the last image’s analysis.

of “Hollywood’s Favorite Asian American Actors/Actresses”. Varied roles for different races are severely unavailable, as if to say that diversity is not welcome in Hollywood.

In a similar tone to the last image, this short comic strip by Dan Wasserman shows the complete ignorance of the white men who head the American film industry. The setting can be inferred to be at the Academy Awards, as the Oscar statue is in the background; an awards ceremony known for its scarcity of non-Caucasian nominees. A woman, possibly of color, is speaking to an old white man in a tuxedo. The woman asks the man, “Instead of scrambling for diversity at awards time, why not worry about it when you’re making the movies?” to which the man replies “Of course- Hire more extras!!”. The woman is obviously talking about the absence of protagonists or even strong supporting characters who are people of color in films, but the white man is oblivious and in his mind, cannot comprehend that happening. He instead has a
“Eureka!” moment and thinks to hire more extras, completely missing the point of the woman’s inquisition. This image is a spot-on depiction of how deeply ingrained racism in Hollywood is, so much so that people of color starring in films is unimaginable.

Whilst racial diversity and representation in the Hollywood film industry still has an extremely long way to go, things are looking promising. The widespread #OscarsSoWhite movement began when an activist named April Reign noticed an overwhelmingly white nomination list and was shocked at how people of color seemed to be snubbed (Ashagre). The campaign grew even larger with even more traction after the actors Jada Pinkett-Smith and Will Smith chose to boycott the 2016 Academy Awards (Ashagre). When comparing this modern phenomenon to the past racism against black people in the South with the black codes during the Reconstruction Era, the future, however far, looks bright.
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