

An impressionist painting of a woman in a long, light-colored dress bending over in a lush green field filled with wildflowers. She is holding a small bouquet of flowers. The background features a dense line of trees and a blue sky with soft, white clouds. The overall style is soft and painterly, with visible brushstrokes.

LAUREL HUMANITIES JOURNAL

A revisit of an forgotten
diplomat; An ode to freedom in
chains; A hurricane of vivid
visions intertwined...

ISSUE VIII
SUMMER 2025



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RESEARCH PAPER



MURDER IN THE CONGO! HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES AND HEROISM IN THE CONGO FREE STATE

DAVID CAI

Introduction

Bloody heads hung from spikes on the walls of the village, baskets full of severed hands filled huts, and rooms were dedicated to the confinement and rape of slaves (“Red Rubber: Atrocities in the Congo Free State”). These were some of the horrors the Congolese experienced under the regime of King Leopold II. Driven by the profitable rubber and ivory trades throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the ironically named Congo Free State was in reality the site of widespread exploitation and brutality (“Crimes of the Hand: manual violence and the Congo”). For many years, these atrocities were kept secret, but one man's journalistic campaign brought international attention to the human rights abuses and initiated a global movement for reform (Congo Reform Association). His work not only expanded the rights of the Congolese people by calling global attention to human rights abuses, but it also showcased the moral and ethical responsibilities of journalists. This man was Edmund Dene Morel.

The Dark Continent

Mysterious, dangerous, rich, and alluring, Europeans did not know very much about Africa until the 1870s when explorer Henry Morton Stanley traveled through the ancient continent, documenting his travels in his book, “Through the Dark Continent”. Convinced that they had the right to colonize these lands because the local inhabitants were “savage” and “uncouth” (“New World Racism”), European powers industrialized the continent for profit in what would become known as the “Scramble for Africa”. The division of the African continent into colonies was done without considering the ethical responsibilities European leaders had to involve African leaders in decision-making over the partition, resulting in new geographic divisions that did not reflect the history or politics of already established kingdoms and societies (“The Partition of Africa”). In the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885, the General Act of Berlin was established to declare trading regulations and the boundaries of colonies in Africa, resulting in the loss of sovereignty by African leaders as well as completely omitting the responsibility of European powers to treat African natives with respect and dignity (General Act of Berlin).

From 1885 to 1908, the Congo Free State was ruled by King Leopold II, who is better remembered for his brutal regime in the Congo Free State (“Leopold II”). Driven by a desire for personal profit, Leopold hatched an ambitious plan to conquer the Congo Basin, a region rich in natural resources like rubber and ivory (National Geographic). Leopold abused both the rights of the Congolese and abandoned his moral responsibility to ensure the health and safety of the Congolese under his rule (Williams). Under the guise of a humanitarian and philanthropic mission to improve the lives of the Congolese and introduce Christianity to Africa, Leopold established the Congo Free State in 1885, claiming that his “civilizing influence would counter the practices of the dreadful ‘Arab’

slave-traders” (Hochschild 78). In reality, Leopold's control over the Congo Free State was marked by ruthless exploitation, terror, and genocide.

Broken Beauty

Before Leopold claimed the Congo Basin, native Congolese lived in the Kongo Kingdom (“The Kongo Kingdom”). Under the rule of the ManiKongo, they enjoyed free will and peaceful lives. Mukunzo Kioko, an oral historian of the Pende people, described what life was like: “Our fathers were living comfortably... They had cattle and crops; they had salt marshes and banana trees” (Kioko). The Kingdom itself was a sophisticated and well-developed state that the earliest Europeans recognized and admired (Ross). Other Europeans, such as “the Milanese ambassador in Lisbon compared the capital Mbanza Kongo to the prestigious city of Évora, the royal residence in Portugal” (“The Kongo Kingdom”).

Prior to the reign of Leopold II, the Congolese did not have a rubber industry because this material did not possess value in their society (“The Kongo Kingdom”). It was not until the rubber boom in 1879 that rubber gained immense value (“Death in the Devil's Paradise”). This way of life would not last, however: from 1885 until 1908, the Congolese under King Leopold faced human rights abuses as the Belgian leader demanded high quotas of rubber extraction. To maintain order, Leopold created the Force Publique (FP), Leopold's private army composed of kidnapped Congolese children who were forced to serve (Dowd 2). Using the FP, Leopold imposed forced labor methods to extract rubber. To motivate workers into returning with rubber instead of fleeing, soldiers would take the wives and children of village men hostage until the men fulfilled their weekly quotas (Hochschild 162).

In addition to facing violence from the FP, rubber workers endured other tortures as they collected and processed this precious material. The difficult process of extracting rubber was accomplished by splitting the rubber vine to remove the rubber juice (Hochschild 164). After this, the rubber juice had to be dried. Workers would apply the juice onto their bodies since their body heat dried the rubber faster. When peeled off, these rubber mats pulled out body hair, causing excruciating pain to the workers (“Apple Rubber”): “The first few times it is not without pain that the man pulls it off the hairy parts of his body” (Chaltin). Adding to this misery was the fact that Congolese rubber harvesters lacked workers' rights. They operated on impossible timeframes, were frequently threatened with death, lacked safety equipment, and often died on the job (“Belgian Congo”). Most egregiously, the quotas rubber workers were required to reach were impossible to satisfy: “The normal quota assigned to each village was three to four kilos of dried rubber per adult male per fortnight – which essentially meant full-time labor for those men” (Hochschild 163).

FP soldiers were responsible for ensuring that quotas were met. If quotas were not met, natives would be subjected to beatings, mutilations, and executions (“Red Rubber: Atrocities in the Congo Free State”). One example of this was recorded by a Catholic priest who quoted a native man, Tswambe. “I saw [Fievez's] soldier Molili, then guarding the village of Boyeka, take a big net, put ten arrested natives in it, attach big stones to the net, and make it tumble into the river” (Hochschild 166). To prove that the bullets they shot natives with had not been used for hunting, soldiers had to provide the hand of a person they had executed (“Red Rubber: Atrocities in the Congo Free State”). Sometimes, though, soldiers “shot a cartridge at an animal in hunting; then cut off a hand from a living man” (Hochschild 165). These practices resulted in the deaths of around 10 million Congolese.

To keep these atrocities secret, Leopold created the International Association of the Congo, an international group dedicated to the well-being of the Congo (“Association Internationale du Congo”).

He used it as a front to deceive the world, but reports of atrocities in the Congo surfaced through the efforts of missionaries, journalists, and humanitarian activists. Missionaries, like John Harris of Baringa, were aware of the abuse of the Congolese, writing, “The abject misery and utter abandon is positively indescribable” (Baringa). Soon, figures including E.D Morel, William Shepard, Joseph Conrad, Mark Twain, Roger Casement, and George Washington Williams would also speak up about these atrocities (Congo Reform Association).

Here Comes the Cavalry!

Mutilations, executions, and beatings were normal in the Congo Free State, yet unknown to the world (Red Rubber: Atrocities in the Congo Free State”; “Leopold II”). That was until E.D Morel investigated the Congo Free State due to his concern over human rights abuses. A French-speaking clerk in the Elder Dempster & Company shipping line, Morel was often sent to Belgium to oversee the unloading of ships (“Congo Free State Propaganda War”). Soon, he saw the dark correlation between the incoming shipments of rubber and the outbound ships of military surplus (Morel). Morel correctly guessed that Belgium and the Congo Free State were not trading, but rather that the Congolese were enslaved under brutal working conditions that threatened both their lives and dignity (Hochschild 184). This led him to investigate deeper, and he eventually uncovered the brutal exploitation and forced labor under King Leopold II's regime. Filled with moral responsibility and “determination to do my best to expose and destroy what I then knew to be a legalized infamy accompanied by unimaginable barbarities”, Morel quit his job as a clerk and launched the Congo Reform Association, (CRA) a public media campaign, along with Roger Casement and other famous figures like Mark Twain and members of the British Parliament (Morel; Congo Reform Association). Through his efforts, Morel's journalism exposed the horrors of the Congo Free State and galvanized a global human rights movement that ultimately led to significant reforms. “Morel's investigative work and publications, including the establishment of the newspaper West African Mail in 1903, played a crucial role in raising public awareness and mobilizing international condemnation of the atrocities in the Congo” (Lapham's Quarterly).

The CRA utilized journalism as its main mechanism to spread news about the Congo Free State and apply international pressure against Leopold's regime. Using works by famous authors and politicians like Mark Twain's King Leopold's Soliloquy, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's The Crime of the Congo, and Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness, Morel and Casement's CRA raised public concern over human rights issues in the Congo (“Congo Reform Association”). Morel himself wrote “three full books and portions of two others, hundreds of articles for almost all the major British newspapers, and several dozen pamphlets” (Hochschild 187). Because of his journalistic reporting that exposed human rights abuses, Morel could not visit the Congo Free State. Subsequently, many of the details in his publications came from missionaries, who would send their reports to him for publishing, as “insiders knew that he was the man to come to if they had any revealing documents to leak” (Hochschild 189). These missionaries were often discredited by Leopold's agents when they spoke out. For example, George Washington Williams was condemned by Leopold after Williams had published his scathing letter accusing Leopold of human rights abuses (Ohio Statehouse).

In addition to his extensive writings, Morel organized public campaigns. Events across the world helped to gain attention for his cause. Among the most famous of these events were the Lantern Lectures, where photos of the Congo genocide were displayed to audiences (Congo Reform Association). One of the most famous lantern lecture pictures is the photograph of Nsala of Wala gazing at his daughter's severed hand and foot (Appendix 1). This photograph was shown as “a grim testament to the horrors of the rubber trade... a powerful visual tool in the fight against colonial abuses” (Hassel and Vanhaesebrouck 1). However, Leopold did not stay silent. He fought back fiercely, matching each accusation against him with his own. When the Foreign Office in London

criticized him, Leopold replied, “accusing the English of hypocrisy: much of the policies followed by Belgians in the Congo had been standard for the English elsewhere” (Prashad 11). He copied many of Morel’s strategies, notably producing pro-Leopold books that were quickly published and distributed (Hochschild 239). Ultimately, international pressure forced Leopold to relinquish the Congo Free State to the Belgian government, but without the work of individuals and the media, this would never have occurred. The annexation of the Congo Free State displays the moral responsibility of individuals to speak up when presented with injustices, just as Morel did. It also emphasizes the responsibility of the media to use its power to aid the oppressed. If these individuals and the media had not upheld their responsibility, the Congolese would have continued to suffer.

Freedom At Last?

When the Belgian Parliament convened in 1908, officials declared, “The Congo has been the scene of excesses that cast a shadow over civilization. We must end this state of affairs”. (Belgian Parliament 1908) That same year, the Congo Free State was annexed and renamed the Belgian Congo. Soon after, many of the rights Morel advocated for were granted to the Congolese (“Congo Reform Association”). By 1913, the arbitrary use of violence was curbed, nobody could be “forced to work on behalf of and for the profit of companies or privates”, and citizens were granted the right to trade with everyone (Belgium Parliament Article 3 Colonial Charter). However, despite this progress, the Belgian government also continued to abuse the rights of natives. For example, African leaders were not consulted on issues that violated their right to have a say in decision-making. They had no role in legislation, but traditional rulers were used as agents to collect taxes and recruit labour” (De Coning; “Belgian Congo”).

Moreover, the right to education was also ignored in the Belgian Congo. The government believed that “Congolese education had to essentially be moral education because their primary task in the Congo was a civilising mission to lead African pagans to Christianity” (De Coning). After the annexation of the Belgian Congo, the Belgian government prioritized extracting resources over the welfare of the Congolese, as the land and resources of the area were controlled by Belgium from 1908 until 1960 (“Belgian Congo”). Due to the continued abuses of rights, rebellions broke out against the Belgians (“Belgian Congo”). For example, “A rebellion broke out in several eastern districts in 1919 and was not suppressed until 1923. In January 1959, riots broke out in Leopoldville (now Kinshasa) after a rally was held calling for the independence of the Congo. Violent altercations between Belgian forces and the Congolese also occurred later that year” (“Belgian Congo”).

On June 30, 1960, the Belgian Congo gained independence and became the Democratic Republic of Congo (“Belgian Congo”). Despite stepping in to improve the quality of life for Congolese, the Belgian government neglected their responsibilities as colonial governors to take care of the natives in the Congo. Although not all of the rights Morel advocated for ended up being respected, life was still improved for the Congolese compared to Leopold’s reign. Shortly after the annexation of the Congo Free State, Morel disbanded the CRA because he believed that their job was finished (Congo Reform Association).

New Beginnings

The Congo Free State Atrocity was an important event in human rights history because it showed that the media is able to bring change for the greater good. In the U.S., muckrakers exposed injustices in workers' rights by publishing essays, accounts, and photographs in the media and in “several cases, muckrakers became activists themselves and spent years speaking throughout the country about their work and the need for reform” (PBS).

In the Congo Free State, individual missionaries and travelers tried to bring attention to the horrors of Leopold's personal colony (Slade 2). Although they failed, they became the basis for Morel's reporting. Together, they forced the annexation of the Congo Free State through international pressure (Congo Reform Association). The Congo Free State was a turning point for colonialism as it exposed the horrors of this practice and demanded greater oversight for colonial regimes ("Congo Free State"). Today, the Democratic Republic of Congo lags behind the modern world in part due to its tumultuous history that can be traced to its colonial past (Center for Preventive Action 1).

Conclusion

The Congo Free State was the site of various atrocities that were kept secret for years ("Congo Free State"). King Leopold II of Belgium took over the Congo Basin area under the guise of a philanthropic cause, but exploited the people and natural resources of the region for his personal profit without any regard for the welfare of the Congolese ("Leopold II"). Through the efforts of E. D. Morel and the media, the world fully became aware of these horrors (Congo Reform Association). By utilizing media and journalism, Morel created international pressure that forced the annexation of the Congo Free State ("Belgian Congo"). We learn from the Congo Free State that colonial powers have a responsibility to take care of their subjects, and that the colonized have certain unalienable rights. When these rights are violated, it is the moral responsibility of the wider world to act and bring justice to the oppressed. These violations also show us the unalienable rights everyone shares, such as the right to life, freedom from torture, and freedom from slavery, among others (Universal Declaration of Human Rights).

Annotated Bibliography

Primary Sources

Alice Seeley Harris: Nsala of Wala gazing at severed hand and foot of his daughter.

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/5/5a/Nsala_of_Wala_in_the_Nsongo_District.jpg/1920px-Nsala_of_Wala_in_the_Nsongo_District.jpg

I used Harris' photographs of the horrors in the Congo to provide imagery throughout my paper. I also used her photographs as part of the examples of ways the Congo Reform Association garnered attention for their cause, as well as reactions to her photos.

Belgian Commission of Enquiry: The Congo; a Report of the Commission of Enquiry appointed by the Congo Free State Government.

<https://archive.org/details/congoreportofcom00congrich/page/n5/mode/2up>

This document taught me about the abuses uncovered by this particular investigation, which missionaries had been reporting on for a long time. It showed me that it had finally come to the time when Leopold was under serious enquiry because his own government had finally decided to launch an investigation against him. I used this investigation in my paper to provide more examples of human rights abuses in the Congo.

Belgium Parliament - Colonial Charter.

<https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/service/gdc/gdclccn/a2/20/00/95/6/a22000956/a22000956.pdf>

This document helped me understand the responsibilities the Belgian government undertook in taking care of the Congolese after annexing the Belgian Congo from Leopold II. I learned about the rights natives were granted and about rules in governing the colony.

E. D. Morel - The Congo Slave State (1903).

https://books.google.com/books?id=5HYMAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbg_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false

This quote helped me understand how Morel reached the conclusion of what was happening, as well as everything else going on at the time that influenced him. I used this as a fact checker as well as to gain insight into Morel's personal reflections on the Congo and his efforts to bring justice there.

E. D. Morel: Diary.

These quotes showed me how Morel figured out and reacted to the discovery of what was happening in the Congo Free State. It also provided quotes detailing how Morel planned to end the human rights abuses there and correspondence with allies such as Roger Casement and Mark Twain.

General Act of the Berlin Conference on West Africa, 26 February 1885.

<https://loveman.sdsu.edu/docs/1885GeneralActBerlinConference.pdf>

This source provided me with the entire signed General Act of the Berlin Conference to read over and review. It allowed me to see the things European leaders valued most and tried to come to an agreement over quickly, such as territorial disputes and trade regulations whereas the fate of those living in Africa were barely discussed, if even mentioned at all.

George Washington Williams: Letter to King Leopold.

<https://www.blackpast.org/global-african-history/primary-documents-global-african-history/george-washington-williams-open-letter-king-leopold-congo-1890/>

The letter written by Williams gave me a lot of quotes I used in my paper to provide evidence for my claims. I also learned about how well Leopold had hidden the atrocities in the Congo to the point that missionaries were shocked to enter the Congo Free State and see these human rights abuses.

Henry Morton Stanley: Through the Dark Continent (1878).

[https://rcin.org.pl/igipz/Content/68281/PDF/WA51_88286_PG586-1-r1878_Through-the-dark-t1 .pdf](https://rcin.org.pl/igipz/Content/68281/PDF/WA51_88286_PG586-1-r1878_Through-the-dark-t1.pdf)

Stanley's book documenting his exploration and findings in Africa provided me with a lot of insight as to how African natives lived before European colonization began. I used his work to add points to sections of my paper where I contrasted the lives of the Congolese before, during, and after Leopold ruled over them.

John Harris of Baringa: Letter to King Leopold.

The letter Harris wrote to King Leopold II showed me the state of the villagers found at the village of Insongo Mboyo. I learned that missionaries would often lie to the villagers to give them false hopes that better times would come because the situation in the Congo was so bleak.

Joseph Conrad: Heart of Darkness. https://www.ibiblio.org/ebooks/Conrad/Heart_Darkness.pdf

I used this book to learn more about how the members of the CRA utilized the media to garner attention towards the Congo Free State situation. I also found this book informative on account that it provided me with a lot of examples of human rights abuses without actually naming any real people.

King Leopold II: Statement on Relinquishing the Congo Free State.

<https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/10894361-i-will-give-them-my-congo-but-they-have-no>

I learned about Leopold's bitterness in relinquishing his "private colony". I learned about the extent to which Leopold went in trying to discredit his political opponents, including bribery and death threats.

Liévin Jean Van de Velde papers <https://scua.uoregon.edu/repositories/2/resources/1972>

This collection of papers taught me a lot about the lives of soldiers in the Congo Free State and how desensitized they had become to the human rights abuses there. I learned about the everyday actions soldiers took against the helpless natives and that these actions were viewed as the norm by both parties. I used this collection of papers throughout my paper as background information.

Loi Fondamentale (fundamental law).

<https://leganet.cd/Legislation/Droit%20Public/Loi%20fondamentale%201960.pdf>

I used this document to learn about the conditions under which the Belgian Government granted the Belgian Congo independence, officially becoming the Democratic Republic of Congo. I used this document to learn some history about the Belgian Congo, as well as the conditions of independence.

Louis Chaltin: Diary.

This quote taught me that producing rubber bricks was a painful process that involved tearing off one's own hair. It also taught me that Congolese had no worker rights and that these things were so common that Chaltin could write about them in his diary without issue. I used this quote to emphasize the difficulty of producing rubber.

Manuel du Voyageur et du Résident au Congo (Manual of the Congo).

This article helped me understand how natives were expected to be treated by officers. That is to say, how much natives were to be degraded and treated like animals, as if they were expendable. I used this source as a way to show how natives were meant to be used and then thrown away, and the torture of natives was just another day to day task similar to raising the flag or firing salutes to ranking officers.

Mark Twain: King Leopold's Soliloquy. https://archive.org/details/kingleopoldssoli00twai_0

This book helped me visualize some of the difficulties that Leopold faced as he was accused of human rights abuses in his Congo Free State. It gave me a sense of how Leopold would rebuke the statements made against him, and I used it as an example of writings that condemned Leopold.

Roger Casement: The Casement Report (1904). <https://archive.org/details/CasementReport>

This report helped me learn about the atrocities in the Congo. It gave detailed reports on how Congolese lived under Force Publique rule, showing a stark contrast between what Leopold was peddling and the reality of the Congo Free State.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle: The Crime of the Congo. <https://archive.org/details/crimeofcongo00doyliala>

I used this book to learn more about the protesting techniques used by members of the CRA. I also found this book useful because it provided an account on the Congo similar to Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness, of which neither man visited the Congo Free State but both produced almost perfectly true and well researched works.

U.S. Department of State: G7 Foreign Ministers' Statement on the Escalation of Violence in the Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

<https://www.state.gov/g7-foreign-ministers-statement-on-the-escalation-of-violence-in-the-eastern-democratic-republic-of-the-congo/>

This excerpt of a speech helped me learn a lot about the current power struggle in the Democratic Republic of Congo. I learned about the different rebellions the DRC has faced in recent times and about the economic state of the country currently. I used this speech to paraphrase and replace some of my words with supporting evidence in my arguments.

Annotated Bibliography

Secondary Sources

African Passages, Lowcountry Adaptations: New World Racism.

https://ldhi.library.cofc.edu/exhibits/show/africanpassageslowcountryadapt/introductionatlanticworld/new_world_racism#:~:text=With%20the%20rise%20of%20African,%2C%20unintelligent%2C%20and%20sexually%20promiscuous.

This source helped me understand how Europeans viewed native Africans as savages and uncouth. I used this in my paper to emphasize how this viewpoint allowed Europeans to justify their takeover of Africa as a superior species to the Africans.

AM Digital: Red Rubber.

<https://www.amdigital.co.uk/insights/news/red-rubber-atrocities-in-the-congo-free-state-in-confidential-print-africa>

This source helped me understand the immense requirements placed on the local Congolese that were often impossible to satisfy. I used this source to show how natives would go to war because it was easier to fight than to meet the requirements imposed upon them

Amnesty International: Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/universal-declaration-of-human-rights/#>

This website taught me about the internationally recognized set of unalienable rights everybody possesses regardless of their nationality, ethnicity, sex, age, or any other determinants. I used this website to refer a lot to my sections on rights abuses in the Congo Free State because so many of these rights had not been retained by the Congolese.

Apple Rubber: How is Natural Rubber Made?

<https://www.applerubber.com/blog/how-is-natural-rubber-made/>

This source taught me how workers in the jungle turned rubber juice into the bricks that were presented to FP officers. I used this source in my paper to describe how rubber was produced by people in the Congo Free State.

Arts and Media Archeology: From Congo atrocities to Ruwenzori heroism: The power of visual campaigns in Belgian colonial lantern lectures.

<https://www.artsmediaarchaeology.blog/from-congo-atrocities-to-ruwenzori-heroism-the-power-of-visual-campaigns-in-belgian-colonial-lantern-lectures/>

I used this website to learn more about the lantern lectures utilized by the CRA to display photographs to large audiences. I used this website to add background information to my section of the paper that detailed the impacts of different strategies to garner attention for the CRA.

BBC: Belgium apology for mixed-race kidnappings in colonial era.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-47817530>

This quote helped me understand how Congolese people were treated at home and overseas. It showed that the Belgian occupiers had no compassion for the Congolese natives and took children to Belgium to be “properly” raised.

BBC: Belgium 'wakes up' to its bloody colonial past.
<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-53017188>

This quote provided me with some examples of how Congolese were punished for not meeting rubber gathering quotas. It also helped me understand how impossible these quotas were to satisfy, resulting in more punishments for the Congolese, contributing to the ultimate death count.

Britannica: Belgian Congo. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Belgian-Congo>

This quote showed me how the Belgian government attempted to take care of the Congolese after annexing the colony from Leopold II. It also helped me understand how Africans were still marginalized despite the fact that Belgians were supposed to be helping the Congo recover. I learned that the Congo never returned to its original state and that even under a new government, the Congolese were still suffering.

Britannica: Berlin West Africa Conference.
<https://www.britannica.com/event/Berlin-West-Africa-Conference>

This source helped me understand the rules and regulations laid out by the Berlin Conference that were agreed upon. It also showed me that no thought was given to how natives would adjust or be treated under these new rules despite the fact that the Europeans were taking over the homes of these natives.

Britannica: King Leopold II. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Leopold-II-king-of-Belgium>

This source helped me to understand how King Leopold was driven by a need for money to fund his building in Belgium. I used it to find the ways in which King Leopold improved Belgium during his reign to give historical context in my paper.

Cedric De Coning: The Colonial Legacy and Transitional Justice in the Democratic Republic of Congo.
<https://www.accord.org.za/ajcr-issues/the-colonial-legacy-and-transitional-justice-in-the-democratic-republic-of-the-congo/#:~:text=However%2C%20because%20of%20atrocities%20committed,State%20on%2015%20November%201908.>

This website taught me a lot about how life was after the annexation of the Congo Free State. I learned about the improved rights of natives, and about the rights that had still not been granted. I used this website in my short term effects portion of my paper to convey the idea that life had improved, but not enough.

Charles Laderman: "The Invasion of the United States by an Englishman: E. D. Morel and the Anglo-American Intervention in the Congo"
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/341429206_THEODORE_ROOSEVELT'S_STATECR_AFT_AND_THE_AMERICAN_RISE_TO_WORLD_POWER

This source taught me about how the Belgian government worked to bring more rights to the Congolese after the annexation of the Congo Free State. I used this source to provide paraphrases in my paper when I discussed how living conditions were improved for Congolese after the annexation of the Congo Free State.

Council on Foreign Relations: Conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo.
<https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/violence-democratic-republic-congo>

This document taught me about how the DRC struggles economically today due to the tumultuous and violent past of the region. I learned about constant rebellions and uprisings, as well as the economic state of the country. I used this source in my paper where I discussed the modern day effects of the Congo's history.

Data Privacy Framework: Congo, Democratic Republic Political Security.
<https://www.privacyshield.gov/ps/article?id=Congo-Democratic-Republic-Political-Security-Environment>

This quote gave me insight on how the Democratic Republic of Congo is still suffering from a lack of stable government due to its tumultuous past. I learned that warlords fight over parts of the country and that this is mostly due to the fact that the Congo did not develop at all while European governments were in charge of its care.

Economic History Association: The International Natural Rubber Market.
<https://eh.net/encyclopedia/the-international-natural-rubber-market-1870-1930/>

This source helped me understand why rubber suddenly became so profitable. It also helped me understand why King Leopold almost possessed a monopoly over the rubber market at the start of the Rubber Boom.

Edinburgh University Press: E.D. Morel & the CRA.
<https://www.eupublishing.com/doi/abs/10.3366/brw.2016.0238?journalCode=brw>

This source introduced me to many of Morel's allies in the Congo Reform Association and all over the world as they fought to force Leopold II to relinquish control of the Congo Free State. I also learned about the methodologies Morel and his allies used to garner attention.

Encyclopedia Britannica: Western Colonialism, Partition, Africa, Imperialism.
<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Western-colonialism/Partition-of-Africa>

This article helped me understand why European countries committed the actions they did in Africa by discussing the Scramble for Africa and showing me the points of view of several European countries. It talked about how European countries drained Africa of valuable resources, and it discussed why countries that had not been interested in Africa at first were suddenly fighting to establish territories in Africa.

History Guild: The Belgian Congo.
<https://historyguild.org/the-belgian-congo/?srsltid=AfmBOooIeceESPcwOd7dXNBVuC0l3SgV56vYMewFAE9mCWaYpO5nTZIL>

This article also helped me learn about the punishments the Congolese endured because they fought back against captors or could not meet quotas for rubber production. It provided me with more examples of clear human rights abuses in the Congo that I could implement in my paper. Hochschild, Adam. *King Leopold's Ghost*. Boston: Mariner Books, 1998. This source showed me how the FP soldiers terrorized Congolese natives in an attempt to force them to work. This book gave me many examples of stories about human rights abuses. I also used this source to provide background information and historical context in my paper.

International Encyclopedia of the First World War: Edmund Dene Morel.

<https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/morel-edmund-dene/>

This article helped me understand what motivated E. D. Morel to shed light upon the atrocities of the Congo Free State by recounting the events leading up to Morel's discovery of the atrocities in the Congo Free State through shipping records. It also provided insight into the life of Morel during and after his career in politics and journalism in the fight for human rights.

Katie Couric: The Media.

<https://quotefancy.com/quote/1147999/Katie-Couric-The-media-can-be-an-instrument-of-change-It-can-maintain-the-status-quo-and>

I used this quote to close out my paper because I thought it was a fitting quote that encompassed my entire argument. This quote was also by a journalist, which I thought was perfect because my paper was based on the work of a journalist.

Lapham's Quarterly. <https://www.laphamsquarterly.org/>

This source provided me with some of Morel's works and writings that he distributed during his campaign. I used many of these sources to craft an argument as to why Morel used the media effectively during his fight with the CRA.

Lumen Learning: The Democratic Republic of the Congo.

[https://courses.lumenlearning.com/suny-fmcc-boundless-worldhistory/chapter/the-democratic-re public-of-the-congo/](https://courses.lumenlearning.com/suny-fmcc-boundless-worldhistory/chapter/the-democratic-republic-of-the-congo/)

This source helped me understand the condition of leadership over the Congo throughout its tumultuous history. I learned about how ownership of the territory was heavily contested after the Belgian government formally withdrew from the area and how the area is still fighting for a stable government today.

Mukunzo Kioko.

<https://youngafrikanpioneers.wordpress.com/2015/03/11/african-view-of-early-europeans/>

His quote helped me understand what life was like for the Congolese before Europeans arrived and started the slave trade. I used his quote to provide evidence in my paper when I stated that the Congolese lived peaceful lives to contrast with the horrors they experienced later.

NatGeo: Feb 5, 1885 CE: Belgian King Establishes Congo Free State.

<https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/belgian-king-establishes-congo-free-state/>

This article helped me understand how King Leopold II violated human rights by providing deep background information on how Leopold took control of the Congo Free State and how he treated the Congolese people cruelly and inhumanely.

Opportunity International: Learn Facts about the DRC and poverty.

<https://opportunity.org/our-impact/where-we-work/the-democratic-republic-of-congo-facts-about-poverty#:~:text=Nearly%20three%20in%20four%20people,one%20of%20the%20lowest%20countries.>

This source helped me understand the problems the DRC is facing today that stem directly from its time as Leopold's personal colony. It highlighted issues that could be prevented if the DRC had a stable government but because of history, are now rampant throughout the country.

Oxford Reference: Berlin Conference of 1884-1885.

<https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/acref/9780195337709.001.0001/acref-9780195337709-e-0467#:~:text=Berlin%20Conference%20of%201884%E2%80%931885%20Meeting%20at%20which%20the%20major,the%20Berlin%20West%20Africa%20Conference.>

This source provided insight on which parts of Central Africa Leopold II really desired for himself, as well as the natural resources in those areas that had piqued Leopold's interest. It also outlined all of Leopold's demands in the Berlin Conference when he laid claim to the Congo Free State.

PBS Newshour: Investigative Journalists: The Muckrakers.

<https://www.journalisminaction.org/case/ida-tarbell-muckraker>

This source taught me about the ways muckrakers used the media to expose corruption in the U.S, similar to how the CRA used the media to expose Leopold. I used this to provide support for my argument about the usage of media.

Revealing Histories: British attitudes to 'others'.

<http://revealinghistories.org.uk/legacies-stereotypes-racism-and-the-civil-rights-movement/articles/british-attitudes-to-others.html>

This source showed me how European powers viewed Africans as animals and lesser beings. It also showed me how these European nations defended their actions and abuse of rights against Africans by declaring the natives as inhuman and unworthy of rights.

Royal Museum for Central Africa: The Kongo Kingdom.

https://www.africamuseum.be/en/discover/history_articles/kongo-kingdom

This article helped me understand how the Kongo Kingdom functioned before European arrivals and how even Europeans admired the sophisticated social class levels, especially Portuguese sailors. In fact the Kongo Kingdom was even compared to nations in Europe as an example of excellence. A Kongoese King even changed his name to Portuguese and established a close relationship with the Portuguese King of the time.

Ruth Slade: English Missionaries and the Beginning of the Anti-Congoese Campaign in England.

https://www.persee.fr/doc/rbph_0035-0818_1955_num_33_1_1933

This document taught me about the work of individual missionaries who wrote letters and pamphlets for news outlets about the atrocities of the Congo. It discussed the impact these missionaries had despite not being able to apply enough international pressure on Leopold. I used this document to add more information to my section on the media's role in the annexation of the Congo Free State.

South African History Online: Kingdom of Kongo 1390-1914.

<https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/kingdom-kongo-1390-1914>

This source helped me understand what laws were in place during the Kongo Kingdom's time as a sovereign state before the formal invasion of Europeans. I learned about the rights Congolese reserved and how those rights changed after European powers took over. I also learned about slavery in the Kongo kingdom and how that varied from the form of slavery in the West.

Stanford University: The Congo: From Leopold to Lumumba.

<https://web.stanford.edu/class/e297a/The%20Congo%20From%20Leopold%20to%20Lumumba.doc>

This source provided many examples of the false promises Leopold made to other European nations to ensure that they would recognize the Congo Free State as his colony. It also went in depth on how these promises were meant to help the Congo by limiting slave trade and bringing Christianity, but instead were never fulfilled in favor of working the natives for profit.

Survival International: Death in the Devil's Paradise.

<https://www.survivalinternational.org/articles/3282-rubber-boom>

This source taught me how rubber was gathered. Although the article focused on rubber gathering in the Amazon, the methods were the same for workers on either side of the world. I used this source in my paper by paraphrasing it to describe the process of harvesting and drying rubber.

Teach Democracy: King Leopold's "Heart of Darkness".

<https://teachdemocracy.org/bill-of-rights-in-action/bria-16-2-a-king-leopold-s-heart-of-darkness#:~:text=In%201885%2C%20King%20Leopold%20II,movement%20of%20the%2020th%20century.>

This source helped me understand how E.D. Morel discovered the forced labor systems in the Congo, and the steps he took afterwards. I also got deeper insight as to why he decided it was worth losing his job to bring justice to the Congolese.

Vijay Prashad: The Boiling Oil of Mark Twain.

This article helped me understand a lot about Mark Twain's motives in writing on the Congo Free State. It explained to me what points Twain was trying to make in King Leopold's Soliloquy, and I learned about how King Leopold would rebuke the accusations piled against him by the CRA.

Felicity Dowd University of Canberra: Force Publique Congo.

<https://www.canberra.edu.au/media/uccreativecompetition/submissions/Felicity%20Dowd%20-%20Force%20Publique%20Congo.pdf>

I used this paper to describe the ways Force Publique soldiers would punish Congolese people in order to establish control over the villagers. I also learned about the kinds of quotas natives were forced to meet and the ways villagers harvest rubber in order to meet these quotas.

University of Nebraska: The Impact of the Belgian Colonization in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/honorstheses/647/>

The quotes I used from this paper showed me what the Belgian government did in the Congo after annexing it from Leopold. I learned about child kidnappings and other rights abuses the Belgian government committed despite the fact that they were supposed to be taking care of the Congolese and help them recover from Leopold's dictatorship.

Wikipedia: Congo Free State propaganda war.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Congo_Free_State_propaganda_war#:~:text=The%20Congo%20Free%20State%20propaganda,outposts%20necessary%20to%20protect%20trade.

This article helped me understand how both the Congo Reform Association and King Leopold utilized the media to try to discredit the claims of the opposing group. It also depicted how the media can challenge governments and garner public support for a just cause.

Appendix

Appendix 1

Nsala of Wala in the Nsongo District



Deaf Education in America: Examining the Shift From a Privilege to a Right

Yuman Wu

Introduction

The American School for the Deaf, the first permanent school for deaf people, was established in 1817 in Hartford, Connecticut, by Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet, Laurent Clerc, and Dr. Mason Fitch Cogswell, marking a key step towards greater equality for people with disabilities and an early event in the American disabilities rights movement.¹ Beginning in the late 19th century, individuals with disabilities protested discriminatory policies and attitudes.² By the mid-20th century, disabled people and their allies joined together to achieve their shared goal of attaining rights equal to those of able-bodied citizens.³

Grassroots activism characterized the disability rights movement.⁴ Prior to the passage of disability-rights legislation in the 1970s, which culminated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990, government support was minimal.⁵ As a result, efforts to educate the deaf were primarily the responsibility of deaf people or their families.

However, after the passing of IDEA and through the efforts of the disability rights movement, deaf education became a public responsibility and a right for deaf citizens, as opposed to a private burden. This shift occurred because disabled WWII veterans brought disability rights into public view.⁶

1 “The American School for the Deaf,” literature from the American School for the Deaf, no publication date available.

2 Michael Rembis, Catherine Kudlick, and Kim E. Nielsen, *The Oxford Handbook of Disability History* (Oxford University Press, 2017), 439.

3 Rembis, Kudlick, and Nielsen, *The Oxford Handbook of Disability History*, 439.

4 Rembis, Kudlick, and Nielsen, *The Oxford Handbook of Disability History*, 439.

5 “Disability Rights Timeline,” United States Coast Guard, effective September 28, 2023, <https://www.uscg.mil/Resources/Civil-Rights/Latest-Civil-Right-News/Article/3541201/disability-rights-timeline/>.

6 Rembis, Kudlick, and Nielsen, *The Oxford Handbook of Disability History*, 442.

The disability rights movement also experienced synergy with the 1960s Civil Rights Movement when civil rights activists persuaded Americans that equality and rights for all were a public concern.⁷ Deaf rights, like other rights for the disabled, did not become a public responsibility with guaranteed rights until the 1970s with the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, when wounded veterans and the Civil Rights Movement convinced the federal government to better care for people with disabilities. This paper will detail the transformation of education for deaf people - a crucial right - from a private burden to a public responsibility.

A Concise History of Disability Rights

The treatment of deaf people varied widely across time and was dependent on whether the individual was born deaf or later became deaf. In Ancient Greece, when a disabled child was born, the father decided whether the child would live.⁸ However, the Romans recognized deaf people as requiring special protection from others in the community.⁹ Similarly, the ancient Hebrews and Egyptians treated disabled persons with respect. In Egypt, blind men often became musicians,¹⁰ and the Hebrews considered disabilities as a fact of life, part of God's creation.¹¹ Although deaf people were "legally incompetent"—they couldn't own property or hold other legal rights—the Hebrews believed the deaf could be taught to write, even if they could not speak.¹²

During the early Middle Ages, deaf adults were objects of ridicule, serving as court jesters or committed to asylums because their behaviors were thought to be the result of demonic possession.¹³ The Catholic Church viewed deaf people as heathens and barred them from attending church services because they were unable to hear the word of God.¹⁴ Thus, across the Middle Ages, deaf people were viewed as abnormal and routinely ostracized.¹⁵

7 “Disability Rights and Racial Justice,” Legal Defense Fund, accessed January 15, 2025, <https://www.naacpldf.org/disability-rights-and-racial-justice/>.

8 Melvia M. Nomeland and Ronald E. Nomeland, *The Deaf Community in America: History in the Making* (McFarland, 2011), 4-13.

9 Nomeland and Nomeland, *The Deaf Community in America*, 4-13.

10 Nomeland and Nomeland, *The Deaf Community in America*, 4-13.

11 Nomeland and Nomeland, *The Deaf Community in America*, 4-13; for more information on treatment of people with disabilities in Judaism, see also Judith Z. Abrams, *Judaism and Disability: Portrayals in Ancient Texts from the Tanach through the Bavli* (Gallaudet University Press, 1998).

12 Nomeland and Nomeland, *The Deaf Community in America*, 4-13; for more information on treatment of people with disabilities in Judaism, see also Abrams, *Judaism and Disability*.

13 Nomeland and Nomeland, *The Deaf Community in America*, 4-13.

14 Nomeland and Nomeland, *The Deaf Community in America*, 4-13.

15 Nomeland and Nomeland, *The Deaf Community in America*, 4-13.

The Renaissance saw the beginning of a movement to improve the lives of the deaf through education. During this period of rebirth and growth, deaf people were recognized as people with abilities, too.¹⁶ Therefore, deaf Europeans were taught to read and write.¹⁷ For deaf children of wealthy families, they were sent to monasteries or taught by tutors due to the limited number of schools for the deaf.¹⁸ *De Inventionem Dialecticam* (On Dialectical Invention), published in 1548 by Rudolph Agricola, a Dutch scholar, described a deaf-mute who learned to read and write.¹⁹ Italian physician Dr. Girolamo Cardano discovered Agricola's story and was impressed.²⁰ Cardano's firstborn son was deaf, and he reasoned that written words were independent of the sounds of speech; thus, deaf people could be taught without aural references.²¹ He theorized that a deaf individual might be taught to "hear" by reading and to "speak" by writing, and he recognized deaf people's ability to reason.²² Centuries later, American professor Dr. Ruth Bender called Cardano's findings "a revolutionary declaration," thus breaking down the long-standing belief that hearing words was necessary to understand ideas.²³

Enlightenment-era thinkers emphasized education to promote freedom and morality.²⁴ The inquiry and reason that drove the Enlightenment made education valuable, improving education for all. The democratization of education began, slowly but surely, to extend beyond children born in wealthy families to the children of common people,²⁵ and soon, the first special school for the deaf opened in France.²⁶

16 Marina RADIĆ ŠESTIĆ, Nadežda DIMIĆ*, Mia ŠEŠUM, "The Beginnings of Education of the Deaf Persons: Renaissance Europe," *Specijalna edukacija i rehabilitacija* 11 (2021): 147-165.
<https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/477908073.pdf>

17 ŠESTIĆ, DIMIĆ*, ŠEŠUM, "The Beginnings of Education of the Deaf Persons."

18 Nomeland and Nomeland, *The Deaf Community in America*, 4-13.

19 Nomeland and Nomeland, *The Deaf Community in America*, 4-13.

20 Nomeland and Nomeland, *The Deaf Community in America*, 4-13.

21 Nomeland and Nomeland, *The Deaf Community in America*, 4-13.

22 Nomeland and Nomeland, *The Deaf Community in America*, 4-13.

23 Nomeland and Nomeland, *The Deaf Community in America*, 4-13.

24 Michalina Clifford-Vaughan, "Enlightenment and Education," *The British Journal of Sociology* 14, no. 2 (1963): 135–43 <https://doi.org/10.2307/586775>.

25 Marcel Broesterhuizen, *From Ephphatha to Deaf Pastors: Deaf Pastoral Ministry*, Vol. 46, Peeters Publishers, 2019 <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1q26q69>.

26 Isaac Lewis Peet, "The Influence of the Life and Work of the Abbe de L'épée," *American Annals of the Deaf* 35, no. 2 (1890): 138, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44627200>.

Early Deaf Education in the United States

In 1812, William Bolling, the father of a deaf son, founded the first American school for the deaf in Manchester, Virginia.²⁷ He employed John Braidwood of Edinburgh to run the oral school, which educated deaf students through speech lessons rather than through signs.²⁸ The school began with much promise, well-supported both financially and in attendance, but Braidwood soon abandoned the school.²⁹

Around the same time, public interest increased in founding a school for deaf students, and Pennsylvanian Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet traveled to Europe to learn the methods employed in teaching the deaf (see Appendix C).³⁰ He went to Paris and brought back a young French instructor, Laurent Clerc, to tour New England, lecturing about deaf education and securing support for a school.³¹ In response, Connecticut's legislature granted \$5,000, and President James Monroe gave a land grant that helped build the "Old Hartford" campus of the American School for the Deaf in Hartford, Connecticut (see Appendix B).³² The American School for the Deaf opened on April 15, 1817, marking a landmark moment in deaf education as the first organized institution for the aid of the deaf in the United States.³³

In 1827, Justus Bradley of Tallmadge, Ohio, the father of three deaf daughters, established a school for deaf children.³⁴ Colonel Smith, a deaf and mute person who was educated at the American School for the Deaf, ran the institution.³⁵ The Ohio legislature appropriated \$100 toward

27 John W Jones, "One Hundred Years of History in the Education of the Deaf in America and Its Present Status," *American Annals of the Deaf* 63, no. 1 (1918): 1–47 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44462669>; for a different account see also,

Betty Miller Unterberger, "The First Attempt to Establish an Oral School for the Deaf and Dumb in the United States," *The Journal of Southern History* 13, no. 4 (1947): 557, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2198327>.

28 Unterberger, "The First Attempt to Establish an Oral School," 566.

29 Jones, "The Education of the Deaf in America," 1–47.

30 Moseley, interview.

31 Moseley, interview.

32 Moseley, interview.

33 Moseley, interview.

34 Collins Stone, "Ohio Institution for Deaf and Dumb," *American Annals of the Deaf and Dumb* 5, no. 4 (1853): 221–39, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44401232>.

35 Jones, "The Education of the Deaf in America," 1–47.

his salary, and eleven pupils enrolled.³⁶ Tallmadge's school used the Hartford method, developed by Gallaudet and Clerc, which used objects and signs to train "dormant vocal organs to definite muscular action."³⁷

In 1843, William Willard, a deaf and mute person, organized a school in nearby Indianapolis, Indiana, for which the state appropriated \$200.³⁸ In 1844, Willard's school was taken over by the state of Indiana and reopened as a state-run school.³⁹

A pattern appears in this history of early American deaf schools: efforts to open deaf schools were initiated by deaf people or their families. This demonstrates how early on in the schooling of the American deaf, their education was primarily a personal responsibility rather than a civic or public responsibility. Though state governments moderately supported deaf schools once they were opened, few states assumed widespread responsibility for educating the deaf people living in the state. Thus, in the 19th century, deaf people received their education usually as a privilege rather than as a legally-recognized right.

Private Responsibilities Become Public Rights

The transformation from private responsibility to public right began during the 1930s and extended through the 1960s, driven by numerous factors, including the activism of veterans and civil-rights organizers.⁴⁰ World War II made more jobs available to people with disabilities.⁴¹ When people, including the deaf, who were often deemed "mentally deficient" entered those jobs, their status and esteem in the eyes of other Americans increased.⁴² This recognition contributed to the rise of disability-rights activism during and after the war.⁴³

36 Jones, "The Education of the Deaf in America," 1–47.

37 Gilbert O. Fay, "The Relation of Hartford to the Education of the Deaf," *American Annals of the Deaf* 44, no. 6 (1899): 419–35, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44463449>.

38 Jones, "The Education of the Deaf in America," 1–47.

39 Jones, "The Education of the Deaf in America," 1–47.

40 Rembis, Kudlick, and Nielsen, *The Oxford Handbook of Disability History*, 442; for more information on the status of disabled veterans, see also David A. Gerber, "Disabled Veterans, the State, and the Experience of Disability in Western Societies, 1914-1950," *Journal of Social History* 36, no. 4 (2003): 899-916, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/jsh.2003.0095>.

41 Rembis, Kudlick, and Nielsen, *The Oxford Handbook of Disability History*, 442.

42 Rembis, Kudlick, and Nielsen, *The Oxford Handbook of Disability History*, 442.

43 Rembis, Kudlick, and Nielsen, *The Oxford Handbook of Disability History*, 442.

In the years following WWII, minority groups questioned their inferior status in American society, as there was a growing international awareness of the importance of human rights.⁴⁴ Throughout the post-war period and into the Vietnam War era, disabled veterans raised awareness about the inadequacies of government programs.⁴⁵ John Lancaster, a Vietnam veteran, fought for greater equality.⁴⁶ He recalls:

A lot of the things that we did were working on accessibility issues and regulatory issues and transportation issues. [Veterans] were doing a lot of work to try and influence the administration at the time to write regulations on Sections 504 and 503 and 502 and 501 of the Rehab Act. And we were also working very hard to get regulations written on Section 402 of the Vietnam Era Veterans Readjustment Act. So we did a lot of things on those laws. Personally, I thought veterans signed up to serve, and what better way could we serve our country than to improve the lives and the inclusion and the employment and the access and the participation of citizens that were being denied that access, and being severely discriminated against?⁴⁷

By questioning who had access to full citizenship in American society, wounded veterans, many of whom were now part of the disabled community, fueled political, cultural, and economic changes.⁴⁸

The Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s also helped propel the disability rights movement's growing momentum.⁴⁹ Both movements wanted equality, justice, and inclusion for marginalized communities. Influenced by civil-rights activism, disability-rights activists employed similar tactics, like sit-ins, to protest the unequal treatment of and lack of accessibility for people with disabilities.⁵⁰

44 Rembis, Kudlick, and Nielsen, *The Oxford Handbook of Disability History*, 442.

45 Gerber, "Disabled Veterans," 899-916.

46 Fred Pelka, *What We Have Done: An Oral History of the Disability Rights Movement* (University of Massachusetts Press, 2012), 359.

47 Fred Pelka, *What We Have Done: An Oral History of the Disability Rights Movement* (University of Massachusetts Press, 2012), 359.

48 Rembis, Kudlick, and Nielsen, *The Oxford Handbook of Disability History*, 442.

49 Richard K. Scotch, "Politics and Policy in the History of the Disability Rights Movement," *The Milbank Quarterly* 67 (1989): 380–400 <https://doi.org/10.2307/3350150>.

50 "Disability Rights and Racial Justice."

As a result, numerous laws were enacted by the federal government to enshrine disability rights. Congress passed Section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act as the first piece of legislation to provide civil-rights protections for disabled people in programs receiving federal financial assistance.⁵¹ Section 504 states that “no qualified individual with a disability in the United States shall be excluded from, denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity that either receives federal financial assistance or is conducted by any executive agency or the United States Postal Service.”⁵² Common requirements of Section 504 include reasonable accommodations for employees with disabilities. For deaf people, programs must provide qualified interpreters, real-time captioning, and assistive listening devices when necessary to ensure effective communication.⁵³

Later, the 1975 Education for All Handicapped Children Act provided equal access to public education and eventually became the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1990.⁵⁴ The IDEA requires public school systems to provide a “free, appropriate public education” to disabled children in the least restrictive environment appropriate to their individual needs.⁵⁵

Public school systems must develop appropriate Individualized Education Programs (IEP) for each child, and procedures must be followed in the development of the IEP.⁵⁶ The specific services outlined in each IEP reflect the individualized needs of each student,⁵⁷ and must be developed by a team of knowledgeable persons (teacher, parents, the disabled child, and specialist) and reviewed annually.⁵⁸

51 Jacqueline Vaughn Switzer, *Disabled Rights* (Georgetown University Press, 2003), 60.

52 “Guide to Disability Rights Laws.” ADA.gov, last modified February 28, 2020, <https://www.ada.gov/resources/disability-rights-guide/>.

53 “Section 504 and ADA Obligations of Public Schools,” National Association of the Deaf, accessed January 15, 2025 at, <https://www.nad.org/resources/education/k-12-education/section-504-and-ada-obligations-of-public-schools/>

54 Jeffrey J. Zettel and Joseph Ballard, “The Education for all Handicapped Children Act of 1975 PL 94-142: Its History, Origins, and Concepts,” *Journal of Education* 3, no. 161 (1979): 5-22, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/002205747916100303>.

55 Zettel and Ballard, “The Education for all Handicapped Children Act,” 5-22.

56 “Section 504 and ADA Obligations of Public Schools.”

57 “Deaf Students Education Services,” U.S. Department of Education, accessed January 15, 2025, [https://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/hq9806.html#:~:text=Meeting%20the%20unique%20communication%20and,\(FAPE\)%20to%20the%20child](https://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/hq9806.html#:~:text=Meeting%20the%20unique%20communication%20and,(FAPE)%20to%20the%20child).

58 “The Law and the IEP: Establishing and Maintaining High Expectations for Deaf Students with Disabilities,” ERIC 15 (2014): 80-84, <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1030997>.

In 1990, the most famous disability-rights act, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) extended disability protection to the private sector.⁵⁹ The ADA prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in employment, public services, business interactions, transportation, telecommunications, and more.⁶⁰ It set new standards for accessibility, making public spaces, buildings, and services more inclusive.⁶¹ The ADA has transformed the lives of millions of Americans by ensuring equal rights and opportunities. Before the ADA, which is now a cornerstone of disability-rights legislation, people were deprived of opportunities due to their disabilities. For deaf people, communication was a struggle, and being deaf was a barrier to employment.⁶² Gerald Buckley, president of RIT's National Technical Institute for the Deaf, credits the ADA with giving rise to the deaf middle class.⁶³ He notes:

“And now, it's not unusual. I mean, we live in Rochester. You're not surprised to hear we have two deaf veterinarians; we have a deaf dentist, we have multiple deaf PhDs, we have several physicians who are deaf. But if you went back 30 years ago, that wasn't true.”⁶⁴

For deaf students in private schools, ADA ensures everyone with a documented disability has a right to access and is provided with reasonable accommodations, furthering education for the deaf as a right rather than a privilege.⁶⁵ These accommodations range from scheduling classes for deaf students in accessible spaces to working with assistive technology like captioning systems.⁶⁶

⁵⁹ “Guide to Disability Rights Laws.”

⁶⁰ “Guide to Disability Rights Laws.”

⁶¹ “Guide to Disability Rights Laws.”

⁶² Beth Adams, “How the Americans with Disabilities Act changed life for deaf people,” WXXI News, July 27, 2020, <https://www.wxxinews.org/inclusion-desk/2020-07-27/how-the-americans-with-disabilities-act-changed-life-for-deaf-people>.

⁶³ Adams, “How the Americans with Disabilities Act changed life for deaf people.”

⁶⁴ Adams, “How the Americans with Disabilities Act changed life for deaf people.”

⁶⁵ Rebecca Plona, “Accommodations at Miss Porter’s for Deaf Students Under ADA,” interview by Yuman Wu.

⁶⁶ Plona, interview.

Although people with disabilities constitute one of the largest minorities in the United States, their rights-related legislation was met with vehement opposition from many, including President Richard Nixon, the National Federation of Independent Business, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and the editorials of the New York Times, which reasserted misleading platitudes relating to disability, casting disabled people as individuals seeking to "play the system" to avoid having to work.⁶⁷ Nixon initially vetoed the Rehabilitation Act of 1972 because he believed supporting medical and social welfare policies was too costly.⁶⁸ The Act was finally signed into law when Nixon and Congress worked out a compromise bill, which reduced funding levels, eliminated proposed programs, and lessened the priority service provided to the severely handicapped.⁶⁹ This difficult process of achieving equal rights highlights the perseverance of disabled people and their allies

Looking Forward: The Next Frontier of Disability Rights

Through impactful legislation such as the Rehabilitation Act, the IDEA, and the ADA, the right to an education for deaf and disabled people was secured. Formerly a privilege, education for deaf students has evolved, starting from the first permanent school established in Hartford, Connecticut, to rights that mirror those of able-bodied people.⁷⁰

Despite these impactful statutes, funding for deaf students continues to fall short. Recently, Congress has considered "full funding" to IDEA-created programs, which originally authorized federal funding for up to 40% of average per-pupil spending yet has never reached its target.⁷¹ In a change of course in 2023, Congress approved a 20% increase in appropriations for IDEA and purportedly planned to grow appropriations in coming years.⁷²

Even with these increased appropriations, education funding formulas need reform. Disparities in IDEA funding exist across the states, and states with more children eligible for special education receive fewer dollars per child than states with less need.⁷³ Large states and states with more children experiencing poverty also receive fewer IDEA dollars per child, making equal educational opportunity for low-income disabled students an ongoing challenge.⁷⁴

67 Doris Zames Fleischer and Frieda Zames, "Disability Rights: The Overlooked Civil Rights Issue," *Disability Studies Quarterly* 4, no. 25 (2005), <https://dsq-sds.org/index.php/dsq/article/view/629/806>.

68 United States Commission on Civil Rights, "Civil Rights Law," 47; see also "Veto of the Vocational Rehabilitation Bill," *The American Presidency Project*, accessed January 22, 2025, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/veto-the-vocational-rehabilitation-bill>.

69 United States Commission on Civil Rights, "Civil Rights Law," 47.

70 "The American School for the Deaf," literature from the American School for the Deaf. 71 Hyman, Rivkin, and Rosenbaum, "How IDEA Fails Families Without Means," 111. 72 Kolbe, Dhuey, and Doutre, "Reconsidering Funding Formulas."

73 Kolbe, Dhuey, and Doutre, "Reconsidering Funding Formulas."

74 Hyman, Rivkin, and Rosenbaum, "How IDEA Fails Families Without Means," 111.

Additionally, the next frontier in disability rights is uncertain, with the Trump administration's threats to the US Department of Education (DOE)⁷⁵ and the effect of President Trump's executive orders on IDEA funding approved by Congress.⁷⁶

The IDEA guarantees students with disabilities their rightful public education, and the law would remain even if the DOE disbanded.⁷⁷ However, it is unclear how disabled students' rights will remain protected. Eric Hanushek, a senior fellow at Stanford University's Hoover Institution, considered Trump's threats to be only a "political statement about how much we want Washington to be intruding in state education policy," and that it wouldn't actually change much for students with disabilities.⁷⁸

On the other hand, Tuan Nguyen, an associate professor at the University of Missouri, worries that without the DOE pressuring states to meet certain standards for teaching, students with disabilities would be disadvantaged.⁷⁹ Amanda Levin Mazin, a senior lecturer at Columbia University's Teachers College, adds that without the DOE, support for special-education teachers will evaporate.⁸⁰

Needless to say, the future for disability rights hangs in the balance, but it is essential to continue advancing rights for the disabled and realizing the promises of equal education for everyone. Education for the deaf has shifted from a largely private responsibility to a public responsibility, and that is how it should ultimately stay.

⁷⁵ Mark Lieberman, "How Trump's Policies Could Affect Special Education," Education Week, November 18, 2024,
<https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/how-trumps-policies-could-affect-special-education/2024/11>

⁷⁶ Michael D. Shear, "Judge Stays Trump's Federal Funding Freeze, but Disruption to Medicaid Sows Fear," New York Times, January 28, 2025,
<https://www.nytimes.com/2025/01/28/us/politics/trump-freeze-funding.html>.

⁷⁷ Kalyn Belsha, "Trump plan to ax the Education Department might affect kids with disabilities a lot — or a little," Chalkbeat, November 15, 2024,
<https://www.chalkbeat.org/2024/11/15/trump-abolishing-education-department-may-hurt-student-s-with-disabilities/>.

⁷⁸ Belsha, "Trump plan to ax the Education Department."

⁷⁹ Belsha, "Trump plan to ax the Education Department."

⁸⁰ Belsha, "Trump plan to ax the Education Department."

Appendix A



This is a photo of Mr. Moseley and me after I conducted my interview.
Xiuping Wang. "Photo of Yuman Wu and Mr. Moseley, Tour Guide at Cogswell Heritage House." 3 September 2024. Cogswell Heritage House.

Appendix B



This photo shows the front of Cogswell Heritage House, the archives of the history of the American School for the Deaf.

Yuman Wu. "Cogswell Heritage House at the American School for the Deaf." 3 September 2024. Cogswell Heritage House.

Appendix C



The statue of Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet stands before the entrance of the school, showing one of the founders who greatly contributed to deaf education in the United States.

Yuman Wu. "Statue of Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet." 3 September 2024. Cogswell Heritage House.

Annotated Bibliography

Primary Sources

Oral Histories

Pelka, Fred. *What We Have Done: An Oral History of the Disability Rights Movement* (University of Massachusetts Press, 2012).

Fred Pelka presents first-hand accounts from disability-rights activists who engaged in the movement. I used the account of John Lancaster, a Vietnam-era Marine Corps veteran, to describe how the work of disabled veterans prompted the signing of several impactful laws.

Journal Articles

Fay, Gilbert O. "The Relation of Hartford to the Education of the Deaf." *American Annals of the Deaf* 44, no. 6 (1899): 419–35. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44463449>.

This account of the American School for the Deaf, written by a school instructor, highlights the role of the school in the broader context of deaf education in America. I used it to explain the "Hartford method."

Jones, John W. "One Hundred Years of History in the Education of the Deaf in America and its Present Status." *American Annals of the Deaf* 63, no. 1 (1918): 1–47. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44462669?seq=1>

This source describes the various schools for the deaf established in the 19th century. I used this source to outline the early history of education for deaf people in the United States.

Peet, Isaac Lewis. "The Influence of the Life and Work of the Abbe de L'Épée." *American Annals of the Deaf* 35, no. 2 (1890): 133–50. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44627200>.

Isaac Lewis Peet describes the influence of the Abbe Charles Michel de l'Épée on the education of deaf students through founding the first school for the deaf in the world. I used this source to examine the founding of the first school for the deaf.

Scotch, Richard K. "Politics and Policy in the History of the Disability Rights Movement." *The Milbank Quarterly* 67 (1989): 380–400. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3350150>.

Published in 1989, this journal article describes the mixed results disability-rights activists achieved over the years. I used this as a primary source to examine how the disability-rights movement moved in tandem with other movements of the era.

STONE, COLLINS. "OHIO INSTITUTION FOR DEAF AND DUMB." *American Annals of the Deaf and Dumb* 5, no. 4 (1853): 221–39. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44401232>.

This primary source explains in detail the process of establishing a school for the deaf in Ohio. I used this to establish a connection of how other schools for the deaf were influenced by the first school for the deaf in Hartford.

Unterberger, Betty Miller. "The First Attempt to Establish an Oral School for the Deaf and Dumb in the United States." *The Journal of Southern History* 13, no. 4 (1947): 556–66.

Betty Miller Unterberger describes a different account of the first oral school for the deaf in Manchester, Virginia, compared to the account of John W. Jones in "One Hundred Years of History in the Education of the Deaf in America and its Present Status." This helped me understand what the oral method for teaching deaf students was, but I decided to use John W. Jones' account for facts on the deaf school in Manchester, Virginia, because I found it to be more trustworthy, as it corroborated with some details of Gallaudet University's site.

Zettel, J. J., & Ballard, J. (1979). The Education for all Handicapped Children Act of 1975 PL 94-142: Its History, Origins, and Concepts. *Journal of Education*, 161(3), 5-22.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/002205747916100303>

This research article provides an account of the standards established by the Education for All Handicapped Children Act. I used this to research how this legislation determines a disabled student's education as appropriate for them.

News Articles

Adams, Beth. "How the Americans with Disabilities Act changed life for deaf people." WXXI News. July 27, 2020.

<https://www.wxxinews.org/inclusion-desk/2020-07-27/how-the-americans-with-disabilities-act-changed-life-for-deaf-people>.

This news article details an interview with Gerard Buckley, a deaf man, on the impact of ADA in his life. I used this in my paper to demonstrate that the passing of ADA was crucial to the success of disabled and deaf people.

Appendix Photos

Wang, Xiuping. "Photo of Yuman Wu and Mr. Moseley, Tour Guide at Cogswell Heritage House." 3 September 2024. Cogswell Heritage House.

This is a photo of the tour guide and me at Cogswell Heritage House after I conducted the interview. I wanted to show a key person whose interview with me helped me understand the significance of the founding of the American School for the Deaf. After this interview, I decided I wanted my paper to be about the change in the rights and responsibilities of deaf education over time.

Wu, Yuman. "Cogswell Heritage House at the American School for the Deaf." 3 September 2024. Cogswell Heritage House.

This is a photo I took of Cogswell Heritage House, the museum at the American School for the Deaf. Through touring this place, I saw first-hand the rich history of the school.

Wu, Yuman. "Statue of Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet." 3 September 2024. Cogswell Heritage House.

This statue of Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet is featured in front of the school's main entrance. It is a replica built by the National Association of the Deaf in 1925 to replace the monument erected in 1854 at the original site of the school. I included this photo to give a sense of how long the school has been established and how the founders of the school, including Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet, laid the foundation for the education of the deaf across states in America.

Secondary Sources

Books

Abrams, Judith Z. *Judaism and Disability: Portrayals in Ancient Texts from the Tanach through the Bavli*. Gallaudet University Press, 1998.

Judith Abrams explores the evolution of Jewish attitudes towards people with disabilities. I cite this source directly in my paper and used it for crucial historical context to learn more about the treatment of disabled people across cultures.

Nomeland, Melvia M. and Nomeland, Ronald E. *The Deaf Community in America: History in the Making*. McFarland, 2011.

The Deaf Community in America: History in the Making describes the prevailing attitudes towards deaf people across different eras and in various cultures. I used this book to analyze the changing perception and treatment of deaf people and disabled people in general.

Rembis, Michael, Kudlick, Catherine, and Nielsen, Kim E. *The Oxford Handbook of Disability History*. (Oxford University Press, 2017).

This handbook examines the actions taken by disabled people and their allies during the disability-rights movement to push important legislation that ensured equal rights. I used this to detail the disability-rights movement in America.

Switzer, Jacqueline Vaughn. *Disabled Rights*. Georgetown University Press, 2003.

Jacqueline Vaughn Switzer notes in her book the importance of Section 504 in the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. I used this book in my paper to explain the significance of the Rehabilitation Act, as it was the first piece of legislation that provided civil-rights protections for disabled people in programs and activities that receive federal financial assistance.

Booklets

“The American School for the Deaf.” Literature from the American School for the Deaf. No publication date available.

This booklet was given to me when I toured the museum of the American School for the Deaf. It contains information on the history of the founding of the school. I used this source to write about the key members that helped establish the school.

Interviews

Moseley, Brad. “Tour of Cogswell Heritage House at the American School for the Deaf.” Interview by Yuman Wu.

I conducted this interview with Brad Moseley, a tour guide at Cogswell Heritage House of the American School for the Deaf. This interview helped me understand key details about the Hartford school, and I used this in my paper to give background information on the school and its founders.

Plona, Rebecca. "Accommodations at Miss Porter's for Deaf Students Under the ADA." Interview by Yuman Wu.

I conducted this interview with Rebecca Plona, the director of academic growth at my school, who manages services for students with disabilities. Through this interview, I learned the measures set in place that ensure "reasonable accommodations [are provided] to anyone who is otherwise qualified to attend to Miss Porter's." After this interview, I wrote about the immense impact of the ADA for deaf students and students of all disabilities in their education.

Periodicals

Belsha, Kalyn. "Trump plan to ax the Education Department might affect kids with disabilities a lot — or a little." *Chalkbeat*, November 15, 2024.

<https://www.chalkbeat.org/2024/11/15/trump-abolishing-education-department-may-hurt-students-with-disabilities/>

This article explains how the incoming administration's plan would impact education for students with disabilities, featuring commentary by experts with different perspectives. I used it as evidence demonstrating that the future of disability rights is uncertain.

Broesterhuizen, Marcel. *From Ephphatha to Deaf Pastors: Deaf Pastoral Ministry*. Vol. 46. Peeters Publishers, 2019. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1q26q69>.

From Ephphatha to Deaf Pastors: Deaf Pastoral Ministry describes the relationship between the Christian church and the deaf. I used this to write about how deaf people were treated by Christians in the Middle Ages.

Clifford-Vaughan, Michalina. "Enlightenment and Education." *The British Journal of Sociology* 14, no. 2 (1963): 135–43. <https://doi.org/10.2307/586775>.

This journal article highlights the values of the French Enlightenment, particularly regarding education, and its impact on society. I used this to explore why great strides were made in deaf education during the Enlightenment.

Fleischer, Doris Zames and Zames, Frieda. "Disability Rights: The Overlooked Civil Rights Issue." *Disability Studies Quarterly* 4, no. 25 (2005), <https://dsq-sds.org/index.php/dsq/article/view/629/806>.

This source highlights the attitudes of the media and the public towards disability rights legislation. I used this source to show the difficult process of passing impactful pieces of legislation in the 20th century.

Gerber, David A. "Disabled Veterans, the State, and the Experience of Disability in Western Societies, 1914-1950." *Journal of Social History* 36, no. 4 (2003): 899-916.

This journal article discusses the relationship between veterans and welfare programs in more depth. I didn't use this in my paper directly, but I examined it to better understand the role veterans played in convincing the government to establish programs for all disabled people.

Hyman, Elysa, Rivkin, Dean Hill, and Rosenbaum, Stephen A. "How IDEA Fails Families Without Means: Causes and Corrections from the Frontlines of Special Education Lawyering." *American University Journal of Gender Social Policy & Law*, 107 (2011-2012): 111, HeinOnline.

This journal article discusses how lawyers advocate for wealthy children to reap the educational benefits of the IDEA while low-income children - the majority of the disabled population - struggle for equal educational opportunities. I used this in my conclusion when examining current barriers to truly attaining equal education for disabled people.

Kolbe, Tammy, Dhuey, Elizabeth, and Doutre, Sara Menlove. "More money is not enough: The case for reconsidering federal special education funding formulas." Brookings, October 3, 2022.
<https://www.brookings.edu/articles/more-money-is-not-enough-the-case-for-reconsidering-federal-special-education-funding-formulas/>.

This article explains the systematic disparities in IDEA funding across states. I used it as evidence for a possible solution to the problems of chronic underfunding of special education programs.

Lieberman, Mark. "How Trump's Policies Could Affect Special Education." *Education Week*, November 18, 2024.
<https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/how-trumps-policies-could-affect-special-education/2024/11>

This article presents the logistics of abolishing the Department of Education and its possible impact on disabled people. I used it for its insights into the uncertain status of education rights over the next few years.

Melcher, Sarah. "Disability and the Hebrew Bible: A Survey and Appraisal." *Currents in Biblical Research*, 1, no. 18 (2019): 7-31.
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1476993X19861951>

Sarah Melcher provides an overview of the significant studies on disability in the Hebrew Bible. I did not use this in my paper directly but through reading the article, I gained a clearer understanding of how disabilities were treated in Judaism.

ŠESTIĆ, Marina RADIĆ, DIMIĆ*, Nadežda, and ŠEŠUM, Mia. "The Beginnings of Education of the Deaf Persons: Renaissance Europe." *Specijalna edukacija i rehabilitacija* 11 (2021): 147-165.
<https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/477908073.pdf>

This source explains how the perception of deaf people changed in the Renaissance. Using this source, I wrote about how the Renaissance was a transformative time for deaf people as they began to receive an education.

"The Law and the IEP: Establishing and Maintaining High Expectations for Deaf Students with Disabilities," *ERIC* 15 (2014): 80-84.

This journal article describes the team assembled to carry out disabled students' Individualized Education Programs (IEP) and to set high expectations that are attainable. I used this source to explain the current process that ensures that disabled students receive a quality education.

United States Commission on Civil Rights. "Federal Civil Rights Law and Handicapped Persons." In *Accommodating the Spectrum of Individual Rights* (Clearinghouse, 1983), 47.

This source explains Nixon's initial veto of legislation that would have greatly helped the disabled community. Through compromise, the Rehabilitation Act was finally signed into law in 1973. I used this source to demonstrate how attaining impactful rights for disabled people was difficult due to the opposition of politicians and other organizations.

Websites

ADA.gov. "Guide to Disability Rights Laws." Last modified February 28, 2020.
<https://www.ada.gov/resources/disability-rights-guide/>.

This site provides an overview of each federal civil rights law that ensures equal opportunity for people with disabilities. I used it to determine which laws were most impactful for disabled people to achieve equality with non-disabled people.

Legal Defense Fund. "Disability Rights and Racial Justice." Accessed January 15, 2025.
<https://www.naacpldf.org/disability-rights-and-racial-justice/>

This website explains the connection between the civil rights movement and the disability-rights movement. I used this to demonstrate how the civil rights movement influenced the disability-rights movement's success.

National Association of the Deaf. "Section 504 and ADA Obligations of Public Schools." Accessed January 15, 2025.
<https://www.nad.org/resources/education/k-12-education/section-504-and-ada-obligations-of-public-schools/>

This site explains the steps taken to ensure that disabled students have a "free, appropriate public education" as outlined by the IDEA. I used this site to describe how the current law works to provide disabled students with an education equal to that of their able-bodied peers.

United States Coast Guard. "Disability Rights Timeline." Effective September 28, 2023.
<https://www.uscg.mil/Resources/Civil-Rights/Latest-Civil-Right-News/Article/3541201/disability-rights-timeline/>.

This website shows a timeline of significant milestones and legislative changes for disability rights. I consulted this to see what time each legislation was passed.

U.S. Department of Education. "Deaf Students Education Services." Accessed January 15, 2025.
[https://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/hq9806.html#:~:text=Meeting%20the%20unique%20communication%20and,\(FAPE\)%20to%20the%20child](https://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/hq9806.html#:~:text=Meeting%20the%20unique%20communication%20and,(FAPE)%20to%20the%20child)

The US Department of Education's rules on deaf student services provide guidelines for disabled students. I used this source to better understand the services the Department of Education provides and the possible disruption of services disabled students would face if the DOE was dismantled.

News Articles

Shear, Michael D. "Judge Stays Trump's Federal Funding Freeze, but Disruption to Medicaid Sows Fear." *New York Times*. January 28, 2025. <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/01/28/us/politics/trump-freeze-funding.html>.

This article explains the impact of current executive orders, particularly a freeze in funding on schools, hospitals, nonprofits, and more. I used this to discuss how although an increase in IDEA funding has been approved by Congress, the state of IDEA funding may change yet again with these orders, highlighting the uncertainty of education for deaf students.

Charm, Strategy, and Struggle: Madame Chiang's Legacy in Modern Diplomatic Appeals

Mira Lu

On February 28, 2025, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's tense Oval Office meeting with President Donald Trump resulted in a dramatic blow-up in the White House. Trump, who accused the Ukrainian leader for his disrespectful and ungrateful attitude,¹ told his administration to suspend military aid to Ukraine, piling up pressure on Kyiv as it struggles to fortify its defenses against Russian invasion.² This moment echoed a strikingly similar episode from nearly a century earlier. In 1943, Soong Mei-ling, the first lady of the Republic of China and wife of Chiang Kai-shek, embarked on a tour in the US to secure military aid for China's war against Japan. Although Madame Chiang Kai-shek's 1943 diplomatic tour of the United States captivated the public and won short-term military aid through her eloquence and cultural fluency, her mission ultimately failed to secure long-term support due to U.S. strategic priorities and skepticism about her role. Her efforts, however, set a precedent for wartime diplomacy that still resonates today—most notably in Zelenskyy's modern appeals for aid.

A Voice for China

Born in 1898, Soong Mei-ling defied the traditional expectations of Chinese women at the time. The third daughter of the influential Soong family, she was educated in the U.S. alongside her siblings, attending Wesleyan University and later transferring to Wellesley College. Upon returning to China, she struggled to reintegrate but soon found political purpose after marrying Chiang Kai-shek in 1927.³ Fluent in English and familiar with Western customs, Madame Chiang became her husband's translator and key advisor on foreign affairs, playing a critical role in shaping diplomatic outreach.⁴

1 "President Trump and Ukrainian President Zelenskyy in Oval Office, Feb. 28, 2025," video, 49:21, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ajxSWocbye8>.

2 Andrew Roth and Oliver Holmes, "US suspends all military aid to Ukraine in wake of Trump-Zelenskyy row," *The Guardian*, March 4, 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/mar/04/us-military-aid-ukraine-pause-trump-zelenskyy-updates>.

3 G. Wright Doyle, "Madame Chiang Kai-shek," 典华, <https://www.bdcconline.net/en/stories/madame-chiang-kai-shek>.

4 Hannah Pakula, "Berkshire Dictionary of Chinese Biography: Soong Mei-ling," *Association of Asian Studies*, Winter 2014, <https://www.asianstudies.org/publications/ea/archives/berkshire-dictionary-of-chinese-biography-soong-mei-ling>

Mei-ling's bicultural upbringing rendered her indispensable when Japan's invasion in 1937 exposed China's military and technological inferiority throughout the eight years of brutal conflict. The Nationalist armies attempted to resist an invasion in late July but realized China was far from capable in defeating the Japanese. Back in the late 19th century, the Meiji Restoration led to a surge in Japan's political and economical development, propelling the country into the modern world.⁵ Hoping to reach the level of Western knowledge in order to resist foreign domination, Japan's military grew into a well-trained, Westernized armed force equipped with modern weapons. By contrast, China was still recovering from the collapse of the Qing dynasty in 1911, and its military was underdeveloped and poorly supplied. Japanese expansion into China accelerated after the fall of the Qing, with the government of President Yuan Shikai forced to comply with a series of twenty-one territorial and economic demands that increased Japan's sphere of influence.⁶ As Japan's economy rapidly industrialized, it quickly outpaced China's ability to arm its forces and defend its territory. In the early stages of the Second Sino-Japanese War, the Japanese military advanced swiftly along China's eastern coast, occupying key cities and strategic locations.

The intensity of Japanese air and ground assaults across eastern China forced the National government to retreat from its capital, Nanjing, to Chongqing in Western China. After the Rape of Nanjing in December 1937 — the most infamous example of Japanese brutality in China in which over 300,000 Chinese civilians and disarmed combatants were massacred—Japan continued its expansion. By 1940, the Japanese controlled the entire north-eastern coast and areas up to 400 miles inland.⁷ Following the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbour in December 1941, foreign assistance for the Chinese increased significantly. The attack was a surprise military strike on the United States Pacific Fleet at its naval base on Oahu, Hawaii, bringing the US directly into World War II, declaring war on Japan and entering into a military alliance with China.⁸

Even though the US did not officially enter the war until 1941, the country began to provide significant military supplies and other assistance to the Allies in September 1940. The concept of Lend-Lease was first suggested by Winston Churchill in December that year, proposing that the United States would provide war materials, foodstuffs and clothing to the democracies.⁹ Franklin D. Roosevelt (FDR) assented to Churchill's proposal, and the bill to achieve this purpose was signed by Congress in early 1941. Through the new Office of Lend-Lease

5 "The Second Sino-Japanese War," alpha history, <https://alphahistory.com/chineserevolution/sino-japanese-war/>.

6 "The Second," alpha history.

7 "The Second," alpha history.

8 "Japan, China, the United States and the Road to Pearl Harbor, 1937–41," Office of the Historian, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1937-1945/pearl-harbor>.

8 "Japan, China, the United States and the Road to Pearl Harbor, 1937–41," Office of the Historian, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1937-1945/pearl-harbor>.

9 "Documents Related to FDR and Churchill," National Archives, <https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/fdr-churchill>.

Administration, FDR ordered supplies shipped from U.S. ports to Britain which, by late April, was receiving vast quantities of food and war materials.¹⁰ Initially created to help Great Britain, the Lend-Lease program expanded within months to include China and the Soviet Union, and any nation whose defense was deemed vital to U.S. interests.¹¹ The United States government sent General Joseph Stillwell to China, who performed the duties of distributing weapons and supplies under the Lend-Lease Act. In the fall of 1942, FDR sent Wendell Willkie, his recent opponent for the presidency, on a foreign tour,¹² which Madame Chiang regarded as an opportunity to get more funds from the US. Her invitation from First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt to visit the White House (Fig.1) led into her landmark eight month long 1943 tour of the U.S., seeking to humanize China's struggle and solidify the alliance.



Fig. 1

10 "The Lend-Lease Program, 1941-1945," Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum, <https://www.fdrlibrary.org/lend-lease>.

11 "This Week in History: The Lend-Lease Act," National Write Your Congressman, last modified october 18, 2019, https://www.nwyc.com/article/this_week_in_history_the_lendlease_act.

12 Pare Lorentz Film Center, "August 1942," Franklin D. Roosevelt Day by Day, <http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/daybyday/event/august-1942-13/>.

Speaking Softly, Standing Tall: Madame Chiang's Persuasive Power

Madame Chiang's public speeches were instrumental in captivating the American audiences and portraying China as a vital wartime ally with shared values. Her clear American accent enhanced her credibility,¹³ but it was her delivery—measured, emotionally resonant, and expertly paced—that made her speeches truly memorable. At her Madison Square Garden address in March 1943, poet Carl Sandburg praised her as "a marvel at timing her pauses and making each word count,"—a tribute that captured how commanding and memorable her presence was.¹⁴ More than just eloquence, her rhetoric reframed China as not a distant victim but as a courageous partner in the global fight for freedom. Through her rhetoric, which emphasized both substance and style, Chiang humanized China's struggle and created a sense of moral urgency that resonated deeply with the American public.

Her distinctly American speech contrasted with her appearance as an elegant Asian woman, which fascinated wartime audiences craving glamour amid austerity. The striking contrast between Madame Chiang's dainty, glamorous poise and First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt's understated style added to her appeal.¹⁵ Roosevelt herself acknowledged her as "a woman, through her own personality and service," who represented her people—not merely as a wife, but as a figure of political influence.¹⁶ By acknowledging Madame Chiang's achievements, Eleanor Roosevelt expressed her views on women's empowerment, shaped by their shared role as First Lady. Using her petite frame and femininity as assets, she also framed China as a "damsel in distress" and the U.S. as its "knight in shining armor,"¹⁷ embodying a nation that was both fragile and valiant.¹⁸ In her Address to the U.S. House of Representatives on February 18, 1943—broadcast live across the country—she received thunderous applause. One reporter noted that lawmakers were "eating out of the palm of her hand."¹⁹ Standing barely five feet tall, Madame Chiang commanded the room with charm and strength, transforming personal presence into political persuasion. The duality of Madame Chiang's persona—her dainty figure paired with a forcefully delivered message—effectively painted a picture of admiration in the American congressmen, serving as a tactical addition to the actual substance of her speech.

13 Tim Kristen, "Madame Chiang Kai-shek - Soong Mei-ling," MegaMilitary.com, last modified February 28, 2024, <https://www.megamilitary.com/military-history/military-biographies/politicians-biographies/madame-chiang-kai-shek-soong-mei-ling>.

14 Laura Tyson Li, *Madame Chiang Kai-Shek : China's Eternal First Lady* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press : Distributed by Publishers Group West, 2006), Page 211.

15 Li, *Madame Chiang*, Page 201-202.

16 Hannah Pakula, *The Last Empress : Madame Chiang Kai-Shek and the Birth of Modern China* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2009), 419.

17 Li, *Madame Chiang*, Page 201-202.

18 Pakula, *The Last*, 431.

19 Pakula, *The Last*, 421.

Madame Chiang's Emotional Appeal to the American Heart

Beyond her eloquence and appearance, Madame Chiang's speeches appealed to deeply held American ideals. During her 1943 tour, she addressed crowds across the country—reaching tens of thousands in person and millions more through radio and print—portraying China as a fellow democracy resisting tyranny. In Madame Chiang's Joint Press Conference with FDR, she presented China as a country that “always had social democracy throughout these thousands of years,” aligning China's cause with American anti-Facist values.²⁰ She rejected appeasement policies and instead promoted democratic solidarity, later praising the U.S. as “an incubator of democratic principles”²¹ in her Address to Congress. Madame Chiang's bicultural identity and admiration for American unity helped her position China as an ideologically compatible and morally upright ally for the anti-facist alliance.

In addition to positioning China as a vulnerable nation needing heroic support through her the dainty portrayal of her figure, Madame Chiang threaded in stories of China's emotional struggle that further connected with her audience on a human level. Despite carrying the weight of China's struggles, she found strength in a hopeful vision, offering the United States “a clear look into the eyes and at the face of China.”²² Madame Chiang achieved this mission at the Hollywood Bowl that concluded her US tour, addressing an audience of over thirty thousand a visceral recounting of China's painful memories during the Sino-Japanese war. She recited the heartbreak of sending young cadets up in the air, knowing many would not return, the nightmare of running the hopelessly outgunned Chinese air force, grisly details in the Rape of Nanjing. As a result, she shocked her American audience: hundreds of women, overcome by emotion, cried and dabbed their eyes with handkerchiefs.²³ The same happened after Madame Chiang's Address to Congress. Even the tough guys felt deeply touched and admitted they were on the verge of bursting into tears. Despite China's deep struggle, Madame Chiang refused to lower herself to begging, even for what she believed China deserved. Willkie hoped that no American would think of their friendship with China as patronage, stating, “the time will come when China's friendship for America will be as important as America's friendship for China.”²⁴ This idea of mutual respect and partnership was reinforced by Eliot Janeway, who, writing in *Fortune Magazine*, agreed that Madame Chiang's diplomacy presented a path for both nations to benefit equally. He emphasized that the deals made for providing aid were framed as mutual benefits for both China and the U.S., highlighting the shared values that allowed the two

20 "Excerpts from the Joint Press Conference with Mme. Chiang Kai-shek," The American Presidency Project, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/excerpts-from-the-joint-press-conference-with-mme-chiang-kai-shek>.

21 May-ling Soong, "Address to the U.S. House of Representatives," speech, *American Rhetoric*, accessed July 20, 2022, <https://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/soongmaylingspeechtocongress.htm>.

22 "CHINA: Madame," *TIME*, March 1, 1943, <https://time.com/archive/6866069/china-madame/>.

23 Li, *Madame Chiang*, Page 224.

24 Pakula, *The Last*, Page 431

countries to work as allies during the war. Moreover, Madame Chiang crafted a "brilliant parable"—a powerful reference to American soldiers stuck on isolated islands in the Pacific—as noted by Republican representative from Connecticut Clare Boothe Luce. This analogy further strengthened the message that the U.S. and China's alliance was not one of patronage, but one of equal partnership. It reminded Congress of China's prolonged solitary struggle and need for military support.²⁵ Through this woman, Americans saw and understood China, its struggles and the strength of its people, moving them emotionally. In addition to Madame Chiang's style through her speaking and appearance, the top-notch substance of her speeches effectively brought out the message she wanted to communicate, touching the audience's hearts.

The "Europe First, Asia Second" Policy

To some extent, Madame Chiang successfully won the hearts of Americans. Yet her efforts collided with a larger, preexisting strategic reality: the U.S.'s "Germany First" policy. This was a strategic decision that deprioritized the Pacific theater and resulted in minimal, delayed aid to China. Heavily shaped by Winston Churchill and embraced by FDR, this strategy prioritized defeating Hitler before focusing on Japan. Despite public admiration for Madame Chiang, U.S. officials remained aligned with Churchill's Eurocentric vision, viewing China's struggle as secondary.²⁶

FDR's personal diplomacy centered around solidifying ties with Britain and, later, the Soviet Union. Before America formally entered the war, U.S.-British cooperation was already underway.²⁷ Roosevelt believed a British victory was essential to U.S. interests, and Churchill believed it could not be achieved without American support. Stalin joined the alliance in 1942, forming the "Big Three," which solidified Europe as the primary focus. At the Washington Conferences (1941-1942), this strategy was reaffirmed. Military planning targeted Germany's industrial core first, with the understanding that Japan could be contained while Europe took precedence.²⁸ These priorities sidelined Asia—and, by extension, Madame Chiang's appeals.

In her 1943 Address to Congress, Madame Chiang directly challenged this strategic framework. She warned that treating Japan as a secondary threat underestimated its control over vast resources and the danger it posed to Asia. She cautioned that losing China would cause "the creation of a sane and progressive world society" to become a hopeless dream, making postwar peace nearly impossible.²⁹ Though her words inspired many Americans, U.S. officials remained unmoved. Analysts dismissed

²⁵ Pakula, *The Last*, Page 328.

²⁶ Miles Maochun Yu, "How America's Experience in Asia during WWII Informs Its China Policy Today," Hoover Institution, last modified March 11, 2025, <https://www.hoover.org/research/how-americas-experience-asia-during-wwii-informs-its-china-policy-today>.

²⁷ "The Big Three," The National WWII Museum | New Orleans, <https://www.nationalww2museum.org/war/articles/big-three>.

²⁸ J.C.S. Files, "Foreign Relations of the United States, The Conferences at Washington, 1941–1942, and Casablanca, 1943," Office of the Historian, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1941-43/d399>.

²⁹ Soong, "Address to the U.S.," speech, American Rhetoric.

her speech as overly emotional and “femininely shrill” — U.S. military analysts regarded her speech as the emotional and illogical product of a feminine mind. Despite her eloquence and Christian-tinged rhetoric, some thought her thinking was obscured by her extraordinary mastery of English, causing her speech to “sound swell.”³⁰ Though Madame Chiang had the potential to bring about fundamental change in society, she failed to alter the status quo.

Madame Chiang’s failure to secure meaningful policy changes resulted in poor outcomes. Despite expressing concerns about inadequate aid to FDR, his “apparent receptiveness” led to binding commitments.³¹ Her request for military resources and financial support were met with vague promises. Failure to secure concrete agreements revealed the limits of her influence in a political climate bound to European priorities. The Cairo Conference in 1943 excluded China from the “Big Four” alliance, further undermining her diplomatic efforts. While the Chiangs advocated for more aid to strengthen China’s war effort, they were excluded from “the inner sanctum of inter-allied decision making” as a key allied leader.³² Despite including China in this conversation, which was often a rare occurrence, the Chiangs’ voices were not taken into serious consideration. By the end of the meeting, Roosevelt sided with Churchill’s Europe-first strategy despite claiming he would strive to balance global priorities.³³ Madame Chiang’s English fluency and Christian rhetoric helped bridge cultural gaps but could not overcome strategic objectives. Her rebuke of Churchill’s radio address and speech by pointing out the betrayal of the promises FDR had made to treat China as an equal partner failed to shift U.S. plans.³⁴ In the end, Madame Chiang’s charisma and polished appeal could not override the deep-seated U.S. strategic calculations. Her visit, while historic, functioned more as a symbolic gesture than a transformative turning point in U.S. policy, highlighting how prewar decisions like “Europe First, Asia Second” rendered her efforts diplomatically constrained from the start.

Skepticism and Concerns About Corruption

Despite Madame Chiang’s compelling rhetoric and media presence, growing skepticism about her personal image and China’s corrupt leadership weakened U.S. confidence and long term support. Her lavish wardrobe, “complete with jewels, fur coats and silk sheets”³⁵ which were scarce during her time contrasted sharply with Americans’ preference for public figures like Eleanor Roosevelt, who embraced a more modest appearance. Many skeptics believed that by spending lavishly and living like royalty, Madame Chiang’s “behavior and dress did not reflect the poverty to which she pleaded.”³⁶ In a wartime climate of sacrifice, her opulence seemed out of touch with the poverty she claimed to represent as an ambassador, undermining her moral authority. Furthermore, Madame Chiang’s

³⁰ Li, *Madame Chiang*

³¹ Li, *Madame Chiang*, 208.

³² Fred E. Pollock, review of *The Cairo Conference of 1943: Roosevelt, Churchill, Chiang Kai-shek and Madame Chiang*, *Pacific Historical Review* 81, no. 4 (2012): 2, <https://doi.org/10.1525/phr.2012.81.4.669>.

³³ Pollock, review, 2.

³⁴ Pakula, *The Last*, 436.

³⁵ Li, *Madame Chiang*, 225.

³⁶ Li, *Madame Chiang*, 225.

speeches contained deliberate notes. Madame Chiang sought to strive for perfection, which, though eloquent, went a little too polished. Her speeches may have appeared impromptu, but she skillfully tried to hide signs of extensive preparation. Madame Chiang deliberately adhered to the rules of her husband's formula, where "every speech should contain at least one reference to George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Jesus, Confucius and Sun Yat-sen."³⁷ She tried her best to — intentionally — incorporate all core American values that would enhance her appeal. This calculated delivery style ultimately detracted the emotional authenticity that Americans valued in public figures and eroded the trust in her sincerity. Madame Chiang's inability to convince the U.S. of her personal sincerity was compounded by the growing concerns about Chiang Kai-shek's corrupt regime.

Deepened concerns over Chiang's government led to further hesitation in sending more aid. President Truman, who succeeded FDR upon his death in 1945, sent Albert C. Wedemeyer to China to investigate the situation between Chiang's government and the Chinese Communist Party.³⁸ Wedemeyer found "evidence of maladministration, corruption and lethargy" in the Chiangs' government. These sentiments were also echoed by US General George Marshall, who "counselled against sending any more equipment to Chiang."³⁹ The predictions made by the US on China's potential government failure accurately reflected reality a few years later. By the end of 1948, Chiang's government was collapsing, and Madame Chiang's 1948 mission to the U.S. to secure more aid was a failed attempt. Though she was ambitious to get more supplies from the US, her trip was merely "a frantic, hopeless mission to woo back the Chinese supply line."⁴⁰ Her efforts were mostly hampered by Truman's accusations that her family had embezzled U.S. funds. As a result, he refused to give her any more. Chiang's resignation in January 1949 was followed by the Communist victory with the establishment of the People's Republic of China later that year on October 1. The ultimate collapse of Chiang's regime, just six years after Madame Chiang's celebrated U.S. tour, retrospectively confirmed the doubts raised during her U.S. visit, cementing her legacy as more symbolic than substantively influential.

A Remarkable Legacy

Madame Chiang's tour was a success in terms of public diplomacy, but its impact was minimal and short-lived, due in large part to political and strategic shifts, as well as concerns about her extravagance and the corruption within the Chinese government. Despite her efforts, Madame Chiang never held an official political position throughout her life, which further hindered her ability to make a substantial impact.⁴¹ This lack of potential authority prevented her from transcending a purely symbolic role, limiting her effectiveness in swaying U.S. policy.

³⁷ Jonathan D. Spence, "The Triumph of Madame Chiang," ChinaFile, February 25, 2010, <https://www.chinafile.com/library/nyrb-china-archive/triumph-madame-chiang>.

³⁸ "Minutes of Meeting Held at Nanking, China, December 21, 1945, 9:15–11:30 P.M.," Office of the Historian, [https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1945v07/d567Minutes of Meeting Held at Nanking, China, December 21, 1945, 9:15–11:30 p.m.](https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1945v07/d567Minutes%20of%20Meeting%20Held%20at%20Nanking,%20China,%20December%2021,%201945,%209:15%E2%80%9311:30%20p.m.)

³⁹ Pakula, "Berkshire Dictionary"

⁴⁰ Pakula, "Berkshire Dictionary"

⁴¹ Pakula, "Berkshire Dictionary"

Though Madame Chiang's well-crafted speeches and diplomatic charm were not the root cause of her limited success, her status and identity—both as a woman and as a representative of a nation still struggling with internal corruption—undermined her appeal. Consequently, Madame Chiang's legacy remains one of symbolism and inspiration, rather than of significant political change. Her experience offers valuable insights into the difficulty of garnering meaningful foreign support, a challenge that persists today. The mission of Ukraine's President Zelenskyy to garner U.S. support has similarly been complicated by contentious relationships with American leadership, particularly following tense interactions in the Oval Office. While the diplomatic language of Madame Chiang's era was marked by elegant rhetoric and personal diplomacy, today's international negotiations, as seen in the case of Zelenskyy and Trump, often devolve into more volatile exchanges.

Despite the relatively short-term nature of the aid Madame Chiang secured, her diplomatic tactics and unwavering confidence offer an important example for modern leaders. Her ability to make a compelling case for China's need for support, despite facing an unsympathetic political climate, serves as a valuable model for leaders like Zelenskyy—reminding them that the pursuit of international aid is a complex and ongoing endeavor, often defined more by symbolic appeal than by immediate success.

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CREATIVE WRITING



Forever Imprisoned

BY EDWARD ZHU

You don't understand.
They don't understand.
No one understands.
No one ever will.

"Why do you frown?" they ask.
"Why are you unhappy?" she prods.
"Why won't you speak?" he questions.

...

Why do you think?

...

I poured myself into your mold.
Carved by your beliefs, your desires, your
projections.
Each action sculpted by your instruction,
every brick laid by your rules.

And now you tell me to live for myself?
To dictate my actions by my wants?
How laughable.

Like caging a bird, clipping its wings,
then throwing open the door—
"Fly," you say, "fly wherever you desire."

But how can it soar,
when it was never taught to fly?
When the sky is a stranger,
and freedom tastes of fear?

Buried beneath years of hurt,
shrouded in betrayal, confusion... desolation.
I do not speak.
I do not refute.

I only nod.



It is easier to agree than to argue.
For if I argue,
if I rend the veil of your delusions,
it would shatter you.
Your glass heart would splinter across the floor,
slice into my feet,
exsanguinate as I run.
Death slithers around my withered wings,
silencing the sun
before it breaks the horizon.
And so I stay silent. I endure.
Until the day I can run far, far away—
from your contradictions and hypocrisy,
from the chains that bind me to this pain.
When I am finally free,
my hair, no longer white with madness,
my smile, real,
my life, mine.
My wings may be clipped,
My courage may be smothered,
But they will grow back—
scarred, uneven, forever altered.
They will bear the weight of a million memories,
and the sorrow of reverie,
for I glimpsed a freedom—
forever beyond my reach

A Free Falling Stone

By Amy Zhou

A stone is sitting on the edge of the desk, half sticking out, ready to fall.

Today is Alfa's sixteenth birthday, but like any other day, she was sitting alone at the desk, looking at the rock halfway off the surface. Nobody was at home, and nobody messaged her; she felt like dust. She sighed and leaned back on her chair, and decided to take out her fancy phone to call her parents. She waited, trying to maintain the flame of hope inside her as long as possible. Suddenly, with the interruption of the mechanical sound, "Sorry, the number you have dialed is busy, please call again later," her faith was extinguished. Like nothing had happened, she hung up the call, and with the phone in her hand, she put on the necklace that her mother gave to her two years ago and walked down the street.

There were all kinds of people beside the driveway. Some were selling goods, some were playing live music, and some were telling jokes. Looking at the happy families, Alfa self-contemptuously lowered her head. She couldn't remember what love felt like; all she could remember is that love is good, and she liked it. With the card carrying all the money she had for this month, she walked into a cake store and bought a little two inch cake for herself— pure white background and no decorations. She sat down at a table, sang Happy Birthday to herself, and finished the cake. Shortly after, she found herself unconsciously walking out of the store, finally arriving at a grassland right near a cliff.

This is her secret place. Here, she can shout as loud as she wants to express her repressed loneliness and her helpless anger. A hundred times she has walked to the edge of the cliff and looked down at the bottomless dark pit, thinking about the wonderful feeling of jumping into the hole and falling freely along with the force of gravity.

The feeling of abandonment grew within her, and she walked slowly to the edge of the cliff—maybe today was the perfect time to liberate this soul from this lifeless body. Closer and closer to the edge, she stepped onto the last big rock. Like the one her mom had gotten for her, and she had pushed it off the edge countless times. Her weight shifted the unstable stone, and she began to feel the melodic wind of freedom flowing through her. Fear struck her in the mind—she wanted nothing more than to return to her lonely life, but it's too late for her to love herself for the last time.

Memories flashed through her mind—the memories of her mom's shiny blue eyes, the memories of her dad's big mustache, and the memories of her dearest grandma. It's too late for these best memories that were too old to be remembered—it's been a long time since she last met her parents—Alfa fell faster and faster down the seemingly endless hole like there is no air resistance to obey Newton's laws. It's all over. Alfa shuts her eyes close and waits for the final sense of realness when hits the ground. In the unseen world, she seems to hear the sound of her mom and her dad. She laughed painfully, it must be her imagination, how could her parents even be in this town. Suddenly, something soft caught her. Maybe she was already dead, maybe God had mercy on her and allowed her to bypass the dreadful impact on the ground. However, after she opened her eyes, what she saw was the big black mustache that once belonged to her dad and the shiny blue eyes that belonged to her mom. She rubbed her eyes with disbelief. Looking at the familiar faces, which filled her with both anxiety and relief, she cried; she cried for the first time in ten years and hugged her parents tightly, afraid of them leaving again.

Finding Myself Through a Cultural Dilemma

By Everette Deng

When I stepped into the arrivals hall of Shanghai Pudong International Airport, a wave of nostalgia and belonging washed over me. I was finally back in China, reconnecting with my relatives whom I had not seen in years. Unlike my grandparents, who both got permanent residency status in America, many of my other relatives still resided in China. Aside from reuniting with family, an imperative aspect of this trip was the long awaited immersion into my ancestral culture. Much of the sights, scents, and language that made up this trip involved flying tirelessly for over thirteen hours, walking through smoky streets, communicating in Chinese with others, riding in countless taxis, visiting military museums, sharing fourteen full plates of cuisine, and arguing over who pays the dinner bills.

I had not touched Chinese soil and exposed myself to these familiar experiences since 2017. It felt wrong. Having not visited my ancestral country for years, I felt like having keys to a Lamborghini but never driving it. But I learned that time does not wait; instead, it races ahead. Days still became weeks, weeks became months, and months became years.

The last time I visited China, COVID-19 and rising tensions between the U.S. and China had escalated at an unprecedented rate. Despite many of the experiences of being back in China remain the same, I was a completely different person back then; I was just a second grader learning Chinese through Chinese class (as most Chinese kids did), celebrating lunar holidays (as most Chinese kids did), taking extracurricular math and writing classes (as most Chinese kids did), playing piano (as most Chinese kids did), and obsessing over LEGO sets.

As years passed, more so recently, I'd felt a shift within me that drifted myself further away from both my cultural heritage and my family. Citing my ever-growing busy schedule, I stopped attending Chinese classes (unlike most Chinese kids). I felt that I was shifting away from advanced-like academic programs, such as the extracurricular math and writing classes that I used to take (and now stopped, citing my busy schedule). I also only spoke Chinese on occasions

when my grandparents visited, and in addition to losing my grip with the language, I also lost touch with Chinese culture. The next thing I knew, it was 2024; seven years had slipped by, pulling me further away from that second grader learning Chinese, celebrating lunar holidays, and taking all those extracurriculars that encapsulated my past self.

Even to this day, thinking about the gradual shift within my Chinese identity haunts and confuses me. Earlier this year, I often asked myself about the details that helped influence myself slipping away from a Chinese personality that I embodied several years ago. Maybe it was the lack of visits to China and the exposure to the culture that led me down this path. But was I even “more Chinese” back in 2017? I mean, I don’t feel like I was better at the language compared to now. I still can’t remember how to write basic sentences using the most basic technique. I wondered if the answer lies within my parents, who became naturalized American citizens in 2018; they became even more distanced from their own Chinese identity, leading to “Americanization” within my household. A notable result was the absence of lunar decorations and notable cuisine that remained.

I might never even find out the true reason behind my cultural drift; my most recent trip served as a stepping stone to harnessing my identity as a Chinese American within the cultural chaos I experienced throughout the past. I began to see the revival of many aspects of my ancestral culture: the dumplings in my house, the lunar posters and decorations on the walls, reuniting with family that I haven’t seen in seven years, and even the increased use of Chinese in my household again. I found it ironic for me to be speaking more of the language; it brings back memories from Chinese class. My teacher taught me that practice makes permanent when learning new vocabulary and reading.

When I stepped back into my house after the 13-hour overnight journey from China earlier this year, it led me to ponder my next return. If it would even happen. I was again afraid whether I would lose my Chinese identity in between trips, as I have throughout the past several years. As seen throughout the past, participation and time would again represent key factors to discovering the duality between my two worlds.

Ephemeral Light

By CoCo Zheng

I can still remember clearly
that warm and cozy afternoon.
Six-year-old me sat in the sunlight
staring at the small transparent aquarium that barely fit in my tiny hands.
My mom had bought me a jellyfish—
a beautiful, outlandish creature
trapped in that piece of man-made ocean.
Behind the glass that kept water and air apart,
she waved at me
with her long and translucent limbs
slowly etching the meandering path of the waves.

She spoke to me;
I heard her scream and despair.
I heard the wind of the Pacific and saw the darkness under the water.
She said she shines in the darkness,
That she was the light.
I couldn't stop imagining hundreds and thousands of those colorful creatures
floating around in the water like electron bulbs.
Heartless and brainless,
themselves the ocean.

The very next day my jellyfish died.

She floated on the surface of the water
so light, like a sheet of paper.
Her limbs entangled with each other and her bubble-like head.
Something heavy had been stripped from her,
leaving this beautiful young creature an empty body.
She was free
from this cage of sunlight.
“Her life couldn't last long,” my mother said.
I nodded but still held that aquarium with the body of my dead jellyfish inside.
She had returned to her ocean.

I have seen many more jellyfish in the aquarium.
Colorful and glowing,
Living in much fancier cages compared to mine.
So I asked them:
Where are you from?
Where do you belong?
Are you the light?
Are you the ocean?
Will you die tomorrow?
No one cares
No one knows.
But I do.
Because you once had a friend
who's been free
since many years ago.

Through Their Eyes, In My Words

By Yixuan Yuan

*“Language is not just a tool for communication,
it’s a bridge for love, understanding, and connection.” —Author*

Language is an abstract idea that is imparted to babies the moment their tears pour out at the sight of the world. Nevertheless, people's first experiences are drastically different. While for some, it could be waking up to the soothing undertone of the French language, I was overwhelmed by the loud, tonal language of Chinese. Despite the differences and uniqueness of each language, society crafted a common purpose for them: communication. However, this idea of language being a tool for communication expanded into a deeper meaning in my life. Growing up in a Chinese household in Chongqing, China, dubbed “Cyberpunk City,” I never really considered the Chinese language in much depth. Navigating a world where everybody around me spoke the same, it came naturally to me, blending into my everyday life. This changed, however, when I moved to the United States at the age of five.

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2012: Welcome to Los Angeles

Leaning against the airplane window with anticipation, my eyes peeked over the thick plexi-glass pane for my first sighting of Los Angeles. As the 15-hour flight neared its end, I was mesmerized by the panoramic skyline and the illuminated grid of city streets. From the edge of my stiff seat, the city I would soon call home glimmered in the foggy night, as the skyscrapers reflected the moon and artificial light. Looking at my aunt and my mother, I could see the fearful uncertainty in their faces. “Ladies and gentleman, welcome to Los Angeles. The local time is 1:00 am and the temperature is 16 degrees



Celsius.” My aunt, who had studied English at university, translated the pilot’s message to us. We nodded with understanding, my mom smiling with assurance.

2013: We’ll See

On the night my aunt left to return to China, I was overwhelmed with a feeling of déjà vu when we got out of the car. Parked in front of the blurred Terminal B sign hanging overhead, the airport seemed distant from when we first arrived three months earlier. Rather than seeing people looking around with wonder and excitement on their faces, the airport felt quieter. This time, my initial feelings of excitement were replaced with an unsettling uncertainty. Before stepping on the escalator, my aunt bid her final farewells. After tearful hugs, she crouched down to match my eyes and whispered, “Good luck. You will do great.” Naive at that moment, I did not give it much thought as I nodded my head. As my aunt grew more distant ascending the escalator, my mom and I slowly turned away to head back to the car.

In the silence of the car ride back some, the night seemed peaceful and calm. Looking outside the car window, I could still see the captivating nature of Los Angeles, but could no longer feel the excitement when we first arrived. Instead, in the darkness of the backseat, my chest felt heavy as I thought back to what my aunt said to me. What did she mean by “do great”, and what would it even look like for us? From the corner of my eyes, I could see the silhouette of my mom gripping the steering wheel, knuckles turning white, as she stared blankly forward on the road ahead.

“Are we going to be ok?” I asked impulsively.

The car fell silent for a moment until my mom took a sigh and slowly opened her mouth. Seemingly unsure, my mom said, “We’ll see.” From that night, our new home looked different, from a welcoming place to one shrouded in uncertainty.

2013: The Stranger's Advice

It was two weeks since my aunt returned to China to care for her family and three months until my dad would come to the United States to reunite with us.

My aunt's absence hit us hard. Luckily, the city we were living in at that time had a significant Asian American community that shared a similar background to ours. We were able to get away with not knowing a word of English, giving us some brief moments of familiarity in the otherwise foreign place. However, our worst fears turned into reality when we had to travel to another city to visit my new pediatrician. Daunted and uncertain of what would happen, all we knew was that we would be forced to confront the true reality of our new home. The ride to the office shared a similar silence as the one felt on the drive back from the departure of my aunt. Even without voices, my mom and I could understand each other perfectly.

Opening the creaking door sheltering us from the cold breeze, a welcoming yet distant voice greeted us in words we could not understand. The voice came from a smiling lady who stood firmly behind the reception desk. Waving her hand to usher us towards her, her face seemed welcoming. But her voice did not. I cowardly followed my mom as she approached the desk, moving farther away from the safety of the door. Glancing around the room with curiosity, I glanced at the two strangers sitting down, preoccupied with whatever they were engaged in. With my focus back, I could see the receptionist handing my mom a form attached to a clipboard and gesturing to the many seats lined up in the room. My mom, however, unable to communicate, used her hands to gesture for a pen, which the receptionist thankfully understood. Once seated, I could see the blank expressions on my mother's face as she looked at the paper. In Chinese, she asked, "Son, can you see if you can understand this?" showing me the paper. The strange characters stared right back at me as I failed to uncover their meaning. Nervously,

I shook my head and looked directly at my mom's worried face. Just when our panic was about to rise, a woman who appeared to be Chinese and whom I had not given much thought of when I looked around the room stood up and approached us.

“你们需要帮助吗?/Do you guys need some help?” the stranger politely asked as she explained she had overheard us.

My mom's face lighted up with joy as she replied “哦 你也是中国人吗? 你能帮我们翻译一下这句话吗?/Oh, you are Chinese too? Can you help translate what this is saying for us?”

The kind stranger sat next to my mom and patiently explained each question on the form for the next two minutes. As my mom was finishing up the last few questions, the stranger turned to address me.

“小家伙, 你的名字是?/Little guy, what is your name?” she asked.

Usually answering this question with my English name, when I told her my Chinese name, I felt a sense of connection and comfort. She then asked if I knew any bit of English to which I shook my head.

Smiling, she told me “好吧, 有一天你将不得不为你的父母翻译. 他们将依靠你来沟通./Well, one day, you are going to have to translate for your parents. They are going to depend on you to communicate.”

I nod nervously as my mom so happens to finish with the form. “太感谢了/Thank you so much!” my mom said to the stranger as she went to turn in the form.

“没问题/No problem.” replied the stranger as she turned over to me to say one more thing.

“我是认真的. 你确实需要尽快学习英语来帮助你的父母./I am serious though. You actually need to learn English soon to help your parents.”

Nodding my head again and waving goodbye, I head after my mom as we enter the examination room.

Before long, I was already in the backseat of our car on the drive back home. Although leaving the pediatrician appointment was like lifting a weight off my shoulders, I felt as if another one had emerged. What the stranger said lingered in the back of my head as I stared daydreaming out of the window. She gave me a responsibility that I never really considered until that moment.

“你还好吗?/ Are you ok?” ask my mom.

I snapped back to reality as I could see my mom staring at me through the rearview mirror.

“我没事/ I am fine,” I lied.

2023: 我们的小翻译/Our Little Translator

Ring Ring! My heart ached with panic as my mom passed me the phone. Gripped with anticipation, I put it next to my ear. Scenarios were already playing out in my head: was it the insurance agent calling back about our recent accident? Or was it the front desk receptionist calling to schedule my next checkup? Prepared with the few English words I knew, I found myself, once again, at the edge of the language barrier separating my parents and our new home.

Ever since coming to the United States at the age of five, I had been tasked with a new job. After my aunt left, I took on the daily task of being a translator. At the supermarket, I helped my parents talk to the cashier. At parent-teacher conferences, I helped my teacher communicate to my parents my grades and performance. As we watched TV, I translated the English subtitles into Chinese.

Although I always showed understanding and respect in bridging the language gap, I have often wondered about the pressure placed upon me. Am I capable of handling these adult responsibilities?

I never truly found answers to these questions until two years ago. As we drove home from an appointment, I was suddenly pushed forward in my seat as the airbags deployed in front of me. Shaken, I quickly ripped out my headphones and managed to open the door and run to check on my mom. Luckily, she was OK. Before she even had a chance to speak, I knew this was our worst nightmare. When the police came to make sure everyone was alright and to make a report, I understood that I had to step up and take on adult responsibilities again. Speaking to the officer, my heart thundered as I described what happened. After the report was filed, I still had to contact a collision center to get our car towed while also communicating through our insurance. When the day was over and my dad was driving the family home, I discovered an answer to my questions.

From the backseat, seeing my parents' relieved faces brought me a sense of pride.



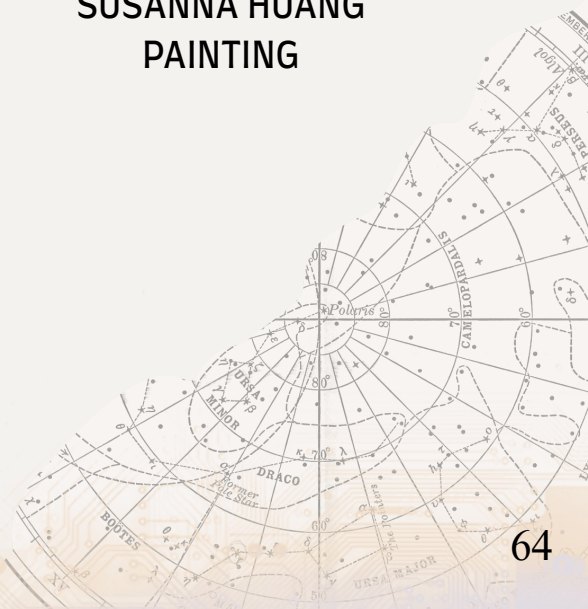
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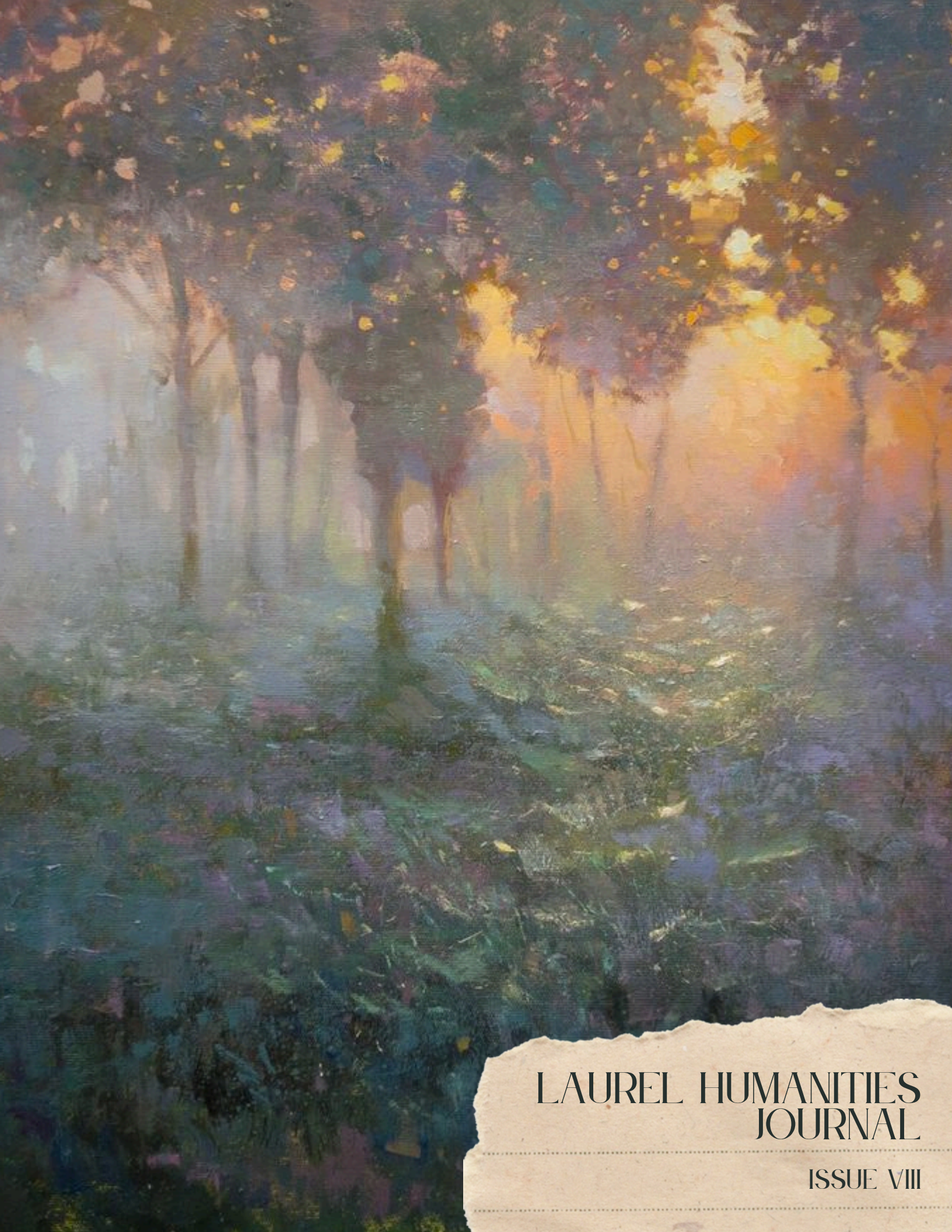


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ISSUE VIII