

Notes from the Underground

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The Historical Underground

Voices from the Past: Charles Darwin

By: Caleb Hinojos, Student

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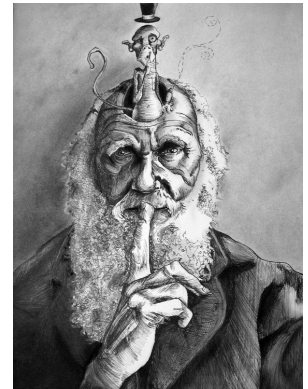
Charles Darwin was born into a prestigious family. At the age of sixteen he was sent to the University of Edinburgh to study medicine, but he left the school early and never completed his degree. However, he was quickly corralled by his family and sent to Cambridge, where he studied theology. Before long, though, he realized that his true passion concentrated more on the natural world as opposed to the spiritual realm. He quickly began to excel under the tutelage of John Stevens Henslow, who realized Darwin's talents for the natural world and decided to arrange for his young pupil to voyage out with the *H.M.S. Beagle*. Although the excursion took him away from London for five years, the experience was immensely beneficial, for he learned things on this voyage that transformed him into one of the most well known yet controversial people ever to walk the face of the earth.

While on his travels, Darwin recorded many observations from different places, but he is most notably cited for his work on the Galapagos Islands, even though he was only there for five weeks. There

must have been something about this voyage, though, for on it he made the most remarkable observation that would eventually change the way we see the world. It began when he noticed that many of the species, though quite similar to each other, all had evolved minute differences that allowed for them to fit in to specific environmental niches. This was a profound observation, for it allowed him to develop his theories of natural selection. When he came out and declared his findings to the scientific community, they were accepted quite readily, which is remarkable given the fact that 19th-century science was very competitive and cutthroat. Upon hearing that another scientist had formulated a similar theory, his colleagues encouraged him to publish his research, which would later become known to the world as *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection*.

While Charles Darwin became renowned in certain scientific circles after publishing his works, the religious community was quite flustered by his concepts, which they considered to go against contemporary church doctrine. As a result, many members of the church regarded his studies as heresy. However, others looked upon his findings as scien-

tific evidence of a materialistic view. He tried adamantly to defend his research after the book's publication, but prolonged battles with sickness kept him from participating in many debates and discussions, of which there were many. In fact, they are still going on today, which demonstrates the power of dogma.



"Ignorance more frequently begets confidence than does knowledge"
-Charles Darwin

The Ever-Present Past



Ambassador to Great Britain and future Secretary of State John M. Hay famously described the Spanish-American War to his friend (and newly-minted war hero) Colonel Theodore Roosevelt as "a splendid little war." In less than four months in 1898, the United States dismantled what remained of the Spanish Empire.

For Cubans, however, this conflict was anything but "splendid" or "little." By 1898, Cubans had been fighting Spain for their independence off and on for 30 years. The Cubans had created a multiracial army with officers of every race during a period of intensifying racism around the world. Revolutionary leader, José Martí defied this trend by declaring, "This is not the century of the struggle of races, but rather the

A Splendid Little War?

century of the affirmation of rights."

Tens of thousands of Cubans died in their dogged pursuit of national independence, and over time the Cubans wore down the Spanish. In fact, by 1898, the American minister to Spain came to believe that the conflict was nearly over as the Cubans had effectively defeated the Spanish. It was at this moment that the U.S. declared war against the Spanish and invaded Cuba. The U.S. did not wish to anger the revolutionaries and went as far as passing a bill that said it was also fighting for Cuban independence.

After winning a series of victories in Cuba, the U.S. refused to allow Cuban troops to be present at the Spanish surrender, and no Cuban delegates

were present at the signing of the Treaty of Paris, which formally ended the conflict. Perhaps even more distressingly, the U.S. lent political and cultural power to Cuba's white elites after the conflict and demanded that the Cuban government accept effective U.S. control over Cuba's economy and foreign policy. These policies created animosity amongst many Cubans and these economic policies were a blueprint for American policy in Latin America for the next three decades. By controlling the flow of loans and oftentimes controlling customs houses, the U.S. extended its informal economic empire in the Western hemisphere, where it still remains in many areas today.

~ Greg Kosc, Faculty

America's Bloodiest Day

“The bloodiest day ended with nearly 23k young Americans dead or wounded on the field.”



Exactly seventy-five years after the signing of the Constitution, the bloodiest day in American history occurred at Antietam Creek. During the Union's Peninsular Campaign, the Confederate leader, Joseph Johnson, was wounded and a new leader emerged, Robert E. Lee. Lee successfully defended Richmond (the Confederate capital) and in the summer of 1862, Lee launched a new plan to take the fight to the north by invading across the Potomac River. As Lee marched north to sever Washington D.C. from the rest of the Union by cutting an important railway line, he held out hope for an alliance with Britain. It was in this crisis that Lincoln turned General George McClellan and the Union army toward the Confederates. The Confederates took the initiative, and seized Harper's Ferry Arsenal. In so doing, they took 12k Union prisoners, 13k small arms, 200 wagons, and 73 artillery pieces, making this the largest Union surrender of the war.

As luck would have it, important plans from a meeting of Lee's staff

were lost here. The battle plans and movements of his entire army had been placed in an old cigar roll and somehow were discarded, only to be found by a Union patrol. As both armies neared the town of Sharpsburg, MD, McClellan planned to block Lee's 38k men with his 75k. The two sides emerged along Antietam Creek on September 17th, and Lee struck a defensive posture.

McClellan would send his subordinates on unsuccessful attacks during the day, while attempting to flank the Confederate line. Massive fighting erupted along a sunken road, inflicting terrible casualties on both sides. In the afternoon, Union general Ambrose Burnside, the man who popularized massive sideburns, led his men across a stone bridge, without checking the depth of the creek, which was only a few feet deep. Forced to cross a narrow bridge, he accrued massive casualties in pushing the Confederates back. At this moment, Confederate reinforcements arrived to even the odds. By evening, both sides halted the struggle, and Lee chose to withdraw, ending his

first northern invasion and allowing McClellan to claim a great victory. It seems much less impressive given the massive advantages he had on the field. In addition, he failed to follow up and pursue Lee, who was able to slip back south of the Potomac and live to fight another day. The bloodiest day ended with nearly 23k young Americans dead or wounded on the field.

This battle marked a turning point for the Civil War as Lincoln chose to announce his Emancipation Proclamation afterwards, thereby changing Union focus from preserving the Union to abolishing slavery. The British were heartened by the Emancipation Proclamation, and the Confederacy would receive no formal help from Britain. The conflict raged for nearly three more years. As we approach the 150th anniversary of that 'great and terrible day,' it is worth taking a moment to reflect on the battle that changed a nation forever.

~Scott W. Maloney, Adjunct Faculty

Random Rants

Race, Ethnicity, and the Question of Identity

September marks Hispanic Heritage Month in the United States. According to the most recent data provided by the U.S. census, Hispanics have become the largest minority group in America with a population close to 50 million. With such a large number of Hispanics being identified, the fundamental question to be asked is, what does it mean to be Hispanic? According to the census, 33% of those who identified their ethnicity as Hispanic either did not provide an answer to the race question or chose to answer, "some other race" instead of selecting one of the traditional five options of White, Asian, Pacific Islander, Black, or American-Indian. Why is this the case? Well, as an ethnicity, Hispanics may share a common language, culture, and heritage, but there appears to be some confusion as to what "race" they associate with.

It could be because the so-called ethnicity known as Hispanic encompasses members from each of the aforementioned races. For many years, those of Hispanic decent have been identified with the "white" race, which is why for the most part when serving in the armed forces they were one of the few minority groups not relegated to segregated units. In fact, I have noticed that, when I get traffic citations, the officer consistently marks "W" for the race category. However, when it comes down to it, a great deal of Hispanics do not associate themselves with the "white" race, but the question is why not? Is it because they never enjoyed the majority of freedoms or liberties of whites in America, and therefore at some point decided to align their struggle to be in harmony with other minorities in the United States? I don't know, but as we celebrate and reflect upon Hispanic Heritage month, I believe these are some fundamental questions to consider.

Eric Salas, Faculty



The American Revolution: Liberty or Constraint?

By: Bradley J. Borougerdi

Perhaps more so than anything else, the American Revolution is remembered by millions across the world as a fight for freedom that released a large group of people from the chains of the British Empire. But was it really as much about freedom and liberty as we give it credit for?

If looked at from another angle, the American Revolution can be seen as a movement that promoted the cause of unfree labor as much as it promoted liberty. Although whites of European descent were to be free, the majority of 1st, 2nd, and 3rd generation Africans were still subjected to a life of chattel slavery in America. In fact, it was the British Empire that witnessed the massive growth of abolitionism directly following the American Revolution. Not only that, but Indians were unfree to roam as they pleased in America, and Loyalists, who considered America their

home before the conflict began, were forced to leave the new country in unsettling ways. As a result, migration patterns after the Revolution mirrored those of before. Especially in the southern states of the Carolinas, where more than 20,000 slaves were brought in within the first ten years after the Revolution. Between 1804 and 1807, in Charleston alone, some 40,000 more were brought in. Even in New England, where slavery is rarely considered a part of the region's history, 17,000 were still enslaved by 1790. And the Constitutional Convention that occurred a decade or so after the Revolution even included a clause that referred to the many "non-persons" living in the states as 3/5ths of a human being in order to boost population numbers and increase representation of slave states in Congress. Washington himself owned over 400 slaves and only gained enough courage to free them while he was on his deathbed well after the Revolution ended!

Although such facts should not entirely change the way we see the foundation of this country, we must come to grips with the fact that these flaws were real, and the institution of slavery left a legacy of oppression in this country that is hard for some people to swallow; and this is why we must still work for change.



The Indomitable Tejano: Macario Garcia

Late on the night of Christmas Eve in 1972, a car driven by a slightly-built Mexican-American man traveling east-bound on the westbound side of Highway 59 near Sugarland, Texas slammed head-first into a car driven by a Houston woman; both drivers were killed on impact. For the driver of the first car, Macario Garcia, it marked the end of a tragically short but eventful life, a life that would place this man in the middle of some of the most important events of the twentieth century.

In 1920, Macario was born into a family of farmers in Mexico. The family soon immigrated to Texas, and began work as sharecroppers. Macario and his older brother worked on the cotton picking circuit, and it looked as if Macario would live out the rest of his life as an obscure, undocumented sharecropper in south Texas. History, however, had another plan in store. In 1942, after hearing a speech by the visiting Mexican Secretariat of Defense, who urged immigrants to fight in defense of their adopted homeland, Garcia volunteered for U.S. Army.

After occupying several state side postings, Private First Class Garcia eventually landed in Normandy not long after D-Day. Pushing through France, Garcia quickly proved himself on the battle field, earning the Bronze Star as well as two purple hearts. Then, in November 1944, near Grossshau, Germany, Garcia was acting as a squad leader and tasked with a mission to take out two German

machine-gun nests decimating his company from atop wooded hills. Moving forward with little cover, he was wounded in the shoulder and leg. Undaunted, he managed to crawl forward alone and destroy one machine gun nest with hand grenades, killing three Germans who tried to escape. Returning to his company, the second machine-gun nest opened fire and once again Garcia moved forward alone, destroyed the nest, killed three Germans in the process and captured twelve others. On August 23, 1945, President Harry Truman pinned the Medal of Honor on the chest of one hundred thirty-eight pound Staff Sergeant Macario Garcia. Mexico also awarded Garcia its highest award, the *Merito Militar*, for his war service.

Although the fighting was over, Garcia confronted a much stancher foe at home: Jim Crow. He returned home to a hero's welcome, speaking to local rotary clubs and veterans groups; but, the celebrations did not last. In September 1945, he attempted to enter the Oasis Café in Richmond, Texas but was denied service due to his race. A sign in the window of the restaurant read: "No Dogs, No Mexicans." After a confrontation with an abusive waitress, Garcia was arrested for assault and battery. Members of the League of United Latin American Citizens rushed funds to his defense, and he was acquitted by a jury.

Eventually, in 1947 Garcia became a naturalized U.S. citizen. Paying things forward, he went to work for the Department of Veterans Affairs for the next twenty-five years before his untimely death. In 1965 the City of Houston proclaimed August 23 "Macario Garcia Day," and in 1981 Houston renamed 69th

Street Macario Garcia Drive. This man of small stature nevertheless achieved a larger than life place in the history of Texas and the U.S. by offering up his life for his adopted country, refusing to bow to arbitrary political borders, racism, painful wounds, or German machine guns.

~ John R. Lundberg, Adjunct Faculty





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"HISTORY IS OUR WEAPON OF CHOICE"



Join Us: Fridays @ 1-2pm in ESEE 1224

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Letter from the Editors

Dear Readers,

We are pleased to bring you another epic publication with several articles relating to Hispanic Heritage Month! That's right, it's *Hot off the Press* (and the Hook), ready to *Bring Down the House* (but not the roof)! It's *Cool as a Cucumber* . . . the *Cream of the Crop* . . . *Larger Than Li* Ok, perhaps we went a little *Too Overboard* and got *Carried Away* with the use of cheesy American Idioms. We can assure you of our firm belief that there are at least a few things on the face of this planet that are more important than the monthly musings of faculty and students who for some reason or another have realized that history is like the blood that flows through our veins: a living entity that supports human life. Indeed, our past is such an important part of who we are that people use it all the time (for good and for bad) to give meaning to the present. In the last edition, we spent a great deal of time explaining the importance of history, and we should thank Linda Frazier as outgoing Chair of the History Department, Josué Muñoz as Dean of Humanities, Mike Cinatl as Dual Credit Coordinator (and so much more, we might add), and Doug Peak as Director of Student Development Services for making it possible to publish 1000 copies of the Orientation Edition that we handed out during many of the Fall orientation sessions. If you were unable to obtain one of these, then let not your heart be troubled, for the history department is rolling out a mad-official web page that will have, among other interesting info, all of the previous editions posted in pdf format! As always, copies of the newest editions can be found dispersed throughout campus, in the library, or outside the office of ESEE 2144. We hope that you will continue supporting this wonderful endeavor by reading it, sending feedback to the contact email listed above, or writing an article for upcoming editions. The History Department and THU are working together to established a firm culture of learning on this campus, so be on the lookout for great lectures and presentation by in-house faculty as well as scholars from other places. September 18th is the campus celebration of Constitution Day in the library, and the speakers are no doubt sure to please. Our own Rick Yoes will be in colonial costume as he recites the constitution, and Dr. John Lunberg will be presenting at lecture titled, "Original Intent: Fact or Fiction?" Also, for those of you who want to witness what promises to be a lively and exciting debate, come to the North Ball room at 1:00pm the very next day (Sept. 19th) to check out a round table panel discussion over immigration in America. So, attend, read, and have a great semester; and *Bob's your Uncle!*

~Greg Kosc, Eric Salas, and Bradley J Borougerdi

