

Notes from the Underground

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The Historical Underground

The Christmas Truce

By Scott W. Maloney, Faculty

Currently, we are seeing a renewed interest in the events of the Great War. Our most recent example is Spielberg's *War Horse*, which takes the point of view of an animal as it survives throughout the bloody conflict. In the film, Joey passes from his original owner in England, to the British Cavalry, French peasants, and eventually the German Army. One of many impressive scenes is the moment when Joey remains stuck in "No Man's Land." As soldiers from both sides attempted to help the poor creature, a mini truce was agreed upon to assist them in this task. This story reminds me of another lesser known event, the Christmas Truce of 1914.

This event sprang from a world gone mad by the tragic events that engulfed Europe in four years of bloody trench warfare. In the summer of 1914, young men from across the globe marched off to fanfare with the mistaken belief that it would all be over by Christmas. As summer faded into fall, conditions worsened and morale declined. On the Western Front, the governments of Britain and Germany tried to keep the men's spirits up. This involved care packages and personal gifts to the soldiers from Kaiser

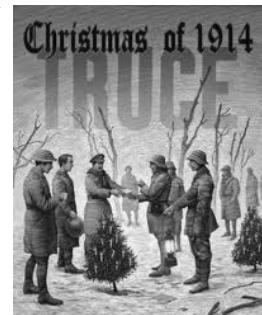
Wilhelm, and puddings and candy from the British royals.

During the evening of December 24th, a curious noise was heard along sections of the line. Singing among the Germans rang out as they celebrated the holiday, possibly due to extra rations of beer. Some English soldiers recognized the carols and decided to join in with their own. Throughout the night, it became an informal competition between both sides. After awhile, some of the songs became bawdier pub selections.

As dawn broke on the 25th, lights were still seen in the German lines. Eventually, a soldier stood up with a small fern tree strung with these lights. Although the Christmas tree developed in Germany and had spread through out the Atlantic World by this time, the British were unsure how to react. It seemed that the Germans meant no harm, so eventually men rose from their trenches and met in "No Man's Land."

The mixing of the German grey and the British Khaki was a shocking site. Not surprisingly, part

of the interaction was burying the dead. Conversations broke out, and exchanges of food and cigars commenced among the men. In one section, a Scottish and a Saxon regiment staged a football match. For the first time, these young men realized their enemies weren't evil. In some places the truce lasted for days! Naturally, officers were incensed by the fraternization and worked to put a quick stop to it; but young men in this horrible situation started to realize the futility of the conflict. Nevertheless, the slaughter resumed days before 1915. Still, the Christmas Truce was a humanitarian moment of clarity in the brutal dawn of modern war. It was never repeated, but should forever be remembered.



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This Month in History

What is Black History Month to You?

I usually open up my February lectures by posing this question to my students, and I must say this year has been more controversial than ever. It seems that more and more people are beginning to feel as though celebrating this month is harmful and promotes a sort of reverse racism. Some of the arguments are quite convincing, especially the one that is grounded on the idea that MLK sought to build a color blind society, yet we seem to be reinforcing one.

Though I sympathize with such arguments, we must understand that the purpose of the month as Carter G. Woodson (the founder) envisioned it was to promote awareness of the fact that black people living in the Americas, based on the color of their skin, shared the historical experience of racism that prohibited any legitimate story of their history to be told or

written down in historical textbooks. This oppression made it extremely difficult for black Americans to prosper in the racially charged environment that taught them they were inferior because they were descended from the "Dark Continent" with no "real" history to tell.

We sometimes forget that, although time tends to heal most wounds, scar tissue can remain for much longer. Especially when it was only 40 years ago that the majority of people living in America still thought of Africa as the primitive savage continent of homogenous people from which black Americans were descended. Right here in Arlington at UTA, students even held mock slave auctions in the court yard in the 1970s!

Have we come a long way? Absolutely. Will we come further still? Of course.

But one of the reasons we have been able to come so far is because of the foundation that Woodson and others established in the early 20th century that demanded Americans pay attention to the accomplishments and achievements of a supposed "inferior" people. Traditions are hard to break, especially when they have been responsible for so much good. Black History Month is no exception. Although it should never be viewed as a substitute for diversifying the historical narrative we tell in our classrooms throughout the semester, it can serve as a meaningful celebration and a reminder of how, despite horrible circumstances, people can master their past. As Santayana so eloquently put it, "Those who cannot remember the past are doomed to repeat it."

Bradley J Borougerdi, Faculty

Women in History



Juanita Craft

Juanita Craft was a Texan who grew up in the Jim Crow South where segregation and disenfranchisement were a given. When she was just an adolescent, she served as a caretaker for her tubercular mother who had been refused care by a "whites only" hospital. After never receiving any medical treatment, her mother succumbed to the disease.

In 1938, Craft joined the Dallas branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and she became very active in the organization in the 1940s. After being made state organizer, she began crisscrossing the state on a shoe-string budget in an effort to raise awareness of issues. At great personal risk, Craft

promoted her talks in small towns with posters whose banner headline always proclaimed, "THE FIGHT IS ON!" She persistently and boldly confronted the injustices and inequalities inherent in Jim Crow. Covering hot button issues such as lynching and education reform in her improvised speeches, Craft earned a reputation as a "rabble rouser."

Craft eventually transitioned into working with youth members of the movement, and her methods became so successful at desegregating theatres, restaurants, lunch counters, and transportation that they began to be replicated around the country. She also fought to desegregate Texas colleges, and was involved in the suc-

cessful effort to desegregate North Texas State College, which is now University of North Texas.

Today, the house Juanita Craft lived in for 50 years on Warren Avenue has been designated by Dallas as a Texas Historic Landmark, and it is open to the public via appointment. There is a plan to turn the house and the surrounding area into the Juanita J. Craft Civil Rights District with a museum/interpretive center and garden.

Gregory Kosc, Faculty

Random Rants

"[T]hese inhumane acts of lynching and setting human bodies aflame took place in a family setting"

A cruel time in our beloved nations' history was in the early 1900's when black Americans were considered free, but in no way or shape were they treated as such. On any given day at this time in the south, a white American could create a rumor claiming that a black man raped a white woman in order to drum up support for a lynching. One thing would lead to another, and in no time a blood thirsty mob would pick a random person to become a victim of their hate. As the horrid images of *Without Sanctuary* reveal, these inhumane acts of lynching and setting human bodies aflame took place in a family setting. It was commonly known as a picnic, and post cards

"Without Sanctuary"

were made of these horrible images. One specifically read, "We had a barbecue this weekend," and exhibited the charred body of a victimized American black man. It was not uncommon for white men in the New South to tie up the black man and burn them after the public hanging was watch by men, women, and children alike. As James Allen and John Littlefield's project reveals, turning these photographs into friendly post cards that were sent to each other was commonplace. In fact, this disgusting act happened more than 200 times a year that we know of at the turn of the century, and even the people who were supposed to be protecting American

citizens (the police) participated. On the contrary, the newly freed African American population had no protection at all, and their lives were considered worthless to these vicious people. Though extremely hard to confront, this part of our history must not be forgotten. It is a constant reminder of what people are capable of, and we need these images to ensure that we never follow the same path again. See for yourself at: <http://withoutsanctuary.org/main.html>.

Emily Dragoo, Student

inhumanity

Le Gens de Couleur Libres

The Free People of Color in New Orleans

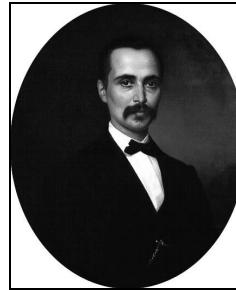
Since the 1700s, blacks in New Orleans have been part of the landscape. Many came from the French Caribbean. By 1800, these blacks fell under two categories: blacks who were entirely of African descent, and recently freed Creoles of Color who spoke Creole French and practiced Roman Catholicism.

There were several avenues by which individuals became a Creole of Color. As enslaved blacks were leased out to work in the city and on the docks, they were allowed to keep part of the charges for their labor. With this money, some were able to buy their freedom. Another way was by manumission, the legal freeing of a slave by the owner. This was often done by aging whites who had fathered children of

their enslaved black women. The term also included those born into freedom as second generation free blacks.

Although the Creoles were not accorded equal rights with whites, some managed to prosper. Within their *faubourg*, (neighborhood), the Creoles had thriving businesses catering mostly to their neighbors but also the whites of New Orleans. Meeting regularly in business halls was common, but the two groups often remained socially segregated. By the 1850s, the Creoles of New Orleans accrued over \$2 million of property in the city. Tax records in 1803 showed that a quarter of the homes and estates along the main streets of the city were owned by free blacks.

Today, Creoles are all over the country. There are academic study centers dedicated to unveiling their rich history, and their descendants meet as groups throughout the country. In Los Angeles/San Francisco a yearly gathering brings together hundreds from Southwest Louisiana for a weekend of “*les se beau temp roulez*,” where the gumbo, etoufee and jambalaya and in no short supply.



Florinda Morse Royal,
Faculty

Historical Movie Review

J. Edgar Part II, Student Perspective

J. Edgar is a biographical film based on the career and personal life of John Edgar Hoover. As not to mistake him for President Herbert Hoover, J. Edgar was well known for founding and directing the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Not only did he struggle to make the FBI into the powerful crime-fighting organization that it is today, but he developed and implemented innovative ideas, such as making use of the fingerprint in identifying individuals. To some he is a hero of this country; but to others, a controversial and corrupt character who went to extreme lengths to achieve his goals, even if it meant overstepping the boundaries on what was considered legal during his time.

Written from the perspective of Dustin Lance Black (film writer), the story takes an up-close and personal look at Hoover's life, pulling him from the vague and dull descriptions of an age-old history book, and casting him back into the scandalous drama of real

life events. Hoover is skillfully played by Leonardo DiCaprio, who does a great job in eliminating the dichotomy of portraying him as either the hero or the corrupt tyrant. Instead, he appears as a living, breathing, human being with real life desires and emotions. As the movie progresses, little bits and pieces of J. Edgar's character reveal themselves, and the viewer will find that the man was a very complex and egotistical individual who faced great obstacles, ranging from hiding his true nature behind strict social norms to making controversial decisions for the sake of protecting what he considered the safety of his country.

The movie is literally cast in a grey light, filmed with dull, mostly neutral colors, giving an air of seriousness to the film. Moreover, the storyline constantly skips back and forth through events played out in J. Edgar's life. This may cause a bit of confusion to some viewers; but overall, the film is easy to follow, especially if one knows nothing about the history or character of J. Edgar Hoover. There are some

scenes in the movie that will only make sense if the viewer knows the context in which they came from, but there are so few of these scenes that they won't make a big enough impact to lessen the viewer's understanding of the film, especially since the film focuses more on the relationship status of J. Edgar's life. The direction the film decided to take resulted in mixed reviews; some were expecting more history than what was actually given, but technically, even the seemingly minor events are still considered history, just not the history written in a text book.

For anyone who wants to look into the personal life of an important historical figure and try to understand the moral character of J. Edgar Hoover, this film is for you. That being said, the overarching themes seems to say more about the struggles of living the life of a closeted sexual nonconformists than it does about the historical significance of the man.

Sarah Dinh, Student

“To some he is a hero of this country; but to others, a controversial and corrupt character who went to extreme lengths to achieve his goals”





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"HISTORY IS OUR WEAPON OF CHOICE"



Join Us: Fridays/12:50pm/ESEE 1224

Contact: Bradley.borougerdi@tccd.edu



Letter from the Editors

Dear Readers

We are proud to present to you our fourth edition of *Notes From the Underground* with an emphasis on Black History. In this issue, we are particularly proud to tout the diversification of contributors. Not only do we have several student-written articles, but this edition also features our first article by a dual-credit student! With that being said, *Notes* has been, and will continue to be, a collaborative effort from the entire TCCD academic community, from full-time faculty, adjunct faculty, full-time students, and dual-credit students. The only group not represented thus far... the administration! In order to remedy this intolerable situation, we want to extend an official call for our administrators to take up their pens (or keyboards) and contribute to the newsletter (Shout out to Dean Muñoz... Coats.... we know where your offices are!). The project is gathering so much steam that we now have articles on reserve to be placed in future editions, so if you want to contribute you should get on board soon. We have also decided to give an award for the best student article published each semester, so get to writing students!

As you are probably aware, February is Black History Month. It is our hope that you will find a number of thought provoking articles in this edition that are designed to get you thinking about the importance of this month. We would also like to remind everyone that there will be a lecture series on Wednesday, February 22nd at 1:30pm in the North Ball Room on the rise of pan-Africanism and Malcolm X. We sincerely hope you will be able to attend. College is a place designed to maximize your potential as a student, so it is important for you to take advantage of these free learning opportunities when they present themselves. Please also remember that if you are too shy to ask questions in the Ball Room, you can always track Brad or Eric down afterwards. Never stop asking questions, especially if you are curious about something. Again, thank you for taking the time to read our newsletter, and if you are interested in joining The Historical Underground, we are holding meetings every Friday from 12:50-1:50 in room 1224.

