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Learning to Remake the World: Education, Decolonization, Cold War, Race War

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
degree requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in

Ethnic Studies

by

Malathi Michelle Iyengar

Committee in Charge:

Professor Kalindi Vora, Chair
Professor John D. Blanco
Professor Kirstie Dorr
Professor Ross H. Frank
Professor Dayo F. Gore
Professor Wayne Yang

2017

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Chair

University of California, San Diego

2017

DEDICATION

To Ryan and Sanjana, with love

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VITA

EDUCATION

Doctor of Philosophy, Ethnic Studies
University of California, San Diego, 2017

M.A., Educational Foundations
California State University, Los Angeles, 2006

M.F.A., Music
California Institute of the Arts, 1999

Bachelor of Music
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1996

ACADEMIC PUBLICATIONS

Vora, Kalindi, and Malathi Iyengar. "Citizen, Subject, Property: Indian Surrogacy and the Global Fertility Market." *Assisted Reproduction in Movement: Normalization, Disruptions, and Transmissions*. Ed. Merete Lie and Nina Lykke. Oxford/New York: Routledge, Advanced Feminist Theory Book Series, 2017.

Iyengar, Malathi. "Colored Cosmopolitanism and the Classroom: Educational Connections Between African Americans and South Asians." In M.A. Peters (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Educational Philosophy and Theory*. Singapore: Springer, 2015.

Iyengar, Malathi. "Language Ideologies in an Anglo-Controlled Bilingual Charter School: A Teacher's Reflections." In *Readings in Language Studies, Volume 4*, edited by M. Mantero, J.L. Watzke, & P.C. Miller., Grandville, MI: International Society for Language Studies, 2014.

Iyengar, Malathi. "Not Mere Abstractions: Language Policies and Language Ideologies in U.S. Settler Colonialism," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, Vol. 3, no. 2, 2014, pp. 33-59.

Iyengar, Malathi. Review of *Transnational Discourses on Class, Gender, and Cultural Identity*, by Irene Marques, *Comparative Literature Studies*, Vol. 51, no. 2, 2014, pp. 347-350

Iyengar, Malathi, and William E. Powell, "One Who Knows Music: Sri Narasinhalu Wadavati and the Clarinet in Hindustani Music, Part 1," *The Clarinet*, Vol. 38, no. 2, March 2011.

Iyengar, Malathi, and William E. Powell, "One Who Knows Music: Sri Narasinhalu Wadavati and the Clarinet in Hindustani Music, Part 2," *The Clarinet*, Vol. 38, no. 3, June 2011.

COURSES TAUGHT – UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

Ethnic Studies 113, Decolonizing Education (Winter 2016)

This course examines historical and contemporary relationships between colonialism, anticolonial movements, and education, with a particular focus on decolonial theories of education in relation to classroom pedagogy.

Ethnic Studies 185, Discourse, Power, and Inequality (Summer 2014)

Combining theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches from ethnic studies, applied linguistics, and linguistic anthropology, this course examines the relationships between discourse – ranging from literary language, to specialized professional jargon, to everyday speech – and social stratification. Students explore discourse analysis as a valuable technology for evaluating the operations of power within various aspects of social life.

RESEARCH ASSISTANTSHIPS

Research Assistant to Professor Kalindi Vora, *Surrogate Humanity* project (UCSD, Spring 2015)

Research Assistant to Professor Ana Celia Zentella, *Transfronterizos* Project (UCSD, Spring 2011)

SERVICE

San Diego Unit Chair, UAW 2865 – Academic Student Employee Union
(Spring 2014 – Present)

Graduate Student Representative, UCSD Ethnic Studies PhD Admissions Committee
(Spring 2016).

HONORS AND AWARDS

2014 Dean of Social Sciences Travel Fund Award (for travel to conduct archival work)

2013 UCSD Ethnic Studies Departmental Travel Grant (for travel to the Biennial Conference of the International Society for Language Studies, San Juan, Puerto Rico)
2010 UCSD Predoctoral Humanities Fellowship (multi-year fellowship)
1999 Frank Huntington Beebe Music Fellowship (1999): Full funding for one year of music study and musicological research in South India
1996 CalArts Scholarship (full funding for graduate study in music at the California Institute of the Arts; renewed 1997, 1998)

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Learning to Remake the World: Education, Decolonization, Cold War, Race War

By

Malathi Michelle Iyengar

Doctor of Philosophy in Ethnic Studies

University of California, San Diego 2017

Professor Kalindi Vora, Chair

This dissertation makes two interconnected arguments. First, I trace a historical pattern of transnational, trans-imperial, anti-racist and anticolonial educational cooperation and solidarity between Asian Indian and African American thinkers and organizations during the first half of the twentieth century. Secondly, I show how the U.S. State Department during the 1950s used various forms of international education as a means of displacing the transnational relationships between African American and Asian Indian communities, and supplanting them with a state-to-state relationship between India and the United States, with the goal of bringing a newly independent India

into Cold War alignment. Together, the dissertation's chapters reveal education as centrally located within the nexus of transnationally-linked decolonization movements, the long Cold War, and the global politics of race, particularly between around 1915 and 1965. Using an interdisciplinary methodology that combines archival research with close textual analysis, biographical tracings, and juxtaposition of literary and historical documents, I show how education took center stage over these five tumultuous decades – an eventful half-century during which antiracist and anticolonial activists joined hands across national and imperial borders, and a rising U.S. empire-state both clashed and compromised with decolonization movements abroad and antiracist human rights movements at home.

Introduction – Learning to Remake the World: Education, Decolonization, Cold War, Race War

Two sides of the page: A twofold argument

Sometime around the beginning of September, 1956, a thirty-three-year-old architect named Gopaldas Maganlal Mandalia sat down in his temporary quarters at the YMCA in Newark, New Jersey, and typed out a report of his activities during the previous month. Mandalia first listed his professional attainments for the month of August, which included the production of a design for the “Springwood redevelopment Area of Asbury Park.” He then listed his academic activities for the month: “August Course at Columbia University. Five Term papers, two examinations and a final summary criticism on assigned reading of 1500 pages. Visit to Upsala College as the integral part of the education course.” At the end of the report, Mandalia – a professor of architecture from the Indian Institute of Technology at Kharagpur, temporarily in the United States for study, research, and pedagogical training, under a program overseen by the recently-established International Cooperation Administration within the U.S. State Department – noted that he had also completed the “[n]ecessary actions and correspondence for getting extension of time in Passport and Visa.” Into the envelope with this report, which would be mailed to the ICA coordinator at the University of Illinois (IIT-Kharagpur’s “sister” institution in the United States), the young Indian professor also placed an eight-by-eleven-inch newspaper cutting: the *Asbury Park Evening Press* had printed a copy of Mandalia’s design for the Springwood redevelopment project.

Mandalia's design was on the second page of the newspaper. The *back* of this cutting – the front page of the newspaper – carried a photograph with the following caption: “Three Negro boys walked past a group of white girls yesterday on their way to classes in the newly integrated Clinton, Tenn., High School which has been the scene of minor violence the past two days because of the integration.” The three “Negro boys,” not named in the caption, were members of what historians now refer to as the “Clinton Twelve” – twelve Black high school students who braved daily harassment and the constant threat of white-supremacist violence in order to desegregate Clinton High School, two years after the Supreme Court's anti-segregation ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education*. The *Evening Press*'s characterization of the violence in Clinton as having taken place “because of the integration” reflected a racist discursive trend in which, as Jeanne Theoharis (2001) notes, “desegregation [was] conflated with the violence of those who resisted it.”¹ This discourse was symptomatic of white America's deep-seated refusal to acknowledge the actual source of racial violence: the disturbances in Clinton – which caused National Guard troops to be sent into the city and to remain there for two months – were not caused “by the integration,” but by the white supremacy. And, while Clinton's location may suggest that the story of violent opposition to school desegregation there would align with the official U.S. narrative of Jim Crow as a “Southern” problem, the primary spokesman and ringleader for Clinton's white

¹ Jeanne Theoharis, “‘We Saved the City’: Black Struggles for Educational Equality in Boston, 1960-1976.” (*Radical History Review*, Issue 81, Fall 2001, pp. 61-93), p. 64

supremacist mobs was actually not a southerner, but the well-known White Citizens' Councilman and Columbia University graduate John Kasper, from New Jersey.²

If Professor Mandalia's cutting-out and mailing of a newspaper caption on white violence and the African American struggle for educational equity was presumably *unintentional*, it was also clearly *unavoidable*. Mandalia's project was veritably inseparable from the drama at Clinton High School; the two stories were – both literally and figuratively – printed on the same piece of paper. This inseparability is part of what the chapters of *Learning to Remake the World* collectively seek to demonstrate. Tracing the long historical threads that connect such seemingly unrelated educational situations, revealing these different vignettes as not only coincident but in fact co-constituted, is one of the central tasks of this dissertation. In fact, the envelope sent by Mandalia to his coordinator at the University of Illinois can be seen as a metonym for the tangled web of transnational educational connections that my project aims to highlight. Education, Indian postcolonial nation-building and U.S. Cold War empire-building, white supremacy and Black resistance, all were folded together in the 9"x12" manila envelope that traveled from New Jersey to Illinois. In each of the chapters that follow, and in the larger discussion produced by putting these chapters together, I endeavor to shed light upon underexplored connections between the different elements folded into the envelope – in other words, between the components of the dissertation's subtitle: *education, decolonization, cold war, race war*.

² Mandalia's letter and the *Asbury Park Evening Press* clipping are in the Indian Institute of Technology Project File, 1953-1966, Record Series 24/2/12, Box #8, University of Illinois Archives.

More specifically, *Learning to Remake the World* makes two interconnected arguments. First, I trace a historical pattern of transnational, trans-imperial, anti-racist and anticolonial educational cooperation and solidarity between Asian Indian and African American thinkers and organizations during the first half of the twentieth century.³ Secondly, I show how the U.S. State Department during the 1950s used various forms of international education as a means of displacing the transnational relationships between African American and Asian Indian communities, and supplanting them with a state-to-state relationship between India and the United States, with the goal of bringing a newly independent India into Cold War alignment. Together, the chapters of *Learning to*

³ Since terms like “Asian Indian” and “African American” do not represent natural or self-evident categories, an explanation of my terminology is needed here. I use the term “African American” in this paper primarily to refer to U.S.-based African diasporic peoples, generally descendants of enslaved Africans. At the same, not all of the important figures within U.S.-based African diasporic movements have been U.S. citizens; hence, my use of “African American” also encompasses figures like the Jamaican-born Marcus Garvey and the Afro-Trinidadian C.L.R. James – figures who, though not technically “from” the United States, spent considerable time in the U.S. and exercised a major influence on U.S.-based Black intellectual and political traditions. In other words, this dissertation uses the term “African American” to refer to a set of U.S.-based African diasporic histories, but also recognizes that those histories are transnational at every level, and cannot be understood without reference to key events and movements featuring Afro-Caribbean and other Afro-diasporic individuals.

With regards to the terms “Indian” or “Asian Indian,” some readers may be inclined to ask why I do not use the more commonly preferred “South Asian.” The reasons for this choice are many. For one thing, the anticolonial Subcontinental individuals, communities, and organizations I reference in this dissertation referred to *themselves* as “Indian”; the term “South Asian” has only come into popular usage much more recently. During the second half of the twentieth century, of course, the area formerly known as British India would become, not a single nation-state, but several. The anticolonial figures I examine here, however, referred to themselves as part of an “Indian” independence movement. I use their language, not to glorify the contemporary nation-state of “India,” but simply to use the language of the era under examination in this paper. In addition, to the extent that my analysis extends into the post-1947 era, it deals with the relationships between the United States and the postcolonial Indian state; it does not touch upon State Department policy with regards to Pakistan, Bangladesh, or other nation-states formerly under the British Raj. Finally, because this dissertation contributes to relational understandings of racialization and education, it is important to note that not all communities currently falling under the label of “South Asian” are racialized in the same manner. For example, Afghanistan is part of “South Asia,” but the racialized treatment of peoples associated with Afghanistan is quite different from that of peoples associated with India – even bearing in mind that neither of these group-experiences of racialization is internally homogenous.

Remake the World reveal education as centrally located within the nexus of decolonization, the long Cold War, and the global politics of race, particularly between around 1915 and 1965. Using an interdisciplinary methodology that combines archival research with close textual analysis, biographical tracings, and juxtaposition of literary and historical documents, I show how education took center stage over these five tumultuous decades – an eventful half-century during which antiracist and anticolonial activists joined hands across national and imperial borders, and a rising U.S. empire-state both clashed and compromised with decolonization movements abroad and antiracist human rights movements at home.

Put another way, the first part of my twofold argument here is that education was a major artery within the body of relationships and conversations that historian Nico Slate (2012) refers to as “colored cosmopolitanism” – a term indexing the intricate and multivalent web of political alliances and cultural affiliations that flourished between interlocking networks of African American and Asian Indian activists and intellectuals during the first half of the twentieth century. The second part of my argument holds that education also became a central component of the U.S. State Department’s post-WWII efforts to *disrupt* the relationships of colored cosmopolitanism and establish a superseding relationship between a postcolonial Indian state and a globally-ascendant U.S. empire-state.

In making this twofold argument, *Learning to Remake the World* interrupts and complicates certain entrenched patterns of educational racialization – patterns originally established within discourses internal to U.S. society, but now circulating in multiple

international contexts – whereby U.S.-born African diasporic populations are blamed and scapegoated for their own educational exclusion, while Asian Indians (whether born in India, in the United States, or elsewhere) are effusively lauded as math-and-science whiz kids: eminently useful, if somewhat unidimensional, and distinctly apolitical.

Particularly within current U.S. contexts, constructions of a racial “achievement gap” in education are currently central to a pernicious set of discourses positioning Asian Indians and African Americans at opposite ends of a spectrum from “model minority” to “problem minority.” My analysis counters this type of simplistic and problematic educational racialization by tracing the imbrications and co-constitutions of Asian Indian and African American racial and educational histories between the World War I era and the passage of the 1965 Immigration and Naturalization Act. By unearthing a series of deeply buried historical connections between African American and Asian Indian experiences of racialization and education, I seek not only to historicize contemporary racial-educational arrangements and discourses, but also to highlight historical moments of educational solidarity and cooperation between African American and Asian Indian constituencies – historical moments that belie the contemporary U.S. racial-educational *Weltanschauung*.

Because my two-part argument here attends both to state/imperial actors and to oppositional social movements, and transects the traditional historical-periodical dividing-line of World War II, this dissertation necessarily bridges two important planks of historical scholarship. First, it engages a growing collection of research around colored cosmopolitanism. This area of inquiry is itself a sort of inter-field hub connecting the wider field of transnational African American studies with an emergent

body of research on the Asian Indian presence in the United States during the “Asiatic Barred Zone” period, as well as with histories of anticolonial resistance on the Indian Subcontinent. Secondly, the dissertation takes up insights from an established corpus of work highlighting the connections between “race relations” and U.S. Cold War strategy, particularly in the two decades following World War II. My analysis contributes to these two areas of transnational historical investigation – colored cosmopolitanism and U.S. Cold War racial policy – by putting them into conversation with each other and with scholarly understandings from the field of education, particularly in the area of curriculum studies.

The rest of this introduction will situate and contextualize the dissertation’s overall contribution by elaborating upon the fields and terms it engages. I first paint a picture of the historical context for my study by discussing colored cosmopolitanism. In order to place the phenomenon of colored cosmopolitanism within a more expansive historical frame of reference, I also discuss the broader field of transnational African American studies. In addition, I highlight the ways in which histories of colored cosmopolitanism shed light upon the presence of Asian Indians in the U.S. during the barred zone period. I then discuss how the relationships and discourses of colored cosmopolitanism crucially affected official U.S. policy in the two decades following World War II. Finally, I establish the stakes of my study as a history *of education* with reference to recent theoretical work in pedagogy and curriculum studies. This historical and theoretical context establishes the groundwork for an understanding of the dissertation’s chapters, which I outline at the end of the introduction.

Colored Cosmopolitanism: the “darker peoples of the earth”

Beginning in the late nineteenth century and extending through the first half of the twentieth, interlocking networks of African American and Asian Indian intellectuals, artists, and activists forged a resonant assemblage of transnational and trans-imperial alliances and affinities rooted in a shared opposition to global white supremacy. Multilayered constellations of personal friendships and organizational consociations during this era – as historian Gerald Horne (2008) incisively puts it – “linked the largest ‘minority’ in what was to become the world’s most powerful nation and the largest colony of the once potent British Empire.”⁴ In the heyday of overt Anglo-Saxon racism and imperial domination stretching across the Americas, Africa, and Asia, these networks of African American and Asian Indian thinkers came together to construct what Slate (2012) describes as “a colored cosmopolitanism that transcended traditional racial distinctions, positioning Indians and African Americans together at the vanguard of the ‘darker races.’”⁵ While the term “cosmopolitanism” is etymologically associated with being a “citizen of the world,” its usage within the phrase “colored cosmopolitanism” more specifically highlights the subversive nature of alliances formed outside of established borders and boundaries.⁶ Colored cosmopolitans “fought for the freedom of

⁴ Gerald Horne, *The End of Empires: African Americans and India* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008), p. 1

⁵ Nico Slate, *Colored Cosmopolitanism: The Shared Struggle for Freedom in the United States and India* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2012), p. 2

⁶ It bears mentioning that Slate’s choice of “colored cosmopolitanism” as a descriptive term for these transnational alliances can be understood as connecting with a large body of scholarly work around the general concept of cosmopolitanism – the different valences and contradictory connotations of the term, its potentialities and its perils – being produced during the 1990s and 2000s. Studies in colored cosmopolitanism do not dwell on this general “cosmopolitanism literature,” so to speak, and this dissertation is not engaged in debates about the promises and pitfalls of various forms of cosmopolitanism; I engage only with the specific historical phenomenon of colored cosmopolitanism as defined by Slate. For an example of a more general study of cosmopolitanism as a concept, see for example Steven Vertovec and Robin Cohen’s (2002) *Conceiving Cosmopolitanism: Theory, Context, and Practice*.

the ‘colored world,’ even while calling into question the meanings of both color and freedom.”⁷

The historical depth, complexity, and mutuality of these transnational relationships between Asian Indian and African American communities, political movements, and intellectual genealogies are generally suppressed or elided in mainstream U.S. civil rights histories. As Sudarshan Kapur (1992) notes, the “essential historical connection generally made between the Indian independence movement and the modern African American freedom movement” is frequently limited to a narrow, linear story of MK Gandhi as an inspiration for Martin Luther King, Jr. This narrow focus on Gandhi and King, as Kapur indicates, “obscures a much richer history.”⁸ Not only is it important to realize, as Slate points out, that much contemporary scholarship, by “focusing primarily on Gandhi’s impact on African Americans,” has “largely neglected the ways in which African Americans influenced Gandhi”⁹; it is also vital to recognize that the historical relationship between Black America and India is not reducible to a Gandhian legacy. The transnational connections, conversations and coalitions of colored cosmopolitanism predated the Mahatma’s rise to international stardom, continued after his demise, and included many voices opposed to his outlook and methods, as well as those that idolized him.

While exploring the historical connections between African American and Asian Indian communities, the literature on colored cosmopolitanism does not treat these

⁷ Slate 2012, p. 2

⁸ Sudarshan Kapur, *Raising Up a Prophet: The African American Encounter with Gandhi* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), p. 2

⁹ Slate 2012, p. 94

communities as homogenous entities or monolithic blocs. Both African American and Asian Indian populations were – and still are – fractured and stratified along lines of class, caste, religion, language, gender, sexuality, and other such markers and constructions. Nevertheless, many colored cosmopolitans were able to critique multiple forms of oppression simultaneously, and to analyze the connections between these different oppressions – not just the racial and colonial forms of domination perpetrated by white power structures upon “colored” peoples, but also the violence of caste and gender hierarchies, religious chauvinisms, and the exploitation of workers (of all races) under capitalist rule. Indeed, studies of colored cosmopolitanism highlight – as Slate puts it – “the potential for transnational exchange to encourage intragroup introspection,” meaning that Asian Indian and African American activists not only reinforced one another’s critiques of white supremacy, but also, through their contact with each other, developed auto-critiques regarding their own treatment of fellow “colored” people within their own communities.¹⁰

To be sure, not all African Americans and Asian Indians during the first half of the twentieth century were colored cosmopolitans. Most notably, scholars in ethnic studies are well aware of the fact that numerous Indians in the United States during the early decades of the twentieth century attempted to gain access to U.S. citizenship by claiming whiteness. Perhaps the most well-known example would be Bhagat Singh Thind, a U.S. Army veteran of Punjabi origin, who in 1923 argued before the Supreme Court that his high-caste status should place him within the category of whiteness.

¹⁰ Slate 2012, p. 63

Linking his argument to the prevailing anthropological theories of the day, Thind asserted that as an upper-caste Punjabi, he was “a pure Aryan.”¹¹ In an analogy that discursively naturalized and reified both casteism and white supremacy, Thind explained to the court that “the high class Hindu regards the aboriginal Indian Mongoloid in the same manner as the American regards the Negro, speaking from the matrimonial standpoint.”¹² Singh’s argument failed to convince the court, but his gross appeal to American racism has lived on after him in the annals of U.S. legal history.

Given this history, I should note that my choice to focus on colored cosmopolitanism, rather than on claims to whiteness, is a deliberate one. Clearly, it would be equally possible to center the racism of figures like Thind. But, as Vivek Bald (2013) points out, recent historical work challenges the common assumption that the “early approach to race” among Asian Indians in the U.S. was primarily “characterized by the attempt to claim whiteness.”¹³ Furthermore, while it is important to understand the history of various “Asian” claims to citizenship-via-whiteness – a history brilliantly documented and analyzed by scholars like Ian Haney Lopez (2006) – it is also true that to concentrate solely on these claims is to keep the focus entirely on the exclusionary categories of whiteness and U.S. citizenship, thus precluding an examination of the rich and complex political and social worlds that were simultaneously being constructed *outside* of these prohibitive categories during the first half of the twentieth century.

¹¹ Qtd. in Mai Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004), p. 45

¹² Qtd. in Horne 2008, p. 64

¹³ Vivek Bald, *Bengali Harlem and the Lost Histories of South Asian America* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press 2013), p. 223

While history provides us with many examples of how different peoples of color in the United States have stepped on and squashed each other in a mad scramble to climb into the tower of whiteness – and have chauvinistically claimed precedence over “other” communities on the basis of being more “American” – we can also find compelling stories of political solidarity, intellectual exchange, and shared cultural life among various nonwhite peoples. The phenomenon of colored cosmopolitanism is one vibrant example.

All this being said, my engagement with the “richly braided relations that conjoin Black America and India” (Horne 2008) is not intended to uncritically glorify the phenomenon of colored cosmopolitanism or to imagine its participants as faultless saints.¹⁴ The transnational correspondences and exchanges between Asian Indian and African American communities during the first half of the twentieth century created a patchwork of discourse and action, and not all pieces of the patchwork were equally progressive. While many of the conversations and texts that emerged from these transnational alliances challenged conventional notions of gender and sexuality, for example, others reflected the gendered presuppositions of their era. While some colored cosmopolitan activists linked their antiracist and anticolonial work to a structural analysis of the world capitalist system, others lacked a clear critique of the connections between capitalism and the color line. Some of the colored cosmopolitan writings on education invoke simplistic and problematic notions of “intelligence” and “ability” as identifiable and even innate personal qualities. From my own vantage point as a critical ethnic

¹⁴ Horne 2008, p. 4

studies scholar, perhaps the most egregious problem with colored cosmopolitan discourses as a whole was that they did not consistently address specifically *settler* forms of colonialism. While colored cosmopolitan thinkers imagined their alliances as advancing the goal of freedom for the “colored world,” they generally imagined that world as consisting of Africa, Asia, and the Black and Asian populations of the United States and the Caribbean, with no attention paid to the Indigenous peoples of the Americas who had been occupied by white supremacy for hundreds of years. While a small number of colored cosmopolitan thinkers critiqued the structural genocide underlying the creation of “the United States,” most colored cosmopolitan writers either framed U.S. violence against the “American Indian” only in the *past* tense (ignoring the coevalness of Native American struggles with their own), or else ignored the issue entirely. As to the Native peoples of the rest of North and South America (i.e., outside of the U.S.), they were scarcely mentioned at all.

Despite these various gaps and problems within many of the discourses of colored cosmopolitanism, my position with regards to this historical movement is to focus on its liberatory ideals and solidarities, rather than simply writing an extended critique of its omissions and failures. From a *historical* transnational ethnic studies standpoint, unearthing the buried histories (or, if we prefer, emplotting some of the stories) of past social justice movements – all of which have been imperfect – is a worthwhile endeavor for scholars interested in the concept of liberatory struggle. It behooves us to examine the strengths, as well as to critique the weaknesses, of these historic movements. I have found it useful to approach the writings of colored cosmopolitanism from a critical but also sympathetic perspective, bearing in mind the fact that the activists and intellectuals

of the past could be contradictory, could change over time, and could use language strategically – all of which apply to today’s scholars and activists as well.

To elaborate on this point by way of example: today’s U.S.-based leftist and antiracist intellectuals routinely invoke their “academic freedom,” despite the fact – cogently demonstrated by scholars working in a variety of fields – that the U.S. academy has been built (and continues to be maintained) on a material basis of unfreedom, enacted through settler-colonial removals, chattel slavery, and military occupations.¹⁵ While some of the scholars who so passionately defend “academic freedom” are truly unaware of, or indifferent to, the historical and structural ironies of such a term within the context of the U.S. settler state (or, one might argue, anywhere), some scholars *are* clearly aware of those ironies but choose to reference “academic freedom” for a variety of strategic purposes: to make themselves legible to particular audiences, to consciously invoke an *aspirational* concept even while knowing that it has no basis in historical reality, to oppose the censorship of their writings, to keep their jobs. Today’s antiracist Left activists similarly demand their “First Amendment rights,” implicitly reifying the legitimacy of a document – the “U.S. Constitution” – that was produced by a brutal white-supremacist settler state in the service of its own expansion. It is indeed important to highlight the ironies and to critique the hypocrisies inherent in discourses that glorify the founding documents of the U.S. settler state or that imagine the U.S. university as a

¹⁵ On slavery and settler colonialism as the material foundations for the U.S. university, see for example Craig Steven Wilder’s (2013) *Ebony and Ivy: Race, Slavery, and the Troubled History of America’s Universities*. For an exploration of the relationships between the U.S. university, U.S. militarism, and the U.S. prison-industrial complex, see Piya Chatterjee and Sunaina Maira’s (2014) *The Imperial University: Academic Repression and Scholarly Dissent*.

protector of intellectual “freedom.” At the same time, however, ethnic studies scholars generally do not ignore or dismiss the work of every contemporary scholar or activist who has ever invoked “academic freedom,” the “First Amendment,” etc. My point is that if we can understand contemporary activists and scholars as dialectical, processual thinkers and strategic writers, it should be possible and permissible to take the same approach to the antiracist and anticolonial activists and scholars of the past.

Colored cosmopolitanism represents one strand within the broader field of transnational African American studies, which, in the words of Maria Christina Ramos, “chart[s] the ways in which [African Americans have used] globally positioned black diasporic identities to challenge socially-spatially constructed [e.g. national] identities and reconfigure global relations.”¹⁶ As Brenda Gayle Plummer (2011) notes, “The primacy of the nation-state [in historical studies] has tended to obscure the transnational mobility and ubiquity of African Americans.”¹⁷ Seeking to reverse this trend, multiple scholars have recently been gravitating – in the words of Gerald Horne – “toward a transnational research agenda for African American history.”¹⁸ To further clarify this dissertation’s stakes and interventions, it is necessary to situate colored cosmopolitanism within a larger body of work on transnational African American histories.

Transnational African American studies: Global circulations

¹⁶ Maria Christina Ramos, *Mapping the World Differently: African American Travel Writing About Spain*, (Valencia, Spain: Publicacions de la Universitat de València, 2015), p. 23

¹⁷ Brenda Gayle Plummer, “African Americans in the International Imaginary: Gerald Horne’s Progressive Vision.” (*The Journal of African American History*, Vol. 96, No. 2 (Spring 2011), pp. 221-230), p. 221

¹⁸ See Gerald Horne, “Toward a Transnational Research Agenda for African American History in the 21st Century.” *Journal of African American History*. Vol. 91, No. 3 (200), pp. 288-303.

To study African American history, writes Cynthia Dobbs (2016),

... is necessarily to concern ourselves with problems of movement and mapping. Authors and scholars attempt to uncover the tracks, trace the terrible and (at many points) triumphant movements of African diasporic history in the Americas: from the Middle Passage to the auction block, from the plantation to the underground railroad, from the Great Migration(s) north and west to the movements of both the dispossessed and the passport-empowered of late capitalism.¹⁹

Dobbs' focus on the centrality of movement and mapping within African American studies actually provides an opening for a discussion of the ways in which African American histories transcend the boundaries of the very map she describes. In other words, African American histories are not simply defined by a one-way crossing of the Atlantic via the Middle Passage, followed by various circulations within the United States (or, for that matter, "the Americas"). Rather, as Cedric Tolliver notes, "throughout their history African Americans have constructed their identity not just in terms of national belonging but through intense, complex, and sometimes bitter engagements on a *global* level."²⁰ While the label "African American" might seem to imply a set of histories bounded or defined by the U.S. state (following the initial arrival of enslaved peoples from Africa on U.S. shores), historical research in transnational African American studies highlights the remarkable extent to which the intellectual currents and political activities of U.S.-based African diasporic populations have both shaped and been shaped by events in Asia, Africa, Europe – indeed, throughout the world. Not merely a "part" contained within the boundaries of the United States, African American

¹⁹ Cynthia Dobbs, "Mapping Black Movement, Containing Black Laughter: Ralph Ellison's New York Essays" (*American Quarterly*, Volume 68, Number 4, December 2016, pp. 907-929), p. 913

²⁰ Cedric Tolliver, "Anchoring Black Diasporic History," (*Safundi*, 9:3), p. 343 (emphasis added)

histories are constitutively imbricated in the conceptual and political trajectories of communities and nations across the globe.

Learning to Remake the World engages a strand of transnational African American studies that explores African American internationalism and anticolonialism during the long Cold War. During World War I and the inter-war period, the transnational and counter-imperial interventions of a critical mass of African American writers, artists, and activists ran directly in opposition to the ideologies and goals of the U.S. state and mainstream U.S. society. White America during this era was increasingly obsessed with barring “foreigners” and purging anyone and anything that did not fit a specifically “Anglo-Saxon” model of what it meant to be truly “American.” With the Russian Revolution of 1917, additional hysteria arose around the specter of imported communism and “radicalism”; the idea was that these dangerous ideologies would be brought into the United States by the aforementioned non-Anglo foreigners. But while the dominant (white) public sphere was engulfed in hyper-nationalism and Anglo-Saxonism – public sentiments reflected in the legislated ethnic exclusions of the Johnson-Reed Act and the Asiatic Barred Zone Act, and in various state and local laws mandating English monolingualism – there also emerged, as Nikhil Pal Singh (2004) notes, a Black “counter-public sphere” in the United States.²¹

This growing African American counter-public, facilitated by the rising Black press and the activities of Black artists and intellectuals, increasingly reached outward to

²¹ Nikhil Pal Singh, *Black is a Country: Race and the Unfinished Struggle for Democracy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), p. 65. (Singh adopts the term “counter-public sphere” from Nancy Fraser, “Re-Thinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy,” *Social Text* 25, no. 26 (1990): 56-80.

form connections with cultural and political movements taking place beyond the borders of the white-supremacist U.S. state. Alongside and in conjunction with the ascendance of colored cosmopolitanism, this era witnessed the multifaceted elaboration of multiple versions of Pan-Africanism. In addition, as historian Penny Von Eschen (1997) notes, there was a “rich cross-fertilization of leftist and Pan-African movements, beginning most visibly after the Russian Revolution.”²² African American scholars, activists, artists and journalists increasingly elucidated the connections between white supremacy and the gross exploitation of labor, framing their analyses and demands not just in terms of “American” society, but in terms of *global* structures of power, labor, and race. As W.E.B. Du Bois wrote in his 1935 *Black Reconstruction in America*, the history of Black America was inseparably intertwined with “that dark and vast sea of human labor in China and India, the South Seas and all of Africa ... that great majority of mankind, on whose bent and broken backs rest today the founding stones of modern history.” Linking white supremacy, the oppression of workers, and capitalist accumulation, Du Bois described how the darker peoples of the world – “despised and rejected by race and color; paid a wage below the level of decent living; driven, beaten, prisoned and enslaved in all but name” – produced massive economic value which was then “gathered up at prices the lowest of the low,” traded and circulated “at fabulous gain,” and the “resultant wealth ... distributed and displayed and made the basis of world power and universal domination and armed arrogance” in the Western imperial metropolises. Operationalizing a Marxist language within an anti-racist exegesis, Du Bois declared that the “real modern labor

²² Penny Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire: Black Americans and Anticolonialism, 1937-1957* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1997), p. 10

problem” – indeed, the “kernel of the problem of ... Humanity” – was the “exploitation of the dark proletariat.” The “Surplus Value filched from human beasts” constituted the real economic engine which the “Machine and harnessed Power” served to “veil and conceal.” A true workers’ revolution thus could not take place without a central focus on the liberation of the colored peoples: “The emancipation of man is the emancipation of labor and the emancipation of labor is the freeing of that basic majority of workers who are yellow, brown, and black.”²³

The response of many “colored” peoples to the 1935 Italian invasion of Abyssinia (Ethiopia) exemplifies the coalescence of Pan-Africanism, anti-fascism, left/socialist labor movements, anti-imperialism, and colored cosmopolitanism during (what is rather inaccurately referred to as) the inter-war period. When Mussolini’s forces attacked Ethiopia, many African Americans saw not only an alarming spread of fascism, but also a white-supremacist imperialist assault on the only African country not colonized by Europe. “Almost overnight,” recalls historian John Hope Franklin, “even the most provincial among the Negro Americans became international-minded.”²⁴ (Of course, many newspaper-reading African Americans had long been “international-minded” anyway, thanks to the transnational orientation of the Black press during this era.) As Von Eschen notes, African American activists understandably “viewed as racist the indifference of Western nations to a clear fascist attack” on the Abyssinian Kingdom.²⁵ In addition to mass demonstrations – one march in Harlem drew 25,000 participants –

²³ W.E.B. Du Bois (1935), *Black Reconstruction in America* (New York: The Free Press, 1998), pp. 15-16

²⁴ Qtd. in Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2001), p. 28

²⁵ Von Eschen 1997, p. 11

there were “petitions by black churches to the pope, fund raising for Emperor Haile Selassie’s beleaguered subjects, and ... organization of volunteer militias” to help fight the Italian troops in Ethiopia.²⁶ In Chicago, Oliver Law, an African American labor organizer and member of the Communist Party, planned a rally that drew 10,000 people – along with 2,000 police officers sent to break up the demonstration. Law began to address the gathering from a rooftop and was promptly arrested. Thereafter, six other speakers appeared, one by one, on different rooftops, shouting against fascism. One after another, they were all taken away by the police.

Colored cosmopolitans in India followed the lead of African American activists, condemning the Italian fascist aggression and denouncing the apathy of the other Western powers in allowing the assault on Ethiopia to continue unchecked. Rammanohar Lohia, head of the Foreign Department of the Indian National Congress and a member of the Congress Socialist Party, wrote to Robert O. Jordan, the Jamaican-born President of the Harlem-based Ethiopia Pacific Movement:

I fully reciprocate your feelings and I am in entire agreement with you that the fight against imperialist domination, whether it is carried on in the West Indies or in India or in China, is of an indivisible character. ... It was, I dare say, this conviction that brought hundreds of thousands of Indians on to the meeting-places in the numerous cities and towns of the country on the 9th of May, 1936 to protest against Italian aggression over Abyssinia. Significantly enough, the Calcutta police on that occasion stopped a procession from demonstrating in front of the Royal Italian Consulate.²⁷

²⁶ Brenda Gayle Plummer, *Rising Wind: Black Americans and U.S. Foreign Affairs, 1935-1960* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), p. 37

²⁷ Letter from Rammanohar Lohia to Robert O. Jordan, May 21, 1936. In *Collected Works of Dr. Rammanohar Lohia, Vol. 8*. Edited by Mastram Kapoor. Hyderabad: RML Samata Nyas, 2011.

²⁷ Statement signed by Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, Vice President, All Indian Women’s Conference. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library archives, All India Women’s Conference IV, F. no. 16, 1937.

Lohia's letter goes on to reiterate the INC's solidarity with "our coloured brethren in America and the neighboring islands and Africa," adding: "Your struggle ... not only has our sympathy but is an inspiration to other oppressed nations in their march toward freedom."²⁸

The following year, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, writing on behalf of the All India Women's Conference, again condemned the "cruel rape of Abyssinia," and linked this imperialist attack with the subsequent rise of the fascist dictator Francisco Franco in Spain.²⁹ Meanwhile, Oliver Law had actually traveled to Spain and was serving as commander of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade – a contingent of American volunteers within a larger international brigade of anti-fascist fighters backing the Spanish resistance against Franco. Later that year, when Law was killed in action, his comrades buried him under a sign reading: "OLIVER LAW, THE FIRST NEGRO TO COMMAND AMERICAN WHITE SOLDIERS."³⁰ In 1938, the famed African American actor-singer-scholar-activist Paul Robeson visited Republican-controlled Spain in a demonstration of support for the anti-fascist fighters. At an International Brigade training camp, Robeson and his wife Eslanda "met African American volunteers from places like St. Louis and Baltimore, who would soon be sent to the front lines."³¹ As Robeson later recalled in his autobiography, "I sang with my whole heart and soul for these gallant

²⁸ Letter from Rammanohar Lohia to Robert O. Jordan, May 21, 1936. In *Collected Works of Dr. Rammanohar Lohia, Vol. 8*. Edited by Mastram Kapoor. Hyderabad: RML Samata Nyas, 2011.

²⁹ Statement signed by Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, Vice President, All Indian Women's Conference. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library archives, *All India Women's Conference IV*, F. no. 16, 1937.

³⁰ <http://www.blackpast.org/aah/law-oliver-1900-1937>

³¹ Lindsay Swindall, *Paul Robeson: A Life of Activism and Art* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2013), p. 85

fighters of the international brigade.”³² The Robesons’ traveling companion during this trip was Krishna Menon, secretary of the India League. Directly upon leaving Spain, the little group traveled to London, where they met with Jawaharlal Nehru and other prominent Indian anticolonial activists.

Moving into the 1940s, African American anticolonialists continued to reiterate their conviction “that their struggles against Jim Crow were inextricably bound to the struggles of African and Asian peoples for independence.”³³ Colored cosmopolitanism was not the only manifestation of this conviction, but it was one of the most consequential during these years. In the words of Gerald Horne, the “bilateral relationship between an oppressed national minority in a budding superpower and the world’s largest colony,” which had been steadily building through the inter-war period, “exploded in significance during World War II.”³⁴ More broadly, as Von Eschen notes, by the end of the war “internationalist anticolonial discourse [had become] critical in shaping black American politics and the meaning of racial identities and solidarities.”³⁵ Colored cosmopolitanism, Pan-Africanism, international workers’ movements, and international peace movements were fundamental co-constituents of African American intellectual, political, and artistic activity during these years.

With the increasing visibility of African American mass political activity via organizations such as A. Philip Randolph’s March on Washington Movement, and with the African American electorate growing (thanks in part to the Great Migration), the

³² Paul Robeson, *Here I Stand* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958), p. 53

³³ Von Eschen 1997, p. 2

³⁴ Horne 2008, p. 15

³⁵ Von Eschen 1997, p. 2

Roosevelt administration realized that it could not afford to continue ignoring African American human rights demands completely. And African Americans were making these demands, not just for themselves as U.S. citizens, but on behalf of colonized peoples around the world – particularly in India. British officials recognized the potential of African American voters to influence the U.S. administration and thus the policies of a key imperial ally. As Brenda Gayle Plummer (1996) notes, “British authorities during World War II became [increasingly] sensitized to the political power of black voters in key industrial states [in the U.S.]. They saw Afro-Americans as a threat to colonialism in India and the Caribbean and sought contact with NAACP secretary Walter White to keep abreast of what he was doing.”³⁶ (327) British officials were correct in regarding African American politics as a threat to white-supremacist global rule. Ultimately, as Gerald Horne writes, the “remarkable upsurge” of African American support for Indian independence “helped immeasurably in pushing this inevitability towards realization.”³⁷

Cold War concerns: Jim Crow and U.S. public relations

In the years following World War II, as a rising U.S. empire-state sought to trump Soviet power by drawing the new postcolonial African and Asian nations into its sphere of influence, State Department officials quickly realized that these new “colored” nations, long aware of Jim Crow racial apartheid, were logically wary of U.S. overtures and tended to react with skepticism (if not outright scorn) to claims of American moral superiority. As Ibram X. Kendi (2016) notes, “Branding itself the leader of the free

³⁶ Plummer 1996, p. 327

³⁷ Horne 2008, p. 16

world opened the United States up to criticism about its myriad unfree racial policies.”³⁸ In other words, widespread condemnation of America’s color line was a distinct hindrance to U.S. global ambitions during this particular phase of the Cold War. Stories of violence against African Americans, as well as mistreatment of nonwhite visitors (including diplomats representing the new postcolonial governments) appeared regularly on the pages of newspapers worldwide, and were greeted with outrage in the decolonizing nations of color. In order to realize its Cold War objectives, the United States would have to clean up its racial image.

Seizing this post-WWII moment of opportunity, African American activists mobilized public opinion in the emerging “colored” nations in order to bring pressure against ongoing structures of white supremacy within the United States. Having effectively aided anticolonial struggle on an international scale, African American leaders now strategically reminded U.S. officials that domestic civil rights reform was crucial to U.S. interests with regards to the Cold War alignment of the new postcolonial states. Activists also made recourse to the newly-created United Nations to keep the struggles of African Americans before the eyes of world leaders. In 1951, for example, a group of African American leftist intellectuals signed a petition to the UN titled *We Charge Genocide*, outlining the systematic brutality being committed against Black peoples within the United States.

³⁸ Ibram X. Kendi *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America* (New York: Nation Books, 2016), p. 355

During the late 1940s and early 1950s, the relationships and discourses of colored cosmopolitanism constituted an important (though certainly not the only) factor in this equation between the State Department's Cold War maneuvering and the African American struggle against Jim Crow. This was both because those networks had been built up over so many decades, and because U.S. officials were intensely concerned with keeping India out of the Soviet sphere. Of all the decolonizing nations over which the U.S. sought influence during this period, India was one of the most (if not *the* most) aggressively pursued, due to its strategic geopolitical location, its valuable natural resources, and its enormous population.³⁹ And, much to the frustration of the State Department, Indian politicians and newsreading publics were among the most vocal international critics of U.S. racism. As Mary Dudziak (2000) notes,

During the Truman years [1945-1953], in no other country was the focus on American race relations of greater importance than in India. Chester Bowles discovered in 1951, early in his tenure as U.S. ambassador to India, that 'the number one question' in Asia about the United States was 'about America's treatment of the Negro.' Bowles took Indian concerns very seriously because he believed India to be of great strategic importance to the United States.⁴⁰

African American activists skillfully made use of these two factors – India's Cold War importance, and Indian critiques of U.S. racism – to advance their battle against Jim Crow. This strategy was available thanks to the already-existing networks of colored cosmopolitanism. In leveraging public opinion in the newly-independent India to affect U.S. domestic racial policy, African American leaders coordinated their efforts with Indian

³⁹ For a detailed study of the U.S. view of India and its strategic importance during this era, see Andrew J. Rotter, *Comrades at Odds: The United States and India, 1947-1964* (Ithica: Cornell University Press, 2000).

⁴⁰ Mary Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000), p. 33

activists and intellectuals, both on the Subcontinent and in the U.S. NAACP Executive Secretary Walter White, for example, used his “knowledge of India and his connections with powerful Indians” to pressure the U.S. on issues of racial justice. One of White’s major allies in helping to maintain and expand Indian public awareness of African American struggles from the late 1940s through the 1950s was the well-connected J.J. Singh of the India League of America (ILA). White and Singh “stroved to influence public opinion and worked together to generate links between Black and Indian newspapers.”⁴¹

Though not a U.S. citizen, J.J. Singh was based in the United States. He had entered the country in 1926 and stayed until 1959, when he returned to India and received a hero’s welcome.⁴² In other words, Singh had come into the U.S. during the “Asiatic Barred Zone” period, and had remained for more than three decades. The presence of colored cosmopolitans like Singh living in the United States during the barred zone era brings us to another point – namely, that Asian Indian influence in the U.S. flourished precisely during a period when Indians were formally barred from immigrating to the United States. This fact bears dwelling upon as part of the historical context for the chapters of *Learning to Remake the World*.

The “Hindu Menace”: Indians in the U.S. during the barred zone era

The “story of South Asians in the United States,” writes historian Vivek Bald, is commonly assumed to have stopped short in 1917 with the passage of the Asiatic Barred

⁴¹ Slate 2012, pp. 170-171

⁴² For a more extensive study of J.J. Singh’s work, see Robert Shaffer, “J. J. Singh and the India League of America, 1945-1959: Pressing at the Margins of the Cold War Consensus.” *Journal of American Ethnic History*, Vol. 31, No. 2 (Winter 2012), pp. 68-103

Zone Act, and to have resumed only after the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, which replaced the national-origin-based quota system with an immigration policy favoring certain high-skilled science and technology professionals. As recent historical research makes clear, however, Asian Indian movement into and out of the United States did not stop in 1917. A small but steady stream of Asian Indians continued to flow through the United States throughout the barred zone era. Individuals from British-occupied India entered the United States as students, as visiting professors at colleges, on tourist visas, or just illegally. And the activities of many of these “aliens ineligible for citizenship” were of unique historic consequence, both in the U.S. and back on the Subcontinent.

The histories of Asian Indians who came to the U.S. during the barred zone period upend the standard U.S. “immigration” narrative of “incipient settler families clutching a one-way ticket in their hands and the American Dream in their hearts.”⁴³ Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, travelers from India arrived on U.S. shores, not seeking U.S. citizenship or the “American Dream,” but in order to earn money and return home, or move on to third countries, or to study or teach at U.S. colleges ... or to engage in political activity on behalf of the Indian independence movement and/or the broader ideal of colored cosmopolitanism. Countless numbers of Indian anticolonialists – Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya, Sarojini Naidu, Lala Lajpat Rai, Krishnalal Shridharani, Vijaylakshmi Pandit, K.A. Abbas, K.D. Shastri, Haridas Muzumdar, and Rabindranath Tagore, to name just a handful – entered the United States during this era, staying for durations of time

⁴³ Sucheta Mazumdar, “What Happened to the Women?” in Hume, S., & Nomura, G. (Eds.), *Asian Pacific Islander Women: A Historical Anthology*. Qtd. in Bald 2013, p. 9

ranging from a few weeks to several years or even decades. These traveling Indians met with numerous “Negro” individuals and organizations, strengthening the ties of colored cosmopolitanism, as well as with notable white leftists such as the educational philosopher John Dewey, the noted socialist Norman Thomas, and Roger Baldwin of the ACLU.

Multiple Indian intellectuals during this era became professors at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). Dr. Vishnu V. Oak, for example, after earning his PhD from Clark University, where he wrote a dissertation on “Commercial Education in Negro Colleges and Universities in the United States,” took up a teaching position at Cheney State Teachers’ College. There he met Eleanor Hill, daughter of the well-known African American educator, writer, and musician Leslie Pinckney Hill, who was Cheney’s president. Vishnu and Eleanor married in 1935, and both went on to teach at the North Carolina College for Negroes. In 1939, the professors Oak co-authored an article in the *Journal of Negro Education* on “Children’s Literature Dealing with Negro Life.”⁴⁴ Among the list of books they discussed was one about a Dalit (“Untouchable”) child in India, which the authors suggested might resonate with the experiences of Negro children living under U.S. segregation. Vishnu Oak later published a major historical study of the Black press; this work is still used as a resource by scholars today.

At the same time as intellectuals like Dr. Oak were making connections with their African American peers, working-class Asian Indian migrants were evading the notice of

⁴⁴ Vishnu V. Oak and Eleanor H. Oak, “Children’s Literature Dealing with Negro Life.” *The Journal of Negro Education*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (Jan., 1939), pp. 77-79

immigration authorities by blending into “colored” neighborhoods in multiple East Coast port cities. Bald (2013) traces the paths of some of these predominantly-Muslim working-class Indian populations – peddlers dealing in embroidery and other goods, for example, and seamen who had jumped ship to escape from abusive labor conditions in the holds of British vessels. Some of these migrants only stayed in the U.S. long enough to figure out where to go next, but others stayed for years, and some stayed permanently – marrying African American or Puerto Rican spouses, establishing families, opening local businesses, and becoming part of the fabric of these communities of color that had given them safe haven and allowed them to pass under the racial radar of U.S. officials. As Bald notes, “What these [Asian Indian] migrants of color found in black diasporic neighborhoods was what George Lipsitz, drawing on the African American religious scholar Theophus Smith, has called a ‘world-traversing and world-transcending citizenship,’ forged by peoples ‘cut off from ancestral homelands [and] denied full franchise and social membership in the United States.’”⁴⁵ The phrase *world-traversing and world-transcending citizenship* here recalls the concept of colored cosmopolitanism. As Bald’s work demonstrates, this genre of affiliation was not merely an elite phenomenon.

It bears mentioning here that the racialization of Asian Indians as a dangerous Enemy Other during World War I and the barred zone period was related to, but distinct from, prior iterations of racialization of Indians and other Asians. Seema Sohi’s (2014) illuminating historical work illustrates how the notion of the “Hindu menace” (all peoples

⁴⁵ Bald 2013, p. 226

from the Indian Subcontinent were referred to as “Hindus,” regardless of religion) during this era was produced through “a convergence of anti-Asian racism and anti-radicalism.” In 1914, for example, in hearings convened by the House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization to discuss two bills aimed at restricting the entry of “Hindus” to the United States, white anxiety over the threat of competition from Asian laborers “soon became indistinguishable from the committee’s anxieties over Indian anticolonialism.” Representative John Raker of California “insisted that Indians were making the country a ‘hotbed of revolution’ by using it as a base to organize radical political movements both domestically and abroad, prompting a number of representatives to insist that ‘Hindus’ were dangerous agitators who had to be excluded.” U.S. officials were “[c]onvinced that Indian anticolonialists ... had the potential to embolden colonized subjects and racialized minorities across the globe to overthrow the racial and imperial world order”; hence, in the ensuing decades, “US Immigration, Justice, and State Department officials routinely collaborated with British authorities by sharing intelligence, enacting deportation and criminal proceedings, and keeping a close eye on Indians.”⁴⁶

Colored cosmopolitanism thus represented a double-threat to U.S. and British officials, who did not fail to notice the growing connections between African American activists and the “Hindu menace.” As Sohi notes, “[E]xpressions of unity between black American and Indian anticolonialists were alarming to US and British officials alike, who seized upon such racial solidarities to justify and expand their inter-imperial surveillance

⁴⁶ Seema Sohi, *Echoes of Mutiny: Race, Surveillance, and Indian Anticolonialism in North America*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 2-4

apparatus.”⁴⁷ Officials staked out and scrutinized gatherings and meetings of “colored” peoples, and government spies closely followed individual African Americans who traveled to India, as well as Indians who traveled to the United States. Information (and misinformation) on “Hindu” and “Negro” individuals and organizations – their activities, their statements, their whereabouts, their associations with one another – flew back and forth, between and among British and U.S. agents and agencies. In 1922, for example, a United States intelligence official ominously reminded the director of the Office of Naval Intelligence that, “The present Hindu revolutionary movement has definite connections with the Negro agitation in America.”⁴⁸ Meanwhile, British officials frantically sought to curtail African American travel to India, in an attempt to keep Indians “quarantined from the putatively seditious messages carried by African Americans.”⁴⁹

During World War II – as Gerald Horne notes in *Race War*, a book from which this dissertation takes part of its subtitle – some Asian Indians in the U.S., together with African American allies, intentionally stoked an existing paranoia on the part of U.S. officials that India and Black America together could form a sort of fifth column in support of Japan. Indeed, a small but vocal contingent of antiracist activists *did* hope that the defeat of the white-supremacist Allied powers at the hands of a “colored” empire would strike a fatal blow to global white supremacy. Japanese propaganda skillfully appealed to African American and Asian Indian audiences specifically on this basis,

⁴⁷ Sohi 2014, p. 202

⁴⁸ Qtd. in Slate 2012, p. 50. Although, as Slate notes, the details of this letter contained “a jumble of falsities” (and misspelled names), the letter exemplifies U.S. government fears of an alliance between Asian Indians and African Americans.

⁴⁹ Horne 2008, p. 10

arguing that a Japanese victory would help end the oppression of these “colored” peoples. As Horne points out, it was the Anglo powers’ long history of brutal white-supremacist violence against (internally and externally) colonized peoples that facilitated “Japan’s ability to insinuate itself within the interstices of this racialized edifice of exploitation – though [the Japanese Empire] was a colonizing power itself.”⁵⁰

Indian anticolonialists circulating within the U.S. during the war, along with some African American partners, tactically played up the threat of this potential “fifth column,” pointing out that it would be difficult to impossible for the Allies to win in the Pacific theater if America’s Jim Crow apartheid and Britain’s white-supremacist colonialism drove masses of African Americans and Asian Indians into the metaphorical arms of Tokyo. In 1942, for instance, Dr. Krishnalal Shridharani, an Indian anticolonial activist and author, veteran of MK Gandhi’s Great Salt March, and researcher at Columbia University, warned in a strategically-worded letter to Roosevelt that the U.S. could no longer regard the fate of India as “merely a British domestic question,” since the support of millions of Indians would be required if the Allies were to win the war. Dramatically declaring that “only free men can win this war, and not mercenaries or vassals,” Shridharani appealed to U.S. wartime self-interest as a way of pressuring Roosevelt to support Indian independence.⁵¹ This message to Roosevelt did not go unnoticed by British intelligence agents, who were busily spying on Shridharani. As Richard J. Aldrich notes, “Shridharani’s activities were a matter of increasing concern to London”

⁵⁰ Horne 2004, p. xiii

⁵¹ Qtd. in Eric S. Rubin, “America, Britain, and *Swaraj*: Anglo-American Relations and Indian Independence, 1939-1945” (*India Review*, vol. 10, no. 1, January–March, 2011. pp. 40–80 2011), pp. 55-56

during these years.⁵² A threat not merely to London but also to the U.S. racial order, Shridharani was an ally of, and a major influence upon, some of the leading African American human rights activists of the 1940s, including A. Philip Randolph, Bayard Rustin, Pauli Murray, and James Farmer – colored cosmopolitans all.

In sum, then, an attention to the idea of colored cosmopolitanism, in addition to highlighting the fact that African American histories cannot be contained within the borders of the United States (or of “the Americas” writ large), also reveals that Asian Indian histories cannot be kept *out* of the United States – particularly during the “barred zone” period. Ironically, the era during which Asian Indians (the “Hindu menace”) were officially barred from legally immigrating to the U.S. represents one of the most consequential eras of “the story of South Asians in the United States.” The activities of Asian Indians in the U.S. during this era influenced U.S. foreign policy, aided the Indian independence movement, and became co-constitutively imbricated within African American intellectual and political life, with historic results. My own interest in the presence of the “Hindu menace” in the U.S. during the barred zone era (combined with histories of colored cosmopolitanism and transnational African American studies) revolves around education – i.e., the connections between the transnational Hindu menace *and education*, both in India and the in U.S. But in order to elucidate my approach to the study of these connections, I must clarify the purpose of the signifier

⁵² Richard J. Aldrich, *Intelligence and the War Against Japan: Britain, America and the Politics of Secret Service* (Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 138-139

“education” within this dissertation. This complex and multivalent signifier is the topic of the next section.

“What do you mean by ‘education’?” ... The lenses of pedagogy and curriculum studies

Building on the transnational historical work of scholars like Gerald Horne, Nico Slate, Seema Sohi, Penny Von Eschen, Brenda Gayle Plummer, Vivek Bald, Mary Dudziak, Sudarshan Kapur, Quinton Dixie and Peter Eisenstadt, among others, this dissertation’s intervention consists in outlining the *centrality of education* within colored cosmopolitanism, and within the U.S. Cold War reactionism that sought to displace it, between around 1915 and 1965. As someone who is both an ethnic studies scholar and a schoolteacher, my inclination in reading the work of historians such as Horne, Slate, and the others has naturally been to ask how these cross-cutting and overlapping transnational histories – of colored cosmopolitanism, critical transracial anticolonialism, British and U.S. imperialisms and the long Cold War – have intersected and interacted with histories of education. *Learning to Remake the World* thus examines the ways in which these social movements and geopolitical developments have crucially shaped and been shaped by educational practices, processes, and institutions. My approach involves an exploration of archival documents and published primary texts related to schools and colleges, but also proceeds by analyzing social movements and state/imperial strategies themselves through the lenses of curriculum studies and pedagogy.

To clarify my analytic orientation here, I should note that scholarly literature in the education field has long embraced an expansive definition of education, as reflected in studies such as Roland Sintos Coloma’s (2005) discussion of Filipino education in the

early twentieth century, in which “Education is broadly defined as pedagogical engagements where teaching and learning occur both in the formal school settings and in the informal non-school environments.”⁵³ This definition is not as simple as it may seem at first glance. The term “pedagogical engagements” demands that we consider, as E. Thomas Ewing (2005) puts it, the “layers of complexity inherent in the category of pedagogy.” Ewing invites us to contemplate how “pedagogy is ultimately a matter of relationships [including] between the forces promoting a dominant culture and those engaged in various forms of resistance,” and he calls attention to “the ways in which learning shapes identities on both individual and national levels.”⁵⁴ The concept of pedagogy, in other words, encompasses explorations of how teaching and learning take place across a range of settings, and demands that scholars consider the stakes of that learning at multiple levels, engaging categories and constructions such as race, class, nation, community, identity, etc.

Just as the concept of pedagogy extends outward from the classroom, the field of curriculum studies – originally concerned exclusively with such matters as the content of textbooks, the scope and sequence of material to be taught in a given grade level, or the designation of requirements for different academic degrees – now encompasses a range of intellectual projects investigating the production and organization of knowledge, both inside and outside of formal school settings. At its broadest level, curriculum studies

⁵³ Roland Sintos Coloma, “Disidentifying Nationalism: Camilo Osias and Filipino Education in the Early Twentieth Century” (in *Revolution and Pedagogy: Interdisciplinary and Transnational Perspectives on Educational Foundations*, edited by E. Thomas Ewing. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), p. 19

⁵⁴ E. Thomas Ewing, *Revolution and Pedagogy: Interdisciplinary and Transnational Perspectives on Educational Foundations* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), pp. 9, 12

involves critical analyses and investigations around what William H. Schubert (2009) refers to as “the ‘*what is worthwhile*’ question.”⁵⁵ As Schubert points out,

From time immemorial, educators have asked: What is worth knowing, needing, experiencing, doing, being, becoming, overcoming, contributing, and sharing? Interest groups have emerged to vehemently vie for leadership in response to such questions, both within the curriculum field and in most societies at large throughout history. They have sought to determine the why, when, where, how, for whom, and in whose interest of the what considered worthwhile.⁵⁶

The lens of curriculum studies has been applied to a range of educational policies, practices, arrangements, and texts, both within and beyond formal school settings. Whether the objects of analysis are textbooks, testing regimes, or toy commercials, curriculum studies asks: *What learning is taking place here, and who is organizing that learning, and in whose interest? Who is deciding what is worthwhile for whom?* These questions demand a critical analysis of power, including but not limited to its manifestations along lines of race, gender, sexuality, nation, empire, colony, and capital. In seeking to address questions of the “what is worthwhile” and the power relations that make it so, curriculum studies scholars select from and strategically combine a range of methods, drawn both from traditional disciplines (primarily history, sociology, philosophy and psychology) and from newer interdisciplinary formations, notably cultural studies.

Schubert calls upon scholars of education to pay particular attention to what he calls “the big curriculum,” which consists of “a barrage of propaganda and public

⁵⁵ William H. Schubert, “What is Worthwhile: From Knowing and Needing to Being and Sharing” (*Journal of Curriculum and Pedagogy*, 6:1, 2009, pp. 22-40), p. 22

⁵⁶ William H. Schubert, “Curriculum Studies, The Future of: Essay 5” (*Encyclopedia of Curriculum Studies*, edited by Craig Kridel. Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2010. pp. 244-246), p. 244

relations” produced by and in the interests of hegemonic state powers and big capital.⁵⁷ Interestingly, Schubert identifies the World War I era as a seminal moment in the history of a particular “big curriculum” cultivated by the U.S. state in partnership with U.S.-based capital. Schubert draws attention to the Wilson administration’s contracting of the services of marketing expert Edward Bernays, the “father of public relations,” who argued that the manipulation of public opinion was necessary for democracy and that the “herd instincts” of average people could simultaneously be channeled and directed by a corporate elite in order to generate profits.⁵⁸ Schubert’s periodization of the origins of this particular “big curriculum” coincides with the initiation of the long Cold War (which begins in 1917 with the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia and the first red scare in the U.S.), as well as with key moments in the long civil rights movement and the Indian anticolonial movement. This historical nexus marks the beginning of the period examined in *Learning to Remake the World* – a period during which education played a key role in Cold War maneuvering, efforts towards decolonization, and the global politics of race.

Operating within a framework rooted in these understandings of pedagogy and curriculum, this dissertation understands “education” as encompassing formal schooling, but also extending to include other types of curricular and pedagogical scenarios – Cold War propaganda as pedagogy, study circles within the context of activist movements, the activities of teachers and professors as public intellectuals, and the organization of

⁵⁷ Schubert 2010, p. 244

⁵⁸ William H. Schubert, “Focus on the BIG CURRICULUM.” *Journal of Curriculum and Pedagogy*, 3:1, 2006, pp. 100-103

technical training and technological research. But my choice to understand all these things as “education” is not based solely on the fact that they can all be made to fit within the broad definition of education set forth by contemporary scholars of pedagogy and curriculum. Rather, I understand the different historical moments discussed in these chapters in terms of education *because the participants* in these various events, projects, and texts specifically understood these engagements as educational. This point will become clear in my outline of the dissertation’s chapters. First, however, I turn to another key component of this dissertation’s title: the idea of *remaking the world*.

Learning to Remake the World

In December of 1930, the progressive U.S. education theorist Carleton Washburne – on leave from his post as superintendent of schools in Winnetka, Illinois, and buttressed by a fellowship from the Julius Rosenwald Fund – set out on what he grandly called “a world journey.”⁵⁹ Washburne and his family were joined by Florence Brett, principal of one of the Winnetka schools. The party first sailed to Japan via Hawaii, then on to Korea, whence they traveled northward over the South Manchurian railway, stopping in multiple cities along the way. From there they went on to India, where they spent five weeks traveling the country and talking to some of the leading activists in the Indian independence movement – Sarojini Naidu, Jawaharlal Nehru, MK Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore. Washburne and his companions then journeyed up the Persian Gulf and stopped in Basra and Baghdad, after which they endured a “hazardous

⁵⁹ Carleton Washburne, *Remakers of Mankind* (New York: The John Day Company, 1932), p. 2

automobile trip across the Arabian desert” to get to Damascus, and from there to Palestine.⁶⁰ They conversed with anticolonial nationalists in Egypt, moved on from there to Turkey, and then crossed the Black Sea on a Russian boat to Odessa. After visiting the Crimea and Ukraine and spending time in Moscow, they made their way to Poland, Austria, Germany, France, England, and finally crossed the Atlantic and arrived back in the United States. In each place they visited, Washburne and Brett “sought out those men and women whose thought was most likely to influence the direction and aim of educational thinking in their respective countries during the next two or three decades.”⁶¹ They interviewed educational philosophers and public intellectuals, teachers and professors, deans and chancellors, heads of normal schools, ministers and commissioners of education. The result of the little group’s “quest”⁶² (as Washburne termed it) was a book, published by Washburne in 1932, discussing the educational ideas and ideals the travelers had encountered in the various parts of the world they had visited. The book was titled *Remakers of Mankind*.

Learning to Remake the World takes its title from two books on education. One of those books is Washburne’s obscure volume. The other is John Willinsky’s well-known 1998 *Learning to Divide the World: Education at Empire’s End*. Calling attention to the ways in which education – both within and outside of schools – was crafted to ideologically and materially uphold and expand racialized hierarchies over the course of five hundred years of European imperial rule, Willinsky prompts readers to consider the

⁶⁰ Washburne 1932, p. 4

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 5

⁶² Ibid., p. 1

history and legacy of what he calls “imperialism’s educational projects,” and to attend to the ways in which the material operations of race and empire have been co-constituted with an “accumulation of learning that proved eminently useful to Europe [and Euroamerica] and often detrimental to the larger body of humanity.”⁶³ In other words, Willinsky’s analysis calls attention to the role of education as both a *biopolitical* and a *geopolitical* project – a collection of curricular and pedagogical undertakings that both shaped and were shaped by the processes of imperial expansion and consolidation and the simultaneous processes of racial ordering, economic stratification, and differential modes of gendering.

Washburne and Brett undertook their “world journey” at a historical moment characterized by widespread consciousness of the fact that this “world” had in fact been made by education – specifically, by the type of education described by Willinsky. In other words, a particular world-ordering had been accomplished in large part through structures enforcing the types of education that could/not be made available to different “types” of people, and through the discourses and activities involved in carrying out (or preventing) those different types of education, including fundamental curricular patterns establishing education’s subjects and its objects. Operating with this understanding of the stakes and significance of education as a world-making force, Washburne and Brett set out to talk to educators around the world, specifically because they saw these figures as potential “remakers of mankind” – i.e., remakers of the concept of “humanity,” as well as of the geopolitical map and political economy. This was an era in which multiple

⁶³ John Willinsky, *Learning to Divide the World: Education at Empire’s End* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), p. 4, p. 17

constituencies had become invested in the idea that education (both within and outside of schools) could remake the world, though of course not all of these constituencies held the same priorities in terms of what they wanted this remade world to look like.

While Washburne and Brett understood these various educational constituencies entirely in “national” terms (all of their interlocutors are portrayed in the book as representative of nations, or would-be nations, or national minorities within nations), my own analysis in *Learning to Remake the World* begins by focusing on a transnational constituency, a transnational movement: colored cosmopolitanism. I examine how colored cosmopolitans sought to remake the world by using education to promote the liberation of the “darker peoples of the earth.” The transnational orientation of my analysis is in keeping with perspectives set forth recently by several scholars in cultural studies and curriculum studies, such as Cameron McCarthy and Jennifer Logue (2012), who point to the limitations of frameworks that position “class and culture as a localized, nation-bound set of interests,” and call for greater attention to “patterns of transnational hybridities” in social and educational life.⁶⁴ In addition to highlighting such transnational hybridities, my study accentuates the fact that even apparently “national” developments in education, such as changes to national education laws or official nation-based education policies, have often been driven by international and transnational forces.

While scholars (both in ethnic studies and in education studies) are well-versed in philosophical and sociological theories of education and schooling as conservative forces

⁶⁴ Cameron McCarthy & Jennifer Logue, “Unmasking class and tradition: Questioning recuperative history and affiliation in cultural studies” (In J. Nerone (Ed.), *Media history and the foundations of media studies*. Cambridge, UK: Blackwell, 2012), pp. 5, 41

that reproduce existing social orders – Foucault’s analysis of the school as panopticon, for example, or Althusser’s conception of education as part of an Ideological State Apparatus operating in conjunction with a Repressive State Apparatus – my analysis in this dissertation takes a different conceptual path: I attend to what Ewing (2005) calls “the complex possibilities of education in revolutionary contexts and revolution in educational contexts.” This is not to romanticize the idea of “revolution.” As Ewing notes, the “historical experience of revolution” can be “repressive as well as liberating, stultifying as well as emancipating.”⁶⁵ As a “fundamental change in political organization,” or a movement intended to effect such a change, revolution is not necessarily liberatory; it can just as well install new regimes of power more brutal than the old ones. This dissertation examines the educational engagements of two sets of actors seeking to shape revolutionary change. On the one hand, as already mentioned, there is the movement of colored cosmopolitanism. On the other hand, I also examine how the rising U.S. empire-state in the post-WWII era used education to displace colored cosmopolitanism – not in order to return to an “old” order of European empires, but to institute a new era of U.S. global domination, in which formally-independent states would exist within a U.S. “sphere of influence” and be managed by elites who would act in the interests of the United States. The “American Century” – that immortal phrase coined by Henry Luce in 1941 – was reproductive in some ways (it surely reproduced white supremacy, for instance), but in other ways it was revolutionary; it was productive of entirely new ways of organizing power and ideology on a global scale.

⁶⁵ Ewing 2005, p. 15

Methodology

Since this dissertation examines education both inside and outside of formal schooling, and attends both to state actors and to oppositional social movements, my study here necessarily involves a methodological bricolage. In using this term, I obviously recognize Derrida's famous consideration of Levi Strauss, recuperating the idea of the *bricoleur* as a craftsman using all available instruments, "which had not been especially conceived with an eye to the operation for which they are to be used and to which one tries by trial and error to adapt them, not hesitating to change them whenever it appears necessary, or to try several of them at once, even if their form and their origin are heterogeneous."⁶⁶ More than Derrida, however, my use of "bricolage" engages educational theorist Joe Kincheloe's (2001) exposition of the necessity for *education-related* research in particular to make flexible and informed use of the different "tools in the researcher's toolbox," guided by the specific subject and context of the research at hand. Kincheloe points to the need for a "nuanced discernment of the double-edged sword of disciplinarity" – i.e., the need for education studies to understand the modes of inquiry developed within traditional disciplines, while also remaining critical of the ways in which rigid, territorial disciplinarity can suppress innovative knowledge-production and impede creative problem-solving. Kincheloe calls for a "deep interdisciplinarity" founded upon a dialectical and synergistic relationship between disciplinarity and interdisciplinarity, and rooted in an understanding of the constructed

⁶⁶ Jaques Derrida, *Writing and Difference* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 285. (Derrida's engagement here is with Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*. London: George Weidenfeld and Nicolson; Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1966, p. 247.)

nature of both of these concepts.⁶⁷ This dissertation takes seriously Kincheloe's idea of bricolage as a rigorous methodological orientation within education studies.

One important element of this project's methodological bricolage involves archival exploration. In the course of researching this dissertation, I have visited multiple archives, both in the United States and in India, but I do not aim to report exhaustively the contents of those archives or to make them the primary objects of analysis for the dissertation. Instead, two of my chapters use fragments of information gleaned from different archives as part of the contextual fabric for analyses of particular published texts. Another chapter uses bits of information from different archives, combined with secondary historical sources, to create a narrative demonstrating the confluence of the intellectual orientations, political commitments, and personal lives of four young scholar-activists during the 1940s. Chapter IV is the most archive-centric chapter, but my use of the archives in this chapter follows Anjali Arondekar's "idea of an archive that is more fractious than cumulative, more a space of catachresis than catharsis."⁶⁸ What I mean by adopting Arondekar's "catachresis" is that my use of the archives in Chapter IV does not comport with the primary "meaning" or purpose of those archives as imagined by the institution that created them. I engage in an archival catachresis that involves tracking information about one subject (race) through an archive intended to be about an entirely different subject (international technology-education partnerships); this archival

⁶⁷ Joe Kincheloe "Describing the Bricolage: Conceptualizing a New Rigor in Qualitative Research" (*Qualitative Inquiry*, Vol. 7, No. 6, 2001, pp. 679-692, 2001), p. 685

⁶⁸ Anjali Arondekar, *For the Record: Sexuality and the Colonial Archive in India* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009), p. 171

impropriety is further extended through my juxtaposition of the archived materials with a text of a more literary nature.

This brings me to the idea of juxtaposition as method. My juxtaposition of different types of materials follows Kalindi Vora's (2015) discussion of the ways in which non-traditional (read also "non-disciplinary") analytic combinations – examining a literary work alongside a set of institutional archives, for instance – can serve as a way to draw attention to a set of otherwise-unnoticed connections between different (conceptual, experiential and/or geographic) sites. Vora's explanation builds upon Foucault's evocation of the "sudden vicinity of things that [seem to] have no relation to each other"; as Foucault notes, the juxtaposition of seemingly disparate items, "startling though their propinquity may be," allows for an analysis of relationships that would be elided if one were to adhere exclusively to pre-established and naturalized analytic categories.⁶⁹ Vora also quotes Spivak's (1988) exposition of the intellectual and ethical value of "re-constellating" literary and historical texts in a way that "wrenches" them out of their disciplinary or common-sense "proper contexts" and instead places them "within alien arguments," producing new forms of accountability to subject-positions previously silenced by both disciplinarity and hegemonic common sense.⁷⁰

Speculation also plays a role within this dissertation's methodological bricolage, particularly in the second and third chapters. This method means that where the archives lead me to compelling historical questions with no cut-and-dried answers (or where

⁶⁹ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), p. xvii

⁷⁰ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (New York: Routledge, 1988), p. 241

archival materials present contradictory accounts of events), I proceed – in the words of Sadiya Hartman – by “advancing a series of speculative arguments and exploiting the capacities of the subjunctive (a grammatical mood that expresses doubts, wishes, and possibilities), in fashioning a narrative, which is based on archival research ... a critical reading of the archive that mines the figurative dimensions of history.”⁷¹ I quote Hartman here because her explanation so perfectly encompasses the logic of my method, despite the fact that my questions are a far cry from the unspeakable histories of enslavement, trauma, and death confronted in Hartman’s work. My approach with regards to archival speculation can also be understood with reference to Lisa Lowe’s (2015) method of analyzing various historical texts and archival documents within the speculative space of what she calls the *past conditional temporality*.⁷²

Each chapter uses its own specific version of the dissertation’s methodological bricolage to address a particular nodal point within the historical web of decolonization, the long Cold War, and the global politics of race, between around 1915 and 1965. Building on the historical and theoretical framework established in this introduction, my first chapter traces the influence of African American educational thought upon Indian anticolonial conceptions of education-for-liberation during the first few decades of the twentieth century. This attention to the Indian anticolonial *education movement* – which was not only an intellectual movement, but a material project involving the establishment of multiple schools and colleges – naturally leads to the question addressed in the two

⁷¹ Saidiya Hartman, “Venus in Two Acts” (*Small Axe*, Number 26, Volume 12, Number 2, June 2008, pp. 1-14, 2008), p. 11

⁷² Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2015), pp. 40-41

subsequent chapters; namely, the question of what this movement actually produced. In other words, what happened to the students? Chapters two and three approach this question, not by carrying out a quantitative survey of outcomes in order to label the movement as “successful” or “unsuccessful,” but by tracing the path of one individual student, Krishnalal Shridharani. Educated in anticolonial schools from the age of eleven through his undergraduate years, Shridharani later spent twelve years in the United States, where he played a key role in the civil rights organizing of young African American scholar-activists during the 1940s. Hence, Shridharani was both an educational *product* of colored cosmopolitanism and a major *contributor* to colored cosmopolitanism. Tracing Shridharani’s development and work does not allow us to judge the overall success or failure of the Indian anticolonial education movement, but it does allow us to identify some of the specific effects this movement had in the world.

Moving on to the fourth chapter, I shift my focus from transnational activist movements to the nation-state. This chapter examines how the U.S. State Department during the early 1950s used international education partnerships as part of a campaign to bring the newly independent Indian state into Cold War alignment. I show how this Cold War project sought to displace the transnational antiracist alliances of colored cosmopolitanism, and supplant them with a state-to-state relationship between the U.S. and India. My analysis in this chapter reveals new dimensions of how, as Nico Slate noted in 2014, “the relationship between colored solidarity and the Cold War demonstrates both the success and failure” of colored cosmopolitanism.⁷³ On the one

⁷³ Nico Slate, *The Prism of Race: W.E.B. Du Bois, Langston Hughes, Paul Robeson, and the Colored World of Cedric Dover* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014), p. 50

hand, both U.S. domestic civil rights reform and State Department assistance for India's major postcolonial technology-education projects came about in response to the pressure exerted by joint African American and Asian Indian organizing. On the other hand, as I discuss in my conclusion, formal civil rights reform and U.S. support for Indian technical education played a combined role in enabling the construction of the "model minority" vs. "problem minority" framework that has created new roadblocks to antiracist solidarity-organizing since the 1960s. The realm of education, once a hub for the transnational dialogues of colored cosmopolitanism, has become a morass of stereotypes and resentments – a site for reifying and legitimating exclusions, rather than collectively challenging them.

With this methodological orientation and overall narrative as a framework, the next section provides a more detailed outline of my chapters.

Outline of chapters

Chapter I, "Learning to liberate the subjects: Colored cosmopolitanism and the classroom," centers an analysis of a lengthy text by the famed Indian anticolonialist Lala Lajpat Rai. I focus on how Lajpat Rai's *The United States of America: A Hindu's Views and a Study* (1916) takes up interrelated questions of education and liberation. My purpose in examining this text is not to position Rai as exceptional; rather, his text serves as a metonym for Indian anticolonial educational thought during this era. Like many Indian anticolonialists of his day, Rai regarded African American education as presenting a set of different models that Indians could emulate in designing liberatory forms of

education. In examining these different models, Rai – and other Indian anticolonialists – necessarily confronted what has become known as the “Washington-Dubois debate.” Rather than taking sides in the “debate,” however, Indian activists tended to selectively adopt and adapt ideas from both of these thinkers, choosing the educational strategies they thought would be most useful for their own purposes. Contrary to historical framings that take a “*and never the twain shall meet*” position with regards to Washington and Du Bois, many Indian anticolonialists respected and admired both of these African American educational figures, while also being aware of the significant differences and disagreements between them.

My reading of Lajpat Rai’s text produces a threefold argument. First, I argue that African American educational thought was of profound consequence to Indian anticolonialists during the early decades of the twentieth century. Secondly, I argue that the complexity and nuance of Indian engagements with the ideas of Washington and Du Bois mirror the complexity of African American educational thought at the time – i.e., while historians focus on the personal animus between Washington and Du Bois, the African American educational thinkers of their era were in fact engaged in layered and nuanced discussions of educational issues, rather than focusing on a singular “debate.” My third argument interrogates Rai’s problematic language around the education of “the American Indian.” In this regard, I argue that the inability to critique settler colonialism marks a gap within – or a limitation of – the educational power of colored cosmopolitanism itself.

As my discussion in Chapter I indicates, educational exploration and experimentation formed a central component of Indian anticolonial activism. Anticolonial intellectuals and activists founded multiple schools and colleges intended as alternatives to the British-controlled educational system. An attention to what we might call the Indian anticolonial education movement naturally raises the question: What were the results of this movement? What became of the students educated in these anticolonial schools? Chapters 2 and 3 approach this question, not by attempting a quantitative measurement of outcomes in order to label this education movement as “successful” or “unsuccessful,” but by closely tracing the path of one particular student: Krishnalal Shridharani. At the age of eleven, Shridharani was sent to the experimental nationalist school Dakshinamurthi, where he lived and studied until the age of seventeen. He then continued his studies at MK Gandhi’s Rashtriya Vidyapith – Gandhi’s alternative to India’s British-controlled colleges. He completed his undergraduate education at Rabindranath Tagore’s Viswa Bharati University. After these years of thoroughly anticolonial schooling – and after spending several months in jail for his participation in the Indian independence movement – Shridharani sailed to the United States to earn his PhD at Columbia University. His dissertation, a historical and theoretical study of *satyagraha* (nonviolent resistance), was published under the title *War Without Violence* in 1939.

War Without Violence was avidly taken up by numerous scholar-activists of the African American Left; these activists formed study circles to discuss the book and its potential application to the ongoing resistance against U.S. Jim Crow. In the words of

Bayard Rustin, “Shridharani’s book became our gospel, our bible” during the 1940s.⁷⁴ In addition to the influence of his book, Shridharani himself formed personal friendships with influential African American activists such as Rustin. According to Gerald Horne, Shridharani’s “presence in northern Manhattan ... was to have a dynamic impact on the [growing] relationship [of solidarity] between Black America and India” during this era.⁷⁵

What was it about Shridharani and his book that so strongly appealed to so many African American scholar-activists and interracial allies during the 1940s? Both Chapter II and Chapter III address this question. These chapters set forth arguments that stand in contradistinction to the perspectives of many scholars who have previously discussed *War Without Violence*.

In **Chapter II, “Colored Cosmopolitanism 2.0: Queering transnational consciousness,”** I relate Shridharani’s educational story to those of three of his most avid readers, three African American scholar-activists of Shridharani’s own generation: James Farmer, Bayard Rustin, and Pauli Murray. I do this in order to make the argument that we can historically comprehend the special appeal of *War Without Violence* by understanding Shridharani and these African American readers as young colored cosmopolitans; Shridharani’s work, I argue, “spoke” to readers like Farmer, Rustin, and Murray because it reflected the values and ideals of the colored cosmopolitanism of their generation. This generation of colored cosmopolitan thinkers both revered and rebelled against the older generation that had educated them into the transnational sensibilities and

⁷⁴ Qtd. in Jervis Anderson, *Bayard Rustin: Troubles I’ve Seen: A Biography* (New York: Harper Collins, 1997), p. 69

⁷⁵ Horne 2008, p. 123

solidarities of colored cosmopolitanism itself. Shridharani and his readers were connected long before *War Without Violence* was written or read; they were connected long before Shridharani set foot on U.S. shores. What connected them was their shared transnational intellectual and political genealogy of colored cosmopolitanism. Further, both the writer and his readers shared the impulse to push the boundaries of political action beyond what the previous generation had imagined. They also, as I argue, participated in the “queering” of colored cosmopolitanism, which is to say that they defied their era’s established norms of gender and sexuality, at the same time as they struggled against racial and imperial forms of oppression.

This entire argument stands in contradistinction to the perspectives of many scholars who have previously discussed *War Without Violence*. While there have been no in-depth studies of *War Without Violence* and its author, the text is mentioned in multiple studies of civil rights, civil disobedience, nonviolence, etc. But while many of these existing studies position African American interest in *War Without Violence* within genealogies centered around white thinkers and organizations, I locate African American scholar-activists’ readings of *War Without Violence* with reference to the transnational intellectual and political genealogies of colored cosmopolitanism. For example, while Sean Scalmer (2011) discusses *War Without Violence* within the context of Western fascination with Gandhi, and notes that that “White Americans were among the first to proclaim the Mahatma’s significance,”⁷⁶ my analysis highlights the fact that African American intellectual interest in Shridharani’s work grew out of a much longer history of

⁷⁶ Sean Scalmer, *Gandhi in the West: The Mahatma and the Rise of Radical Protest* (Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 6

African American engagement with India, a history separate from and independent of white proclamations of “the Mahatma’s significance” – indeed, a history that predated “the Mahatma’s significance.” Lewis Perry (2012) positions Black scholar-activists’ interest in *War Without Violence* within an “American tradition” of civil disobedience harking back to the Boston Tea Party and various other white settler tax revolts – a framing that elides many of the connections I seek to highlight here. Joseph Kosek (2009) understands the engagement with *War Without Violence* as emerging from a history of white Christian pacifism, with A.J. Muste and the white-dominated Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) as the important progenitors. By contrast, I highlight the importance of colored cosmopolitanism, and its role in the education of both Shridharani and his readers, as context for an understanding of the circulations of *War Without Violence*.

After these relational educational tracings, my analysis in **Chapter III**, “**Echolocation: Juxtapositions and text-life resonances**,” turns to a close reading of *War Without Violence*, informed by historical and biographical context. I ask: Which particular ideas and passages within this text might have particularly resonated with young African American scholar-activists like James Farmer, Bayard Rustin, and Pauli Murray? I seek to highlight the intellectual counterpoint produced through a juxtaposition of passages from *War Without Violence* with episodes from the personal and political writings of Farmer, Rustin, and Murray. Ultimately I suggest that, while these readers certainly used *War Without Violence* as a guidebook, the specific *type* of wayfinding produced through the interactions between readers and text in this case was less like map-reading and more like a type of echolocation. In other words, Shridharani’s

work allowed these readers to perceive and navigate a particular political terrain, not by telling them things they didn't know, but by "echoing" back to them things they already *did* know. It seems to me that *War Without Violence* articulated a series of ideas that had already begun forming in the minds of such readers, and that these ideas were further developed and affectively reinforced through the readers' personal interactions with the author.

Like the argument set forth in the previous chapter, my discussion in Chapter III breaks with common assumptions about *War Without Violence* found in mainstream civil rights histories. Historians like Lewis Perry, for example, attribute the appeal of *War Without Violence* to the fact that Shridharani offers a series of concrete *steps* involved in a satyagraha-based movement. But only one of the eleven chapters of *War Without Violence* -- the first chapter, titled "How Is It Done?" -- is devoted to these steps, or "instruments" as Shridharani calls them. Readers like Farmer, Rustin, and Murray did not merely read the first chapter; they read and re-read the entire 300-page book, discussing and debating each chapter. To understand the connections these readers were making with Shridharani's book, we need to read further. In contrast to historians who attribute readers' interest entirely to the series of "steps," I argue that African American scholar-activists were interested in the theoretical content of the book. By juxtaposing particular theoretical offerings in *War Without Violence* with particular episodes from the life stories and intellectual work of Farmer, Rustin, and Murray, I show how Shridharani's work would have appealed to these readers beyond the level of the "steps."

Overall, the first three chapters show how education constituted a key strand within – to quote Gerald Horne again – the “richly-braided relations that conjoin[ed] Black America and India” during the first half of the twentieth century. **Chapter IV, “The ‘sisterhood arrangement’: Cold War strategy, the international politics of race, and U.S. involvement in the Indian Institute of Technology at Kharagpur,”** shows how education also became a central strand within the U.S. project of displacing colored cosmopolitanism in order to replace it with a state-to-state relationship between a newly independent India and a rising U.S. empire-state in the post-WWII era. As the United States sought to ensure that India would remain within a U.S./Anglo “sphere of influence” in the Cold War, it became apparent that one major barrier to this goal was the fact that Indian politicians and publics were strongly critical of the white-supremacist orientation of the U.S. empire-state. Having recently detached itself from white-supremacist rule by leaving the British Empire, India was not eager to attach itself to another white-supremacist power. The U.S. thus took several steps in order to clean up its racial image in India. In addition to seeking to silence and discredit members of the Black Left by putting them on trial, revoking their passports, etc., the State Department sought to improve the U.S. image and increase U.S. influence in India through the use of international education partnerships. One such partnership with the so-called “sisterhood relationship” between the University of Illinois and the Indian Institute of Technology and Kharagpur. My chapter shows how the “sisterhood relationship” functioned as a project of racial image management, even as it elided the racialized and gendered relationships and forms of labor that enabled it.

Historicizing the two sides of the page

This brings us back to the newspaper clipping that introduced my discussion – the paper with Gopaldas Mandalia’s Springwood redevelopment design on one side, and the Clinton Twelve on the other, with the *Asbury Park Evening Press*’s caption about how Clinton High had experienced violence “because of the integration.” I came across this clipping in the *Indian Institute of Technology Project File* in the University of Illinois archives. Was it a coincidence to find a newspaper photo of African American students valiantly seeking educational equality, paired with a caption that blames these students for the racist violence directed against them, within an archive dedicated to U.S. involvement in elite Indian technological education? Yes, that is a coincidence – and, at the same time, the *Indian Institute of Technology Project File* is replete with such coincidences, because it is impossible to separate these distinct yet co-constituted educational situations.

The two sides of the 1956 newspaper clipping together represent both an outcome of prior decades of activism and a harbinger of new racializing narratives centering the idea of education. African Americans and Asian Indians had frequently occupied adjacent or overlapping spaces on newspaper pages during the inter-war period and World War II, as movements originating in both communities gained increasing visibility on a global stage. But if the transnational activism and colored cosmopolitanism of the first half of the twentieth century had put African American and Asian Indian communities on the “same page,” so to speak, post-WWII U.S. domestic policy and Cold War strategy put these populations on opposite “sides” of the page. The 1954 *de jure*

elimination of Jim Crow education policies in the U.S. garnered worldwide approval and sustained the narrative of “improvement” and “progress” in U.S. racial politics, but the *de facto* continuation of these Jim Crow policies left most African American students still struggling for educational rights and resources. Meanwhile, U.S. immigration laws would soon change with regards to the former “Hindu menace.” Beginning in 1965, graduates of Indian engineering colleges – such as Mandalia’s home institution, IIT-Kharagpur – would be allowed to migrate to the U.S. and become citizens, as they were recruited to apply their technological skills to enhance U.S. military and industrial capacity in the Cold War contest. Economically incorporated into an upwardly-mobile middle class, these techno-professionals and their descendants would be used to prop up the new “model minority” myth, a new racial mythology within which the idea of “education” (and, in particular, racist assertions about how different populations do or do not “value” education, along with stereotypes about “Asians” and “math”) would play a central role.

Today, the centrality of education-related tropes within “model minority” discourses and anti-black racism is so obvious as to have become fodder for television comedians. In the August 17, 2014 edition of HBO’s *Last Week Tonight*, for instance, comedian John Oliver had no trouble weaving a joke about math into his takedown of James W. Knowles, mayor of Ferguson, Missouri – the town where unarmed Michael Brown, an 18-year-old African American youth, was fatally shot by white police officer Darren Wilson. Mocking Knowles’ assertion that “the races” had always “gotten along” well in Ferguson – a claim clearly belied by interviews with Ferguson’s residents, particularly Black residents who attested to frequent police harassment and intimidation –

Oliver quipped, “Oh, we’re absolutely famous for [racial harmony], presumably that is why I, the Mayor of Ferguson, am currently on national fucking television!” A moment later, Oliver added:

Here's the thing the mayor doesn't understand. As a general rule, no one should ever be allowed to say, 'There is no history of racial tension here.' Because that sentence has never been true *anywhere on Earth!* Even in Antarctica, there is tension between Emperor Penguins and Gentoo Penguins! *'Fuck you Gentoo Penguins! Flappin' over here, stealing our fish! ... Not you, Chinstrap Penguins, you're cool. You guys are good at math.'*

What makes Oliver’s punchline “work,” of course, is the fact that listeners implicitly and immediately recognize the academic “model minority” myth, even when it is transferred onto penguins. The other side of the coin – or of the page – is the treatment of Michael Brown, who did not live to complete his training program in heating and air conditioning repair at Vatterot College technical school.

But while the constructions of “model minority” and “problem minority” in education are easily apparent, the role of intertwined U.S. Cold War foreign and domestic policies in creating these educational “models” and “problems” is elided through the naturalization of such constructions – particularly via mindless discourses around “values” and essentialized notions of “culture.” By the same token, these problematic discourses and naturalized constructions disregard and erase decades of educational exchange between African American and Asian Indian individuals and communities engaged in a joint transnational struggle for social and racial justice. Mandalia’s (unintentional and/but unavoidable) mailing of the photo from Clinton High School (along with his plan for the redevelopment area of Asbury Park) represents a fulcrum moment in history: colored cosmopolitanism on one side of the fulcrum, regressive post-

WWII racial politics on the other, the lever rocking back and forth. The activities and discourses of colored cosmopolitanism continued during the 1950s, but the apparatus of “model minority” vs. “problem minority” was quickly being put into place.

Six months prior to his mailing of the Clinton photo and Asbury Park plans, Mandalia had written to his academic supervisor of having participated in a six-day “Tennessee Valley Authority Tour” organized by John W. Price, director of the International Student Program at the University of Illinois YMCA. In addition to visiting the TVA Headquarters, the Norris Dam, the Kingston Pike Steam Plant, the Watts Bar Dam, and multiple TVA test demonstration farms, the group of forty international students on the tour spent time at several educational institutions in the upper south – including, as Mandalia noted in his March report, “Fisk University, a leading college for Negroes in USA.”⁷⁷ It is impossible to tell, from Mandalia’s documents in the “Indian Institute of Technology Project File,” how much the young architect knew about the role played by students, professors, and graduates of HBCUs such as Fisk in creating the transnational political architecture that had allowed him – Mandalia – to travel to the U.S. as a citizen of an independent India and a representative of an elite engineering college established by this new postcolonial nation.

Similarly, we cannot know whether or not Mandalia was aware, when he drew up the plans for the “Springwood Redevelopment Area” of Asbury Park, that he was far from the first person from the Indian Subcontinent to enter into the life of this Jersey Shore town. In the decades spanning the turn of the twentieth century, small groups of

⁷⁷ Mandalia, Gopaldas Maganalal (April 6, 1956). “Report for the Month of March. 1956.” Indian Institute of Technology Project File, 1953-1966, Record Series 24/2/12, Box #8, University of Illinois Archives.

Bengali peddlers had earned a living selling trinkets and embroidered fabrics to white beachgoers in Asbury Park. Many white Americans during those decades were eager to consume what they perceived as exotica from the “East” – even as they were increasingly hostile towards the brown-skinned foreigners who produced these items. Of course, the residents of Asbury Park – a strictly segregated town – did not want to live with the exoticized brown Others who sold them these trinkets. As Vivek Bald’s research shows us, it was Black diasporic populations in the U.S. that provided cover and community for such working-class migrants from the Subcontinent. Did Mandalia, visiting Asbury Park to work on the redevelopment plans, know anything of this history?

Regardless of what Professor Mandalia did or did not know about the ways in which his own situation was connected to African American histories and futures, it is clear that most students and educators today – both in India and in the U.S. – are completely unaware of the constitutive historical connections between multiple African American and Asian Indian educational experiences. The research presented in this dissertation represents one scholar’s attempt to bring these historical connections back into view. An examination of these histories not only helps us to contextualize and critique contemporary forms of educational racialization; it also provides us with models of intellectual cooperation and political solidarity that can help us imagine alternative educational futures.

Chapter I – Learning to liberate the subjects: Colored cosmopolitanism and the classroom⁷⁸

“If by national education we understand what Europe means by it, then that will be a gross misunderstanding.”

- Rabindranath Tagore, c. 1908-1914⁷⁹

“I am confident that the ideas of the Negro leaders on education and their application of them in solving the difficulties which face them in their racial struggle, would be of more than academic interest to Indian patriots and nationalists.”

- Lala Lajpat Rai, 1916⁸⁰

A striking photograph introduces *The United States of America: A Hindu's Impressions and a Study*, published in 1916 by the renowned Indian anticolonialist Lala Lajpat Rai. After a brief preface to the book, readers encounter a portrait in profile of a pensive-looking gentleman with a meticulously shaped mustache and a salt-and-pepper

⁷⁸ Some of the research and writing appearing in this chapter has been previously published in my article “Colored Cosmopolitanism and the Classroom: Educational Connections Between African Americans and South Asians.” In M.A. Peters (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Educational Philosophy and Theory*. Singapore: Springer Science+Business Media, 2015. DOI 10.1007/978-981-287-532-7_87-1

⁷⁹ Rabindranath Tagore, “Tapovana, the Forest of Asceticism,” written sometime between 1908 and 1914. Reprinted in S.K. Chakraborty and Pradip Bhattacharya (eds. and trans.), *Human Values: The Tagorean Panorama* (New Delhi: New Age International Limited Publishers, 1996), p. 279

⁸⁰ *The United States of America: A Hindu's Impressions and a Study* (hereafter *A Hindu's Impressions*), p. 106

goatee. As the mostly-capitalized caption informs us, this man is “Dr. W. E. BURGHARDT DU BOIS.”

It is no coincidence that the first image Lajpat Rai chooses to present – the image that spearheads this entire 416-page volume – is a portrait of a famous African American educator. Despite the book’s decidedly vague and generalized title, Rai’s lengthy publication is largely devoted to a very specific set of concerns, notably related to race and education – issues Rai addresses sometimes as separate topics, and sometimes concurrently as with his particular attention to “Negro education.” Lajpat Rai was not unique in his intense focus on these two imbricated topics. While issues of race were clearly fundamental to the anticolonial movements of Rai’s era, matters of education were also of central importance to many Indian anticolonialists; and, in seeking to imagine forms of education conducive to national liberation and decolonization, many of these Indian activists turned to African American thought.

In the present chapter I discuss Lala Lajpat Rai’s *The United States of America*, not as a summary of one individual’s views, but as metonymic of Indian anticolonial educational concerns during the early decades of the twentieth century. Popularly nicknamed “Kesari Punjab” (“Lion of Punjab”), Lajpat Rai was one of the major figures of the Indian independence movement; today’s urban Indian landscape is dotted with statues of him and crossed by streets named after him. Rai did not live to see India’s 1947 attainment of formal independence – he died in 1928, after being beaten by police while leading a peaceful protest march. Historians would subsequently observe that Lajpat Rai’s words at the march – “Every blow on our bodies this afternoon is like a nail

driven into the coffin of British imperialism” – were prescient: when he died of his injuries, the independence movement rallied with increased vigor. Rai is thus figured in Indian history books as both a hero and a martyr. In selecting Lajpat Rai’s views for examination, however, I do not intend to reify the idea of “great leaders,” the notion of “martyrs,” the “Lion of Punjab,” etc. Rather, I turn to Lajpat Rai’s book with the understanding that, as Bidyut Chakrabarty observes in his relational study of MK Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr., “Ideas do not emerge in a vacuum.”⁸¹ To analyze the writing of a famous historical figure is to reach into the swirling currents of collective thought that both propelled and were propelled by the remembered figure. In other words, as Chakrabarty points out, “What emerges as a text in a particular context is dialectically structured in the sense of an interrelationship between text and context.”⁸² Lajpat Rai’s 1916 text emerged from an already-existing set of collective concerns, and articulated themes that would appear with increasing frequency in Indian anticolonial discourse in the years and decades following its publication. My analysis in the present chapter thus centers Rai’s *The United States of America*, not in order to portray the text or its author as exceptional, but as a way of examining a set of political, philosophical and ideological concerns collectively held by a larger community of Indian anticolonial activists – specifically, concerns revolving around inter-related issues of race and education. Hence, while I position Rai’s text as my central object of analysis in this chapter, I also cite other

⁸¹ Bidyut Chakrabarty, *Confluence of Thought: Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr.* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 28

⁸² Ibid.

texts of the era as a way of referencing the larger movement-based “conversation” in which Rai was a participant.

While Lajpat Rai is often cited in historical studies of the transnational dimensions of the Indian independence movement – particularly in terms of the influence of African American intellectuals within Indian anticolonial circles – and some of these studies have selectively quoted from *The United States of America*, there have not been any substantive analyses focused on close readings of this lengthy text.⁸³ Rai’s volume, as a published primary source, thus represents an under-explored archive for scholars interested in tracing the Indian anticolonial movement’s transnational elements and connections. Given the title and concerns of Rai’s book, it also represents an overlooked archive of interest to scholars of U.S. history, and particularly of African American education. Importantly, however, *The United States of America* actually tells us as much about the Indian independence movement as about the United States.

I make several interrelated arguments in this chapter. My first argument highlights the profound influence of African American educators, schools, and scholars upon Indian anticolonial educational thought during these decades. Indian anticolonialists’ enthusiastic interest in African American education can be understood within the context of what Nico Slate (2012) refers to as “colored cosmopolitanism,” a term indexing a host of transnational and trans-imperial political alliances and cultural affiliations between interlocking networks of African American and Asian Indian

⁸³ Major works that mention Rai’s book in the way I describe here include Nico Slate’s (2012) *Colored Cosmopolitanism* and Gerald Horne’s (2008) *End of Empires*.

activists and intellectuals during the first half of the twentieth century. As Slate notes, African American interest in India during this era focused both on India's status as the world's most populous "colored" country (sometimes also understood by these thinkers as a bridge between Africa and Asia) and on the rapidly-accelerating activities of the Indian independence movement, a serious challenge to global white supremacy; meanwhile, Indian anticolonialists regarded African Americans as "an oppressed but upwardly mobile people, worthy of sympathy and emulation."⁸⁴ My own research, as this chapter indicates, suggests that the Indian anticolonial view of Black America as a sort of aspirational role model, a people to be *emulated*, was nowhere more strongly in evidence than in the realm of education.

In discussing Indian anticolonialists' interest in African American educational thought, I necessarily engage the so-called "Washington-DuBois debate," and this engagement leads to a second argument, one that highlights the ways in which the debate was translated and/or mistranslated as it circulated in South Asian contexts. While U.S. education histories traditionally pose the Washingtonian and DuBoisian projects as mutually exclusive and incompatible, sometimes with extensive reference to the personal animus between the two men, I argue that South Asian anticolonial thinkers, though generally aware of the conflict between Washington and Du Bois, frequently adopted ideas from both of these figures; South Asian thinkers selectively took up the ideas they perceived as applicable to their own political struggles, while leaving aside other ideas – such as Washington's well-known accommodationist stance with regards to segregation –

⁸⁴ Slate 2012, p. 65

that they did not find useful. The layered and nuanced nature of South Asian conversations around the issues historically glossed as “the Washington-DuBois debate” in fact reflects the complexity of African American educational thought during the early decades of the twentieth century – a complexity that is elided in historical narratives that present early twentieth century African American deliberations regarding the values of university education and vocational training in simple binary terms.

My third argument addresses the structure of Rai’s volume, which reflects the racialized structure of the U.S. society he is studying – meaning that Rai discusses “American” education, by which he means *white* American education, separately from his discussion of Negro American education. Given his emphatic critique of white supremacy (in the U.S., in British-ruled India, and globally), why is Rai interested in discussing white U.S. education at all? To answer this question, I argue, we need to understand Rai’s discussions of white and Negro education relationally – which is to say, we must relate these separate discussions to each other and to Rai’s goal of freeing India from British rule. Rai and other Indian intellectuals, as I argue, used white American education as a measuring stick to demonstrate the failures of British rule, and to paint a glowing picture of the many educational projects and programs that were being carried out in “free” countries – with the word “free” meaning “not ruled by the British Empire.” Rai and others strategically deployed exaggeratedly positive descriptions of white U.S. education in order to create an idealized image of the progressive educational programs and resources – physical education, playgrounds, nutritional programs in schools, early childhood education, well-rounded curricula delivered in state-of-the-art school facilities, special education for students with disabilities – that Indians could have if India were

“free.” In other words, framing my third argument in more specific terms: Rai and other anticolonialists studied both white U.S. education and African American education, but from different standpoints and for different purposes. These anticolonialists lauded white U.S. education, not because they were unaware of U.S. racism, but in order to draw attention to the educational benefits afforded to peoples whose governments were working on their behalf – and the U.S. government *was*, of course, working on behalf of U.S. populations constructed as “white.”⁸⁵ Anticolonial Indian thinkers wrote about white U.S. education in order to enumerate the educational benefits that accrued to free peoples whose governments represented their interests; they wrote about African American education in order to learn about the educational projects and strategies being developed by not-yet-free peoples whose governments did not protect their interests.

My fourth and final argument extends this relational analysis by addressing Rai’s discourse around the education of “the American Indian.”⁸⁶ Rai’s discursive treatment of the Native peoples displaced by the U.S. settler state lacks any persistent, meaningful criticism of the structural genocide underlying the construction of “the United States,” and he was not alone in his failure to critique or oppose U.S. settler colonialism: many Asian Indian visitors to the U.S., including some of the most ardent adherents of colored

⁸⁵ For readers who would be quick to point out that not all individuals and communities designated as “white” have experienced the same level of legal rights or social status in U.S. society, I should note here that my point is not to homogenize “white” experiences, but to highlight the historical and structural construction of *whiteness as citizenship* within U.S. settler society. As Rai and other Indian anticolonialists were well aware, only “free white persons” could become naturalized U.S. citizens during the era under discussion in this chapter. And while some (though not all) nonwhite people born in the U.S. held legal citizenship based on the principle of *jus soli*, the reality of Jim Crow meant that these legal citizens lacked the actual protections of citizenship – i.e., they were afforded only formal citizenship, not substantive citizenship. For a detailed discussion of the historical and structural status of whiteness in U.S. society, see (for example) Cheryl Harris’ (1993) discussion of whiteness as property.

⁸⁶ The term is Rai’s – *A Hindu’s Impressions*, p. 37

cosmopolitanism, wrote of settler-colonial violence only in the *past* tense (or not at all), either ignoring contemporary Native peoples entirely or else regarding them with patronizing folkloric interest. I argue that anticolonial Indian activists like Rai failed to meaningfully address the ongoing displacement of Native peoples because they read the U.S. as a *postcolonial* state (albeit a racist one) rather than understanding it as a *settler colonial* state. Eager to view the United States as a “free” country that had successfully cast off British imperial rule, Indian anticolonialists were generally unable or unwilling to see that the U.S. was in fact an extension of British imperialism rather than a true departure from it. This misrecognition marks a limitation of, or a gap within, the educational potential of colored cosmopolitanism with regards to transnational understandings of racialization, colonialism, and the politics of liberation.

“A Hindu’s Impressions”: *Introducing the text*

Lala Lajpat Rai made two trips to the United States during the early twentieth century. The first trip, in 1905, lasted only a few weeks. Lajpat Rai returned to the U.S. in December of 1914 and remained through December 1919. *The United States of America: A Hindu’s Impressions and a Study* was published during this second stay.

Though written in the U.S., the volume is intended for an Indian audience. Rai sent the manuscript to Ramananda Chatterjee, a high-profile Calcutta-based publisher of anticolonial literature, thereby ensuring the book’s widespread distribution in India. Rai notes in his preface to the book that his “selection of subjects for particular study has been made with an eye to their practical usefulness for our [i.e. India’s] own

development.”⁸⁷ Rai’s strong preference for particular themes gives the reader a very clear understanding as to which aspects of U.S. society he considers most relevant to India’s “own development.” One cannot fail to note that much of the volume deals directly or indirectly with issues of race and education. Indeed, as Rai notes, his second visit to the U.S. had been prompted in part by a “desire to study the Negro problem on the spot and to acquaint myself with the methods that are being adopted for the education and uplift of the Negro population [of the United States].”⁸⁸ Rai sought out “Negro leaders [in the U.S.], so as to know their point of view by first-hand knowledge.”⁸⁹ In his project of studying “Negro education” as a possible model (or rather, a set of different models) for Indian anticolonial education, Rai benefitted from the scholarly assistance, and sometimes the personal hospitality, of numerous African American educators, notably his friend and ally W.E.B. Du Bois, an ardent supporter of the Indian independence movement. With help from Du Bois and others, Rai crafted a discussion of African American education that spoke to the concerns of the Indian anticolonial project.

Lajpat Rai introduces his discussion of Negro education by providing his Indian readers with a lengthy and detailed examination of historical context, beginning with the criminalization of Black literacy under regimes of chattel slavery. Rai not only outlines in detail the anti-literacy laws of numerous “slave” states, citing the specific dates and terms of such laws passed in Alabama, Georgia, Florida, Delaware, Kentucky, Mississippi, Missouri, South Carolina, and Virginia, and in some cases including details

⁸⁷ *A Hindu’s Impressions*, p. v

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 77

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

as to the punishments (fines, lashes, imprisonment) prescribed for anyone caught violating these laws; he also notes that while the “Northern States did not expressly forbid the education of colored persons,” these supposedly “free” states condoned official and unofficial attempts at the local level to suppress Negro education.⁹⁰ Much of Rai’s information in this section seems to have come from conversations with Dean Kelly Miller of Howard University, as well as from Miller’s book *Race Adjustment*, from which Rai quotes extensively. Following Miller, Rai writes that in the face of the violent antebellum repression of Black literacy, it was remarkable that “in 1850, 32,627 [Negroes] were attending schools in both free and slave States, and in 1865, when emancipation came, ‘there was to be found in every Southern community a goodly sprinkling of colored men and women who had previously learned how to read and write.’”⁹¹ Most of this “goodly sprinkling” had – and here Rai quotes Miller again – “learned the art of letters after the furtive method of Frederick Douglass,” or in Negro schools “conducted in avoidance, connivance, or defiance of ordinances and enactments.”⁹² Taking off tangentially from this last point, Rai gives a series of lengthy block quotes from Frederick Douglass’ autobiography, in which Douglass describes his covert pursuit of literacy as a young enslaved boy.

Rai’s attention to Frederick Douglass’ literacy narrative reflects an understanding of the relationship between, as Jacqueline Bacon (1999) puts it, “taking literacy” and “taking liberty.” In other words, within the context of chattel slavery, “acquiring literacy

⁹⁰ Kelly Miller, *Race Adjustment: Essays on the Negro in America* (New York and Washington: The Neale Publishing Company, 1908), p. 254. Qtd. in *A Hindu’s Impressions*, p. 81

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 254. Qtd. in *A Hindu’s Impressions*, p. 83

⁹² Ibid. Qtd. in *A Hindu’s Impressions*, p. 82

was itself an act of resistance that threatened the system of slavery.”⁹³ This link between literacy and liberation within particular “colored” histories points to an important component of the historical lens through which we must read the writings of colored cosmopolitans like Lajpat Rai and his African American interlocutors – to wit, their orientation (however imperfect) towards resistance. While the white-supremacist discourses of this era positioned the colonized and racialized peoples of the world as childlike *recipients* of literacy and other forms of educational largesse supposedly bestowed upon them by benevolent whites, writers like Rai – along with their African American models and allies – understood education as something the “darker peoples of the world” were struggling to *reclaim* and *re-create* in the face of violent white repression. White-supremacist discourses had long portrayed white rule as educational; colored cosmopolitans understood that white rule had always put up road blocks to education. Hence, for example, when Katherine Mayo, in her racist 1927 best-seller *Mother India*, argued that white rule was needed in India because Indians were (among their many other faults) illiterate, Lajpat Rai responded by using British government documents and historical studies to argue that India’s British rulers had “rooted out” various Indian regional and religious systems of literacy instruction at the level of the home and village and had not provided state-funded mass literacy education as a substitute – i.e., British rule had resulted in a suppression of literacy in India.⁹⁴ In Mayo’s discourse, print-literacy was a marker of civilization, and Indians (along with other peoples of color) didn’t measure up. To Rai, print-literacy was one useful form of

⁹³ Jacqueline Bacon, “Taking Literacy, Taking Liberty: Signifying in the Rhetoric of African-American Abolitionists” (*Southern Communication Journal*, 64:4, 1999, pp. 271-287), pp. 271-272

⁹⁴ Lala Lajpat Rai (1928), *Unhappy India* (Reprinted, New York: AMS Press, 1972), p. 35

knowledge, and British rule had diminished Indians' access to it. Given Rai's perspective in this regard, though British rule in India was not equivalent to chattel slavery, Douglass' literacy narrative certainly must have appealed to Rai because of what it said about education as a form of resistance, about the agency of "colored" communities constructing and circulating knowledge despite the barriers erected by white supremacy.

After his discussion of Negro education under slavery, followed by a brief section on the African American schools of the South during "the boom of the emancipation days," Rai moves into an analysis of the contemporary conditions of Negro education. This section makes extensive reference to a 1911 Atlanta University publication "containing the results of an investigation made by them into the educational position of the Negroes in the United States." Rai does not give the title of this publication, but it may have been *The common school and the Negro American: A report of a social study made by the Atlanta University*, edited by W.E.B. Du Bois and Augustus Granville Dill and published by the Atlanta University Press. Quoting from this book, Rai notes that "the overwhelming majority of Negro children of school age are not in school," and that "the chief reason for this is the lack of school facilities."⁹⁵ He further quotes the Atlanta University researchers' finding that existing Negro schools are often staffed by "half-prepared and poorly paid teachers" and operate only for "short terms of three to six months a year," and that physical facilities and equipment for Negro schools "are for the most part wretched and inadequate."⁹⁶ Regarding the South in particular, Rai quotes the

⁹⁵ Qtd. in *A Hindu's Impressions*, p. 87

⁹⁶ Ibid.

finding that “the forward movement in education in the South during the last ten years has been openly confined almost entirely to white people,” and that “the Negroes have been taxed for the improvement of white school facilities, while their own schools have not been allowed to share in these improvements.”⁹⁷ The study cited by Rai also highlights the links between political disfranchisement and educational disfranchisement, noting that “the result and apparently one of the objects of [electoral] disenfranchisement has been to cut down the Negro school fund, bar out competent teachers, lower the grade and efficiency of the course [of] study and employ as teachers in the Negro schools those willing tools who do not and will not protest or complain.”⁹⁸

Rai provides his readers with this extensive account of educational racism and inequality, not just as a way of elaborating upon the antiracist critiques he makes elsewhere in the volume, but also – and primarily – in order to hold up African American education as presenting models of educational resistance against white supremacy. Indians would do well to emulate these models, Rai suggests, because despite the massive barriers erected by white society, African Americans have managed to create “better and larger facilities for education than the [Asian] Indians have in their own country.” In support of this assertion, Rai cites Miller’s discussion of how “the [Negro] colleges and universities have furnished the teachers, doctors, lawyers, editors, and general leaders” now working on behalf of Negro populations; he also notes Miller’s finding that “the illiteracy of the race has been cut down to 45 per cent., which marks the most marvelous advance in the technical elements of knowledge in the annals of human

⁹⁷ Qtd. in *A Hindu’s Impressions*, p. 88

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 87-88

progress.”⁹⁹ The idea of African American education and “progress” as an exceptional phenomenon in human history would, ironically, later be used in U.S. Cold War propaganda as evidence of the supposed benevolence and egalitarianism of the United States. Rai, however, is under no illusions as to the source of the Negro’s educational achievements; as his narrative clearly illustrates, the educational advances of the American Negro have been made *in spite of* the white-dominated U.S. state and society, not because of it. The question for Indian anticolonialists, then, is: What measures have African American educators taken in the face of racial oppression, and what can the colonized peoples of the Subcontinent learn from these measures in order to promote India’s “own development”?

At this point, Rai is brought into an engagement with what has been called the “Washington-Dubois debate” – a complex controversy that Rai returns to repeatedly over the course of the volume, though he never actually uses the term “Washington-Dubois debate.” Instead, Rai notes that “the question of industrial education has been receiving considerable attention in the U.S.A., more than twenty years, and the cry for ‘vocational’ education is every day increasing both in volume and intensity.” Vocational education, in other words, is being prescribed for both Black *and* white students – but, as Rai notes, the excessive push for vocational training for Black students in particular “has a special significance” due to the fact that “[t]he enemies of the Negro race” have long deprecated the intellectual capacities of African peoples and asserted the unfitness of the Negro for

⁹⁹ Kelly Miller, *Out of the House of Bondage* (New York: Neale Publishing Company, 1914), pp. 160-161. Qtd. in *A Hindu’s Impressions*, p. 89

scholarly pursuits.¹⁰⁰ Thus, utilitarian/instrumentalist conceptions of education *in general* come into convergence with racist prescriptions insisting on industrial (and not academic) training *for the Negro in particular*. The racist “attitude of the Southern white towards the higher education of the Negro,” as Rai notes, “has received a certain amount of support from that class of educational philosophers who decry high education and extoll ‘vocational education,’ as they call it.”¹⁰¹ Rai continues:

These philosophers have no use for the ‘mere theorists’ produced by high liberal education [and] want only such education as would raise the efficiency of the nation’s workers as producers and distributors of wealth, and as pursuers of vocations which add to the material prosperity and material comforts of the nation. They estimate education by the amount of dollars it brings to the educated and the contribution which it makes to the wealth of the nation, and its efficiency as a wealth-producing community.¹⁰²

For Rai, the question of vocational training vs. higher academic education is not a simple one. On the one hand, as an anticolonialist concerned with a region/people (“India”) that has been both materially impoverished and politically disenfranchised, Rai perceives a need to increase both vocational and academic education in India. Education, as he sees it, must address issues both of “material prosperity” and of “higher” intellectual and political pursuits. Questions as to how education can be designed to accomplish both of these goals create legitimate debates, with no cut-and-dried answers, from Rai’s point of view. At the same time, he sees in the African American educational experience a cautionary tale of how these debates are inflected by race in ways that serve

¹⁰⁰ *A Hindu’s Impressions*, p. 91

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 93

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, pp. 93-94

the ends of white supremacy. In this regard, he quotes the Atlanta University study's finding that

[I]n the attempt to introduce much needed and valuable manual and industrial training there has been introduced into the curriculum of the Negro common school a mass of ill-considered, unrelated work which has over-burdened the teacher and pushed into the background the vital studies of reading, writing and arithmetic. In a large measure this has been done with the avowed object of training Negroes as menials and laborers and of cutting them off from the higher avenues of life.¹⁰³

If part of the problem with the idea of “vocational education” in an African American context is that it is misused by white society to keep Black people in unskilled menial work, the other part of the problem is that even in the case of truly “much needed and valuable” vocational training, there is perhaps too much of a good thing – at the expense of another good thing, college and university education. Rai writes that “just now that party seems to be in ascendancy, which champions the cause of industrial against high liberal education,” and quotes Dean Miller’s lament that “our whole educational activities are under the thrall of this retrograde spirit. ... [W]henver the higher education of the Negro is broached; industrial training is always suggested as a counter-irritant.”¹⁰⁴

To convey to his Indian readers the complexity of the debates among African American educators as to the types of value attendant upon academic and/or vocational forms of education, Rai devotes seven pages to a series of lengthy quotes from two articles by Dean Miller. These articles, says Rai, convey “a clear idea of what the Negro leaders in the United States think of the conflicting claims of higher liberal education and

¹⁰³ Qtd. in *A Hindu's Impressions*, p. 88

¹⁰⁴ *A Hindu's Impressions*, p. 94

industrial education.”¹⁰⁵ An examination of one of these texts, “Education for Manhood,” provides us with important insights into how these debates within African American education were taken up from an Indian anticolonial perspective.

“Education for Manhood”: Dean Kelley Miller

As dean of Howard University, one of the most prominent African American institutions of higher learning of his era, Miller might be expected to promote the value of university education, and he does so – but he also does something unexpected: he effectively uncouples mere university education from the production of politically assertive personhood – or, as he puts it (in capital letters), “MANHOOD.” In setting up his discussion, Miller declares that “There is a constant duel between the process of machinery and the spirit of democracy – the one tending to subordinate the human element to the mechanical process, the other insisting upon the higher rights and powers of man.”¹⁰⁶ Democracy, says Miller, “banishes distinction between classes and gives all men the same right to develop and exploit the higher powers and susceptibilities with which they may be endowed.”¹⁰⁷ But how is this development to take place? Here Miller seems to warn against the assumption that either industrial or academic training will automatically produce “manhood.” Miller writes:

The highest decree of the Godhead was – ‘Let us make man.’ The true end of education is to develop man, the average man, as a self-conscious personality. This can be done not by imparting information to the mind or facility to the fingers, but felicity to the feelings and inspiration to the soul. ... The final expression of education is not in terms of discipline,

¹⁰⁵ *A Hindu's Impressions*, p. 95

¹⁰⁶ Qtd. in *A Hindu's Impressions*, p.96

¹⁰⁷ Qtd. in *A Hindu's Impressions*, pp. 96-97

efficiency, service, or special virtues, but in terms of MANHOOD which is the substance and summation of all.¹⁰⁸

Miller contrasts the idea of “manhood” with the traditional U.S. positioning of the Negro as “a pure animal instrumentality” whose “mission was considered to be as purely mechanical as that of the ox which pulls the plough.”¹⁰⁹ The ultimate goal of Negro education, writes Miller, must be to assert the right to humanity, to the “higher rights and powers” of each individual. Given white society’s attempts to curtail and even eliminate Negro higher education, Miller emphasizes the importance of defending and expanding university facilities for the Negro as part of the project of asserting “manhood” – and, at the same time, he seems also to warn against the assumption that this “manhood” is somehow inherently linked to, or will automatically follow from, academic learning:

If you wish to reach and inspire the life of the people, the approach must be made not to the intellect, nor yet to the feelings as the final basis of appeal, but to the manhood that lies at the back of these. That education of the youth, especially of the suppressed class, that does not make insistent and incessant appeals to the smothered manhood (I had almost said Godhood) within, will prove to be but vanity and vexation of spirit. What boots a few chapters in chemistry, or pages in history, or paragraphs in philosophy, unless they result in an enlarged appreciation of one’s own manhood?¹¹⁰

The “American white man,” Miller goes on to point out, is encouraged to be “supremely conscious” of his humanity; by contrast, “every feature of our civilization is calculated to impress upon the Negro a sense of his inferiority and to make him feel and believe that he

¹⁰⁸ Qtd. in *A Hindu’s Impressions*, p. 97

¹⁰⁹ Qtd. in *A Hindu’s Impressions*, p. 98

¹¹⁰ Qtd. in *A Hindu’s Impressions*, p. 99

is good for nothing but to be cast out and trodden under foot....”¹¹¹ the fundamental aim of Negro education, for Miller, must be to counteract the white-supremacist societal positioning of the Negro as an “animal instrumentality,” to recognize the ontological condition of the Negro as human, and to reinforce the Negro’s self-recognition as that which white society claims the Negro cannot be – i.e., a full human being. Miller’s insistent interrogation of the relationships (or lack thereof) between *education* (of any sort) and *affirmation of personhood* (particularly of Black peoples) calls to mind Alexander Weheliye’s (2014) reminder that “the problematic of the human has held a pivotal place in various historical formations of black studies since its inception”¹¹² – and Weheliye’s historicization of black studies encompasses W.E.B. Bois and his generation, which of course includes Miller. In asserting that the fundamental purpose of Negro education is to liberate “the smothered manhood (I had almost said Godhood) within” – which is to say, *within people whom white society has placed outside the category of the human* – Miller prompts his readers to consider the category of the human itself, to consider this category in relation to experiences of Blackness, to critique the role of education in producing the category of Blackness as something outside of the human, and to re-imagine the relationships between all of these constructions: education, Blackness, and the human. In other words, Miller wants Negro education to turn the European Enlightenment on its head: whereas Enlightenment thought, as Lisa Lowe (2015) notes, had materially and ideologically constructed the “rights of man” over and against the figure of the Negro (and nonwhite peoples in general), Miller wants a new kind of

¹¹¹ Qtd. in *A Hindu’s Impressions*, pp. 99-100

¹¹² Alexander Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), p. 21

education to affirm the “higher rights and powers” of each and every Black student. This call for an education that uses the Enlightenment against itself would certainly have appealed to Rai, who – echoing the elder anticolonial activist Gopal Krishna Gokhale’s critique of Western “civilization” – notes in *A Hindu’s Impressions* that “When they talk of humanity they actually mean ‘whitemanity.’”¹¹³ The writings of Indian anticolonialists during this period were in fact strewn with sarcastic references to “whitemanity” – a word that allowed writers to succinctly caricature a category of the human that depended upon their own placement *outside* of it. In other words, Indian anticolonialists like Lajpat Rai and African American intellectuals like Kelly Miller used the language of their era to express their understanding of race as – to put it in the terms Weheliye would use nearly a century later – “an assemblage of forces that must continuously articulate nonwhite subjects as not-quite-human.”¹¹⁴ Rai and Miller understood what Weheliye and other scholars in Black studies would later reiterate: that “whiteness designates ... a series of hierarchical power structures that apportion and delimit which members of the *Homo sapiens* species can lay claim to full human status.”¹¹⁵

Miller’s critical point about university education – i.e., that it did not necessarily liberate the smothered personhood of the oppressed – would also have resonated strongly with Rai and other Indian anticolonialists, who were growing increasingly scornful of university education and its role in perpetuating British rule. Anticolonial thinkers like

¹¹³ *A Hindu’s Impressions*, p. 339

¹¹⁴ Weheliye 2014, p. 19

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

Rai were not invested in a romanticized view of the university, and were distinctly uninterested in the notion of the “humanities” as necessary for making people more fully human. On the contrary, they recognized, as Gauri Viswanathan (1989) points out, that British Indian universities – and, in particular, the emphasis on literary studies within these institutions – had been “conceived in India as part and parcel of the act of securing and consolidating power.”¹¹⁶ Rai and others understood that the systematic focus on English literary study for urban Indian upper-class students was intended to constitute such students as a class of loyal imperial subjects, and to train these subjects to serve as administrative go-betweens, low-level bureaucrats, clerks ... the secretaries and scribes of the colonial establishment. As the young anticolonial activist Bharatan Kumarappa declared in a memoir written during his imprisonment in 1943, the goal of British Indian universities

was only to turn out English knowing clerks who, not being trained to think and act for themselves, would carry out the orders of the foreign bureaucracy unquestioningly. So ruthlessly has this aim been put into effect that today from the highest government officer to the lowest it is the clerk mind that comes into evidence in the Indian ranks of the government of India – men whose intelligence and character have been so stifled that like tame clerks they merely carry out the dictates of their British masters.¹¹⁷

Given such critiques, it is easy to see why Indian anticolonialists did not take a simple binary view of the “Washington-Dubois debate.” Indian thinkers were not so much interested in debating the relative merits of university education *versus* vocational

¹¹⁶ Gauri Viswanathan, *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India* (Oxford and New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 167

¹¹⁷ Kumarappa, Bharatan. *My Student Days in America* (Bombay: Padma Publications Ltd, 1945), pp. 48-49

education, because they did not view either of these supposedly separate “types” of learning as inherently liberatory. They were not “for” or “against” university or vocational education *as such*; they were interested in the relationship between education and the idea of freedom. Here they coincided with African American intellectuals like Kelly Miller, whose idea of education for “manhood” transcended the vocational-vs-academic binary.

Miller’s masculinist language, the language of “manhood” uncritically reproduced by Rai, calls for some attention here. Miller and Rai, following the linguistic conventions of their era, use “manhood” to mean “personhood” – a standard gesture that implicitly semi-includes women and non-gender-binary people while explicitly excluding them.¹¹⁸ This usage is symptomatic of the overall gendering of Rai’s book. Although Rai does, as I discuss later, express a particular interest in African American women’s education as a model for Indian women’s education, he notably does not include any long quotations

¹¹⁸ Robin D. G. Kelly (2002) critiques certain Black nationalists, including figures like Marcus Garvey (a contemporary of Kelly Miller and Lajpat Rai), who believed that “African redemption equaled manhood redemption.” The functioning of this idea of “manhood” within the discourses critiqued by Kelly is specifically tied to masculinity and patriarchy. According to Kelly, “While politics was considered an exclusively male domain in this era, masculinity was especially pronounced in black nationalist politics because of its roots in the struggle against slavery. Despite the fact that abolitionism developed alongside woman suffrage, the struggle against slavery by free blacks and even white abolitionists was cast as a struggle for manhood rights largely because servility of any kind was regarded as less than manly. Black men’s inability to protect their families under slavery was considered a direct assault on their manhood, since manhood was defined in part by one’s ability to defend one’s home” (p. 26). Without disagreeing with Kelly’s critique, I will note here that Miller’s use of the term “manhood,” in the article reproduced by Rai, is quite distinct from the patriarchal discourses cited by Kelly. Miller’s “Education for Manhood” uses the term “manhood” to refer to the individual’s sense of personhood – the concept of the human – rather than to valorize patriarchy or masculinity per se. It is also interesting to note that Miller’s discursive identification of “manhood” and “Godhood” finds its echo in Rabindranath Tagore’s lines: “The God of humanity has arrived at the gates of the ruined temple of the tribe. Though he has not yet found his altar, I ask the men of simple faith, wherever they may be in the world, to bring their offering of sacrifice to him. I ask them to claim the right of manhood to be friends of men.” [Qtd. in *The Golden Book of Tagore*, 1931 (Reprint, Calcutta: Rammohun Library & Free Reading Room, 1990), p. 305.] In Tagore’s context as in Miller’s, “manhood” denotes a spiritually-inflected conception of reclaiming one’s sense of one’s own humanity, rather than a glorification of masculinity or patriarchy.

from Black women's writings, as he does from the writings of Miller, Du Bois, and various other African American men. Even the visual dynamics of Rai's volume are notable in their centering of masculinity: all of the individual photographic *portraits* in the book are of African American *male* educational figures.¹¹⁹ (The other photographs are of groups of people, usually engaged in some collective activity, or of buildings.)

The androcentric nature of 1910s-era versions of colored cosmopolitanism is evident when Rai calls his readers' attention to an "incidental reference to India" in Miller's "Education for Manhood." Miller writes: "The highest call of the civilization of the world today is to the educated young *men* of the belated races. The educated young *manhood* of Japan, China, India, Egypt, Turkey, must lift their own people up"¹²⁰

The colored cosmopolitanism of figures like Rai and Miller was a decidedly male-centered project. This would begin to change during the inter-war period, when, as Nico Slate notes, "[c]olored cosmopolitanism was increasingly defined and redefined by colored women."¹²¹

Comparisons and contrasts: African American education as an aspirational model for India

Concluding the seven pages of quoted material from Miller's articles, Rai reminds his Indian readers that he has presented this material for their edification: "Our own educational problem in India," he writes, "is so difficult and complex, so full of anomalies and inconsistencies, that I would like my people to know the views of people

¹¹⁹ In addition to the opening portrait of Du Bois, Rai includes photographic portraits of Washington and of several Tuskegee instructors.

¹²⁰ Qtd. in *A Hindu's Impressions*, p. 100, emphasis added

¹²¹ Slate 2012, p. 91

engaged in the solution of similar problems in a different part of the world.”¹²² While noting the numerous differences between Asian Indian and African American histories and conditions, Rai also calls upon his readers to think of the similarities between the colonized peoples of South Asia and the “submerged race” of Negroes in America, particularly with regards to education.¹²³ “The objections advanced against the higher education of the Negro,” Rai points out, “are very similar to those raised in our own country by the Imperialist Jingo, with whom fall in, sometimes, well-meaning friends and short-sighted Indians, against the higher education of the Indians” – while, at the same time, the “absence of facilities for the industrial and commercial training of the Indians,” combined with “economic pressure from the outside,” has relegated masses of Indians to lives of backbreaking “unskilled labour” in fields and factories.¹²⁴ When Rai critiques the hypocrisy and ill-intent of white society with regards to Negro education, he clearly intends for his readers to relate this critique also to British political subjugation and economic exploitation of India:

The [white man’s] objection against [the Negro’s] higher education is that he should not be there at all. The white man does not want [Negro] competition in these higher callings. He wants to keep for himself the Negro clientele. He objects to the Negro’s claim for equal treatment; he objects to his political aspirations; he denounces his cultural pretensions; and he wants to shut the doors of knowledge against him; but he does not object to take his money. In fact he wants as much of it as he can get, by hook or by crook. He wants his labour, his service, and his industry, but he does not want his leadership; nor does he want him to lead his own people, because that necessarily deprives him of the opportunities of exploitation which he otherwise has.¹²⁵

¹²² *A Hindu’s Impressions*, p. 104

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ *A Hindu’s Impressions*, pp. 104-105

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 105-106

For Indian readers, Rai's description of the white man's suppression of Negro professional aspirations in the "higher callings" *and* of Negro efforts with regards industrial leadership in order to "keep for himself the Negro clientele" would have called to mind the British practices of capping Indian participation in remunerative professions and of deliberately dismantling Indian industries in order to maintain India as a captive market for British goods. Rai's point, though, is not simply to draw these parallels in order to have Indians and African Americans commiserate with each other; rather, he wants his Indian readers to study the successes that African American educators and educational institutions have attained despite the existing conditions of oppression, and to set about trying to reproduce some of these successes in India.

Along these lines, Rai takes particular note of "another feature of the education of the Negro which puts an Indian indescribably to shame"; that is, the education of women.¹²⁶ The "facilities which exist [in the U.S.] for the education of Negro women, are decidedly larger, better, and more liberal than those that exist in India for the education of Indian women."¹²⁷ Rai notes that almost all Negro high schools and colleges are open to female as well as male students, and that women make up the majority of the students in many Negro institutions of higher learning. There are also, he notes, all-female Negro colleges. "I saw one such school at Atlanta," Rai informs his readers, "called the Spellman [sic] School."¹²⁸ There follows a lengthy description of

¹²⁶ *A Hindu's Impressions*, p. 89

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ *A Hindu's Impressions*, p. 90

Spelman's "twenty acres of land," its "magnificent buildings for teaching and residential purposes," its "chapel with a seating capacity for a thousand," the training of nurses at Mac Vicar Hospital, the library with its "four thousand volumes, and a hundred periodicals," the "practice school" for teacher training, the printing office, music studios, and rooms for dressmaking and "domestic science."¹²⁹

Rai's discussion of women's education clearly cannot be regarded as "feminist" by contemporary standards. He does not ask, for example, the obvious question of why the Mac Vicar Hospital provides training for women to become nurses but not doctors. (And he certainly does not ask why men's colleges such as Morehouse – an institution he discusses elsewhere in the book – do not promote courses in "domestic science.") Reading Rai on his own terms, however, we see that his aim is to prompt his Indian readers to do something about the problem of lack of access to educational facilities (either all-female or co-educational) for Indian women. In this as in other areas, African American education is presented as a model to which Indian readers should aspire.

Head, Heart, and Hand: Booker T. Washington in South Asian Translation

Given his clear concern with industrial and economic development (along with higher education, and the various relationships between the two), it is not surprising that, in addition to consulting with academic figures such as Dean Miller, Rai also visited Booker T. Washington's famous Tuskegee Institute. Like many South Asian thinkers of

¹²⁹ *A Hindu's Impressions*, pp. 89-91

his generation, Lajpat Rai writes glowingly of Tuskegee. Though clearly in agreement with African American leaders who critiqued the prevailing U.S. social pattern of reducing support for Negro higher education and redirecting African American students toward vocational training, Rai does not hold Booker T. Washington personally responsible for this problem; rather, he cites the overt racism of white Southern policymakers and the misguided paternalism of white Northern philanthropists. To the extent that he views a certain amount of industrial training as necessary for any society, Rai regards Tuskegee as a fruitful model, particularly for India.

“The object of Tuskegee,” writes Rai, “is to train its students to serve society by doing some useful thing with skill, to give them a three-phased education of ‘the head, the heart, and the hand,’ to use the alliterative phrase of the Tuskegee teachers”¹³⁰

Rai’s discussion of Tuskegee quotes extensively from interviews with Booker T. Washington and from written material provided by Washington, as well as from glowing journalistic accounts of the Institute. He notes, for example, journalist Arthur E. Evans’ opinion that “Dr. Washington and this institute are doing for the Negro people what the University of Wisconsin is doing for its state,” which is to say, “striving to get into close touch with the people and exert an influence . . . to teach the farmer how to raise larger crops . . . to improve conditions of society for the mass.”¹³¹ There follows a lengthy quote from Evans, part of which reads:

Tuskegee is not a school, in the ordinary sense of the word. It’s a city in itself, a community that dominates a whole county. It’s a great industrial plant with forty trades and industries, that consumes all its own products,

¹³⁰ *A Hindu’s Impressions*, p. 108

¹³¹ Qtd. in *A Hindu’s Impressions*, p. 107

that erects its own buildings (first making its own bricks), that grows its own food, makes its own clothes, writes and prints its own text-books, all by way of education.¹³²

In this description, education takes place as an organic element within a larger project of collective advancement through an industrious self-supporting cooperative. The idea of an educational community that “consumes all its own products ... grows its own food, makes its own clothes, writes and prints its own text-books, all by way of education,” sounds very much like the experimental communities attempted by Indian anticolonialists during the decades leading up to formal independence – notably MK Gandhi’s Phoenix Settlement. Rabindranath Tagore’s conception of an institution that would represent “the ideal of education in India” also resonates with the description of Tuskegee.¹³³ In a 1918 lecture, Tagore declared that the ideal educational institution

... must cultivate land, breed cattle, feed itself and its students; it must produce all necessaries, devising the best means and using the best materials, calling science to its aid. Such an institution must group round it all the neighboring villages, and vitally unite them with itself in all its economic endeavors.¹³⁴

Of significance in Evans’ description of Tuskegee is the fact that it does not portray vocational education as being somehow “racially” suited to African Americans in particular; rather, the comparison he draws between Tuskegee and the University of

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Rabindranath Tagore, “The Centre of Indian Culture” (1918 speech), reproduced online at <http://tagoreweb.in/Render/ShowContent.aspx?ct=Essays&bi=72EE92F5-BE50-40D7-9E6E-0F7410664DA3&ti=72EE92F5-BE50-4FE7-FE6E-0F7410664DA3&ch=c>, accessed 3/18/2017.

¹³⁴ Rabindranath Tagore, “The Centre of Indian Culture” (1918 speech), qtd. in *The Golden Book of Tagore*, 1931 (ed. Ramananda Chatterjee) (Reprint, Calcutta: Rammohun Library & Free Reading Room, 1990), p. 305

Wisconsin indicates that the *same* type of education is good for both Black and white populations. Nevertheless, for Lajpat Rai and other Indian anticolonialists – always attentive to issues of finance in education – there would have been an obvious irony to such a comparison: Whereas the white-serving institution (the University of Wisconsin) is funded by the *state*, the Black-serving institution (Tuskegee) depends upon Dr. Washington’s finessing of philanthropic donors and the labor of the students. Noting that most of the funding for Tuskegee – apart from the amount actually provided through students’ labor – comes from Washington’s solicitation of donations from white philanthropists, Rai points out that it is “no wonder then that out of the nineteen Trustees, sixteen are white people and only three Negroes or colored people” – though, as he adds, the staff is “almost entirely Negro.”¹³⁵ Rai makes clear that his attention to these issues of funding and control is not meant to be “carping criticism [or] a disparagement of Booker T. Washington’s work,” noting that “his [Washington’s] community could not supply him with [funds] simply because they had them not,” and that “the fact that he managed to get them from the white community which hates the Negro, stands to his everlasting credit.”¹³⁶ Rai also makes it clear, however, that he prefers to see Indian educational institutions funded and controlled by Indians rather than by white donors.

Rai’s position with regards to Washington may seem contradictory. On the one hand, he effusively praises Tuskegee. On the other hand, he is – following African American intellectuals like his friend Dr. Du Bois – critical of Washington’s willingness to tolerate segregation, and of Washington’s public statements to the effect that

¹³⁵ *A Hindu’s Impressions*, p. 124

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 126

vocational training for the Negro is preferable to university education. And yet at the same time, Rai lauds Washington for having secured huge amounts of funding for Tuskegee from white donors – when, clearly, much of that funding has been secured precisely by making the kinds of compromises that Rai and others critique. But Rai’s position here is nuanced and somewhat dialectical, shuttling repeatedly between different concerns in order to portray a multilayered social reality that is always in motion, unfolding over time. And, of course, Rai’s overall purpose is to inform his Indian readers of African American educational projects and ideas that may have, as he writes in the introduction, some “practical usefulness for our own development.” While Rai clearly does not think compromising with segregation and disfranchisement would be useful to India’s “own development,” he does – along with numerous other South Asian anticolonialists – think that institutions such as Tuskegee (minus the majority-white board of trustees) would be useful for India.

Rai’s description of Tuskegee, in addition to relying on Washington’s writings and on articles by various journalists, is based on his own experiences and observations during his time spent at the Institute. Having visited the school, spent time with Dr. and Mrs. Booker T. Washington and various staff members, and observed and participated in multiple aspects of the life of Tuskegee, Rai could say that he had personally “seen the institution in working order; the academic teaching, the industrial training, the military drill, the midday parade, the work on the farms, in stables, in creamery, in shops.”¹³⁷ He had experienced the “earnestness that characterized the workers in shops, factories, and

¹³⁷ *A Hindu’s Impressions*, p. 124

farms,” along with “the general air of cheerfulness that pervaded the institution throughout in all its departments.”¹³⁸ Rai’s overall impression of Tuskegee was of an ebullient “beehive,” an expansive and bustling community dedicated to continually improving the quality of life, not only of its students, but also of the entire rural population scattered over the lands surrounding the campus.¹³⁹

Rai’s special enthusiasm for Tuskegee can best be understood within the context of the specific critiques posed by Indian anticolonialists with regards to British-controlled education in India during this era. The system of education in British India was, in the words of MK Gandhi, a “factory for making Government employees or clerks in commercial offices.”¹⁴⁰ The problems with this “factory” were multifold. In the first place, it was designed only to train enough clerks to meet the needs of the imperial bureaucracy – meaning that most of the population of India was not provided with any education at all. With regards to the small portion of the population that did have access to what was called “education,” the students were – critics charged – taught to scorn all forms of work other than clerking. This “educated” portion of the population, in other words, learned to look down upon the labor performed by the majority of Indians, and therefore to look down upon Indians and India in general. They became disconnected from Indian languages and ashamed of all things Indian; they had no solidarity with their “countrymen,” and neither could they integrate themselves into British society (or into the upper echelons of the imperial ruling class in India) because they were not regarded

¹³⁸ *A Hindu’s Impressions*, p. 125

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 124

¹⁴⁰ MK Gandhi, “Speech at Y.M.C.A., Madras,” April 27, 1915. In Mishra 2015, p. 36

as “white.” The Indian “educated” classes were, critics charged, both snobbish and insecure, perpetually alienated and frustrated, and – it was frequently alleged – physically weak and unhealthy.

Within this context, it becomes clear why Rai writes of being impressed with, as he puts it, “the physique” of the Tuskegee students.¹⁴¹ “I hardly came across any boy or girl who looked pale or sickly,” Rai notes enthusiastically.¹⁴² All of the Tuskegee students appeared to be of “normal” health, and most were in “robust” health.¹⁴³ This did not mean, of course, that potential students had not been excluded because of health and/or disability issues, but what it did mean (to Rai) was that the Tuskegee education itself was not systematically *causing* a deterioration in the health of the students – something which, according to many anticolonialists, British-controlled education was doing to Indian students. In the words of MK Gandhi, “the tendency” of British education had been “to dwarf the Indian body, mind and soul.”¹⁴⁴ Anticolonialists did not always identify the specific mechanism whereby British education was dwarfing the Indian body, but those who did generally pointed to the fact that while the vast masses of Indians had no access to academic education, members of the “educated classes” generally followed a regime of constant study and no physical work, thereby losing out on the wholesome benefits of manual and agricultural labor. Lack of physical education in children’s schools was also cited as a problem. In addition, some Indian activists, like Khadija Begum Ferozuddin of the All India Women’s Congress, felt that it was the

¹⁴¹ *A Hindu’s Impressions*, p. 125

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ MK Gandhi, *India of My Dreams*, p. 165

“system of education through an alien tongue” that was “sapping the vitality” of Indian children, threatening to produce “a nation growing up of pale, thin graduates commanding no respect in the eyes of the world.”¹⁴⁵ (Gandhi was in agreement with this view of the imposition of English as contributing to ill health.) In any case, the bottom line was that Rai and other Indian anticolonial activists believed Indian students to be weak and infirm, meaning that one of the goals of education for decolonization had to be improving the bodily health of the students. Tuskegee, in Rai’s view, represented a stellar example of an educational institution that was successfully producing “robust” health among members of an oppressed population.

In addition to teaching the “dignity of [physical] labour” and promoting physical exercise through the “morning drill” and “midday parade,” Tuskegee supported students’ health through a diet of “food . . . fresh from the institute farm raised by the students, cooked by the students, and eaten by the students.”¹⁴⁶ Lajpat Rai was highly impressed with the “variety of food production” at Tuskegee, with fields full of corn, oats, and sweet potatoes, and gardens bursting with greens, beans, lettuce, onions, beets, rutabagas, white potatoes, peas, tomatoes, green corn, cantaloupes, watermelons, and other melons.¹⁴⁷ Rai enthusiastically quotes Booker T. Washington on the subject of food, agriculture, and health:

“One of God’s objects in surrounding us with vegetables, with grain, berries and flowers,” says Booker Washington, “is to help us make our bodies better fitted for the uses of life, to make our bodies stronger, to

¹⁴⁵ Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, All India Women’s Conference IV File no. 1, “Report of the activities of AIWC in newspapers, Constitution and Circulars of AXIWC, correspondence of Amrit Kaur, Renuka Ray and others.” 1930-35

¹⁴⁶ *A Hindu’s Impressions*, pp. 114-115, p. 118, p. 125

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 112

make them more healthful. When I go to church and hear people preach for hours on all kinds of subjects, especially in country districts, where the soil is fitted for growing all kinds of vegetables ... how I wish the minister would take a few hours and teach the people how to fill their bodies with some of the beautiful things with which nature has surrounded them.”¹⁴⁸

Again, to understand Rai’s interest in the Tuskegee diet and in Washington’s ideas about food, we must recall that many anticolonialists of this era understood matters of food as central political issues. For Asian Indian thinkers, who were quick to point to the links between British policy and India’s devastating famines, it made sense to center the relationships between nutrition, individual bodily health, community health, and *swaraj*. These connections were understood not as unidirectional, but as multidirectional. That is to say, if colonialism had led to mass hunger and malnutrition, then anticolonial efforts had to focus on strategies for increasing access to nutritious foods and promoting bodily health *as part of* an immediate program for decolonization – not merely wait for nutritional access to improve *as a result of* some future decolonized political state. Activists saw the school not only as a site for distributing knowledge or information about food and nutrition, but also as a vehicle for *providing* bodily nourishment. Members of the All India Women’s Conference advocated for the provision of nutritious food in schools, repeatedly pointing out that school attendance decreased when families lacked food, that under-nourished children did not have the energy to walk the often long distances required to get to school, and that students could not focus on their studies if they were hungry. Experimenting with food and agriculture in an effort to better meet people’s nutritional needs became a central preoccupation for many Indian activists – notably MK Gandhi, who corresponded about

¹⁴⁸ *A Hindu’s Impressions*, pp. 112-113

such issues with the famous Tuskegee professor George Washington Carver. In a message relayed through the white Christian pacifist C.F. Andrews, Carver made dietary suggestions involving “whole-wheat flour, grits, hominy, and local Indian fruits and nuts,” along with “a kind of milk that could be made from soybeans or peanuts.”¹⁴⁹ Carver wrote of this diet, “You can use it in your school, they will carry it to the various communities from whence they came, bringing to my mind greater health, strength and economic independence to India.”¹⁵⁰

To return to Rai’s account of Tuskegee: in addition to his attention to the health of the body, Rai gives long reports of facts and figures demonstrating the financial benefits that students have derived from their Tuskegee training. “In the thirty years of its existence,” writes Rai, “the Institute has given two years of training to approximately 9,000 persons. The average earnings of persons trained at Tuskegee is \$700 a year. Before attending Tuskegee they earned on an average about \$100 a year. Thus the Institute has increased by about \$600 the earnings of all who have taken its courses.”¹⁵¹ Importantly, these Negro graduates primarily earned their money by selling high-quality products and skilled services to Negro customers or by teaching in Negro schools – a fact that stood in contrast to Indian graduates who were (critics charged) busy fighting each other tooth and nail for the opportunity to become desk clerks in the service of the white-supremacist British Empire.

¹⁴⁹ Slate 2012, p, 101

¹⁵⁰ Qtd. in Slate 2012, p. 101

¹⁵¹ *A Hindu’s Impressions*, p. 117

The physical and economic benefits of Tuskegee, in Rai's description, extend from the faculty and students outward to the surrounding communities, and ultimately reach the entire population of Macon County, Georgia. "The influence of the school is to be seen everywhere," Rai observes, "particularly in the well-to-do condition of the Negro farmers" of the area.¹⁵² Tuskegee "is teaching the farmers to increase the productivity of their lands, the principle underlying the system identical with the one that is the basis of Tuskegee's labor – learning and teaching by doing and seeing."¹⁵³ In addition to holding special courses on campus for local farmers, Tuskegee students and teachers operate the "Jessup agricultural wagon," which travels the county as a "school on wheels," providing "practical demonstrations given right on the farms."¹⁵⁴ Such outreach projects have, Rai says, improved the standard of living for local farm families and raised their economic status, giving Macon County "a larger area of land held by Negroes than any other county in the South."¹⁵⁵ Furthermore, the county has "fifty-seven public schools, of which forty-seven have been built through the aid and assistance of Tuskegee Institute."¹⁵⁶ Many of the teachers for these schools have received training in the academic departments at Tuskegee. This portrait of Tuskegee as an institution that not only serves its immediate students, but also builds connections with surrounding rural populations by involving faculty and pupils in practical educational programs for improving the local people's standard of living, certainly contrasts with the image of the British-controlled college in

¹⁵² *A Hindu's Impressions*, p. 119

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 120

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 121

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 119

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 120

India, churning out discontented little swarms of would-be imperial clerks who possess no “practical” survival skills and who scorn the rural Indian masses.

Rai’s discussion is not all agriculture, trades, and finance; he also notes, for example, that:

No account of Tuskegee would be complete that did not mention the music at the school, the wonderful singing in the chapel, in which the student body is led by a choir of 150 voices, pipe organ, a piano and an orchestra of twenty-five pieces. Special effort is made to preserve the old Negro hymns and plantation melodies, orchestration for which have been made with great skill by the bandmaster, Captain N.C. Smith Forty-seven students are in the band, which furnishes music for all occasions, and ... the students render classic music from the great operas. The leader [instructs] the players in the story of the opera, telling them what every musical phrase means, before rehearsals are started, and with this as an inspiration the Tuskegee band plays almost as if it were composed of virtuosi.¹⁵⁷

Rai’s attention to the musical life of Tuskegee is significant in that it conveys a sense of the Institute as not merely instrumentalizing students by teaching them trades, but also caring for their spiritual and in some sense intellectual fulfillment. The school’s efforts with regards to “the old Negro hymns and plantation melodies” also speak to the promotion of a sense of racial pride and an engagement with racial history. Having read W.E.B. Du Bois’ *The Souls of Black Folk*, Rai would have been familiar with Du Bois’ famous discussion of the Sorrow Songs in that volume; hearing music in this tradition

¹⁵⁷ *A Hindu’s Impressions*, pp. 122-123

sung at Tuskegee, Rai must have recalled Du Bois' descriptive historicization of the Sorrow Songs and other spirituals as "the articulate message of the slave to the world."¹⁵⁸

It was during Rai's stay in the United States that the Tuskegee Institute Singers became the first choral ensemble to release recordings of spirituals. The group was approached with a record offer in 1914 by the Victor Talking Machine Company, which had made huge sales of its 1911 recordings of another HBCU-based musical group, the Fisk Jubilee Quartet.¹⁵⁹ In January and February of 1915, several of the Tuskegee Singers' choral renditions of spirituals were released on two ten-inch disks; these early recordings are still in existence, allowing the interested scholar to hear some of the same musical pieces and voices that Rai may have heard as he was making his study of Tuskegee.

The fact that the Tuskegee musical groups also specifically toured to help fundraise for the Institute would not have seemed like a problem to Rai, who was – again – acutely aware of the problem of educational funding. Indeed, Tuskegee was not alone in making use of students' musical talents and training for fundraising purposes. Fisk, for example – an HBCU that would have been familiar to Lajpat Rai through W.E.B. Du Bois – had long used musical performances to significant financial advantage. The fact that some of the donations garnered by choral singers from institutions like Tuskegee came from paternalistic whites, who interpreted the sight (and sound) of Black students

¹⁵⁸ W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 1903 (Reprint, Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett Publications: 1961), p. 183

¹⁵⁹ For more on the recordings made by the Tuskegee Institute Singers, see Tim Brooks, *Lost Sounds: Blacks and the Birth of the Recording Industry, 1890-1919* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004), pp. 320-327.

singing Christian hymns as evidence of the “civilizing” influence of such institutions, would obviously have seemed problematic to Rai; nevertheless, he certainly would not have blamed the Tuskegee students, teachers, or Washington for the attitudes of such donors.

A substantial legacy: Multiple translations, multiple personalities

Rai was not alone in his admiration for Booker T. Washington and Tuskegee. As Slate (2012) notes, Washington’s “legacy in South Asia was substantial.”¹⁶⁰ Not long after the 1901 publication of *Up From Slavery*, teacher Lilavati Singh from Lucknow Women’s College wrote to Washington of having translated the book into Urdu.¹⁶¹ K. Paramu Pillai, headmaster of a high school in the state of Travancore, in southern India, translated the text into Malayalam, subsequently writing to inform Washington that the translation had been adopted as a vernacular textbook “in one of the High School classes of this state,” meaning that “[m]ore than 700 boys and girls, between the ages of 12 and 16, are thereby likely to know something of your labours at Tuskegee, for your race, and I hope they will learn some lessons of self-help therefrom, and learn to recognize the dignity of manual labour and training.”¹⁶² Pillai later wrote that the book had been adopted by Madras University, and that he was working on a translation of another of Washington’s books, to be published serially in a magazine. Another headmaster from Travancore wrote to request copies of four of Washington’s other books, adding: “If you

¹⁶⁰ Slate 2012, p. 21

¹⁶¹ Louis R. Harlan, *Booker T. Washington, The Wizard of Tuskegee, 1901-1915* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 277

¹⁶² Qtd. in Harlan 1983, pp. 277-278

will allow us the privilege of corresponding with you, we promise to keep you informed of the moral and mental need of children here in the improvement of which your advice will be, I am far from flattering you, invaluable.”¹⁶³ *Up From Slavery* was also translated into various other South Asian languages, including Hindi, Marathi, Telugu, Gujarati and Nepali. To the extent that British authorities knew of these translations and allowed them to circulate in India, they probably hoped Indians would take up Washington’s attitude of tolerating segregation and compromising on civil rights issues. Instead, what Indian readers took from Washington’s work were ideas of economic solidarity, rural education, community cooperation, and the relationships between the well-being of the collective and the health of the individual body.¹⁶⁴

MK Gandhi lauded Tuskegee as “an ideal college,” and he repeatedly encouraged Indians to emulate Washington’s work.¹⁶⁵ As Slate notes, Gandhi’s high regard for rural and agricultural life and his emphasis on the dignity of manual labor were in part shaped by his admiration for Washington. Like Washington, Gandhi emphasized vocational education – agricultural skills, trades, village handicrafts – as a path to “self-sufficiency.” Gandhi repeatedly echoed Washington’s motto of educating “head, heart, and hand,” and maintained Washington’s emphasis on the “hand” (manual skills) and “heart” (religious and “character” education) as more important than the “head” (academic knowledge).

¹⁶³ Qtd. in Harlan 1983, p. 278

¹⁶⁴ In this regard, Indian anticolonialists approached Washington’s work in much the same way that – according to Brenda Gayle Plummer (1996) – many African intellectuals (in Africa) approached Washington during this era. That is to say, they “distilled the themes of racial [or in the Indian case, national] pride, self-help, and group solidarity from the accommodationist aspects of his thought.” As Plummer notes, “Colonial authorities, making no such shrewd analysis, were initially blind to the subversive potential of Washington’s messages.” (12)

¹⁶⁵ Qtd. in Slate 2012, p. 21

Gandhi's language around education, and specifically on the relationship between vocational and academic education, was – like Washington's own career – complex, contradictory, and certainly lent itself to charges of hypocrisy. Gandhi sometimes held up Tuskegee specifically as a model for "Harijans" (his term for India's so-called Untouchables), with the problematic implication that the emphasis on vocational training over academic learning was more suitable for Harijans than for other (more privileged) populations. His famous 1937 "Wardha Plan" for national education, however, did not include caste distinctions; it promoted the idea of crafts and trades as central to the education of all Indian students. And when, at a meeting of Harijan workers, Gandhi was asked whether "it was right to encourage Harijan boys to become B.A.s or M.A.s, when unemployment was rife among graduates, and whether it would not be better if they took to technical education," Gandhi replied that "reformers should not expect Harijans to embrace industrial education before other castes," and pointed out that academic education "had its own value for Harijans."¹⁶⁶ As Uma Dhupelia-Mesthrie (2004) notes, Gandhi's elevation of rural life and manual skills over extensive academic experience was reflected in the education he designed for his own sons – sometimes resulting in resentment within the family. He twice refused offers of funding for his son Manilal to study law in England, instead preferring to have Manilal stay at his settlement South Africa, where the young man helped with farming, gardening, and the production of Gandhi's newspaper *Indian Opinion*.

¹⁶⁶ Qtd. in Slate 2012, pp. 120-121

The Anagarika H. Dharmapala, a Sinhalese Buddhist and a leader of the Buddhist revival in India, visited Tuskegee in 1903. Passing through Chicago, he caught the eye of an American journalist who described him as wearing “garments fashionable about 250 B.C.”¹⁶⁷ In response to the journalist’s query regarding his presence in the U.S., the Anagarika described himself as “an admirer of your Booker T. Washington,” and added “I expect to visit his institution during my stay here, and if I am successful I will pattern the Indian institutions after his.”¹⁶⁸ Upon returning home from the journey, the Anagarika wrote to Washington:

I have gained from my visit ... an experience that I shall never forget. ... [When I] saw the Tuskegee Institute with its manifold branches under enlightened teachers I rejoiced that you have made all this glorious work a consummation within a generation; and I thought of the Viceroy in India who with the millions of children starving for education and bread that he should waste in sky rockets and tomfoolery and vain show to please a few loafing lords who came from England last January six million dollars in thirteen days! He is not worth to loose the latchet of your shoe.¹⁶⁹

The Anagarika, whose writings “emphasized group solidarity, material advancement, self-help, and education,” was also familiar with the work of W.E.B. Du Bois, and noted that Dr. Du Bois “took a different view” from Washington.¹⁷⁰ The Anagarika’s view of these differences, as he wrote to Washington, was that “On the whole it is healthy that two parties are at work on two different lines; and there is no energy lost. The moral, political and industrial development are the three sides of a triangle.”¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁷ Qtd. in Harlan 1983, pp. 278-279

¹⁶⁸ Qtd. in Harlan 1983, p. 279

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Harlan 1983, p. 279

¹⁷¹ Qtd. in Harlan 1983, p. 279

The Anagarika's understanding of Washington and Du Bois as "two parties at work on two different lines," each contributing to a "triangle" of group uplift, is indicative of how the "Washington-DuBois debate" was translated into South Asian contexts. Rather than simply understanding Washington and Du Bois as two men who had a "debate" with each other – thereby necessitating that all listeners pick a side in the debate – many South Asian educators and theorists drew inspiration from *both* of these African American educational leaders. Even Gandhi, whose educational philosophy was so closely patterned on Washington's, also admired and corresponded with Du Bois. Gandhi favored Du Bois' refusal to compromise with white supremacy in any form, and Du Bois – unlike Washington – was an avid supporter of all aspects of the Indian independence movement.

We should note that Lajpat Rai's perceptions of Booker T. Washington were informed not only by his own interactions with Washington, his time spent at Tuskegee, and his readings of various journalistic accounts, but also by his discussions with Washington's critics, particularly Dr. Du Bois. Rai's chapter on "The Negro in American Politics" quotes extensively from Du Bois' published critiques of Washington and highlights the importance of Du Bois' arguments. In other words, Rai's nuanced and dialectical understandings of Washington's work were developed in conversation with scholars like Du Bois, who vigorously critiqued Washington but also understood the complexities and contradictions of Washington's situation, his discourse, and his socio-historical positionality. Rai's admiration for Washington, then, can be understood as reflecting, not an ignorance of Washington's faults, but a developing understanding of the fact that, as Harlan (1983) puts it, "Washington had multiple personalities to fit his

various roles,” and that “[a]long with the Washington who cozied up to the white paternalists of the South and philanthropists of the North and who rigorously fought the civil rights champions of his day, there was another Washington who worked unceasingly for black pride, material advancement, and every kind of education.”¹⁷² As Ibram X. Kendi (2016) points out, “In private, Washington supported civil rights and empowerment causes across the South throughout his career.”¹⁷³ What did Washington discuss with Rai in their private conversations? How might the Wizard of Tuskegee have explained his strategy to this Indian visitor, in confidence? Contemporary readers of *The United States of America* can only speculate as to what insights Washington might have shared with Rai “off the record.”

W.E.B. Du Bois, the NAACP, and the HBCUs

Lajpat Rai’s greatest admiration was reserved for his friend and colleague Du Bois, the man whose portrait introduces *The United States of America*. Rai enjoyed time at Du Bois’ home and office, and the two men belonged to the same social club. Lajpat Rai wrote at length about Du Bois’ political activities – his work with the NAACP and his editorship of *The Crisis* – which were also forms of public education.

Rai’s admiration of Du Bois, like his interest in Booker T. Washington, was metonymic of a larger pattern in Indian anticolonial circles. Du Bois was a well-known figure in India; he corresponded with numerous scholars and activists there, and his published writings were much read and admired on the Subcontinent. In addition to his books, Indian readers avidly circulated copies of *The Crisis*, the NAACP publication

¹⁷² Harlan 1983, p. ix

¹⁷³ Kendi 2016, p. 277

edited by Du Bois. Du Bois, as Slate notes, played a major role in “forging solidarity between Indians and African Americans.”¹⁷⁴ Du Bois’ solidarity-building activities engaged people of all ages. While publications like *The Crisis* raised awareness among adult populations in India and the U.S. as to the connections and resonances between Indian and African American freedom struggles, Du Bois also promoted colored solidarity through *The Brownies Book*, an African American children’s magazine which he co-edited with Jessie Faucet.

In addition to expressing his great admiration for Du Bois’ writings, Lajpat Rai’s book is very interested in the work of the NAACP, the organization founded by Du Bois and his allies in 1909. Rai takes particular note of the activities of local NAACP branches in relation to schools and school curricula. He states, for example, that the Boston branch has succeeded in getting the Boston School Committee to withdraw from the schools a book titled “Forty Best Songs” whose songs contain racial slurs.¹⁷⁵ The District of Columbia branch has managed to secure a promise from the local Board of Education that Negro students will not be denied access to “moving pictures on educational topics for the public schools.”¹⁷⁶ The St. Paul, Minnesota branch has “checked discrimination in a private circulating library and in a school of shorthand.”¹⁷⁷ The Howard University branch, the “first college chapter” of the NAACP, is also of interest:

As a student organization, it has developed itself especially to the study of the race question and spreading the [message] of the NAACP by sending

¹⁷⁴ Slate 2012, p. 14

¹⁷⁵ *A Hindu’s Impressions*, p. 164

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ *A Hindu’s Impressions*, pp. 165-166

speakers to other colleges, by correspondence, and by distributing literature broadcast. The dispatch with which briefs protesting against the Afro-Exclusion amendment to the Immigration Bill were distributed to members of Congress was largely due to the energy of the students of the Howard Chapter.¹⁷⁸

Rai also discusses the NAACP's anti-lynching campaigns, one component of which consists simply of educating people as to the extent of U.S. (and particularly southern) lynch culture. Rai lists NAACP-compiled statistics on lynchings for the years 1885-1914, and provides several pages of "illustrative matter" so that his readers understand "the magnitude of the problem"; the accounts of recent lynchings are labeled with headlines such as "FIVE INNOCENT MEN LYNCHED," "WOUNDED NEGRO BURNED TO DEATH," and "WOMAN AND CHILD HANGED."¹⁷⁹ Emphasis is placed upon the complicity or active participation of judges, elected officials, and other government personnel in these attacks on Negro people of all ages and genders. Rai then quotes a lengthy excerpt from Du Bois' *The Souls of Black Folk*, in which Du Bois points out that Booker T. Washington's "old attitude of adjustment and submission," and his educational program which "takes an economic cast, becoming a gospel of Work and Money to such an extent as apparently almost to overshadow the higher aims of life," have not stemmed the tide of lynchings and other forms of violence against the Negro.¹⁸⁰ In this regard, Du Bois insists – and Rai agrees – that Booker T. Washington's politics of compromise have not served the Negro well. Rai also agrees with Du Bois that expanding higher education is an important part of the fight for political equality.

¹⁷⁸ *A Hindu's Impressions*, pp. 165

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 151-154

¹⁸⁰ Qtd. in *A Hindu's Impressions*, pp. 157-158

Du Bois was one of the Indian independence movement's greatest advocates in the United States. But while his direct political support for Indian independence has been extensively discussed, what has not been explicitly highlighted is the fact that the movement in India also benefitted greatly from Du Bois' vigorous defense of Negro higher education. HBCUs were centers of African American political and intellectual life; thus, for South Asian anticolonialists in the United States, visiting HBCUs was a way of connecting with fellow "colored" people in order to exchange ideas and share stories of struggle. It is no surprise, then, that some of the biggest supporters of the Indian independence movement were professors, administrators, and students from HBCUs. Numerous professors from Howard University, for example, corresponded with Indian activists and supported Indian anticolonialism via their journal publications, lectures, speeches, letters to the editor, and sometimes even monetary donations. One of these professors was Dr. Benjamin Mays – dean of Howard University's School of Religion – who traveled to India and met with various anticolonial leaders there, including MK Gandhi. Mays later wrote to members of the All-India Women's Congress and offered to make a financial donation towards that organization's efforts on behalf of Indian women's and girls' education.¹⁸¹ Dr. Howard Thurman, dean of the Rankin Chapel at Howard, was another strong supporter of Indian anticolonialism. Like Mays, Thurman traveled to India in the mid-1930s, meeting with Gandhi and with countless other anticolonial scholars and activists. In addition, Thurman's delegation – consisting of four African American intellectuals on a "Pilgrimage of Friendship" to India – visited Nobel Laureate

¹⁸¹ See Dina Asana (Organizing Secretary, All India Women's Conference), letter to Rajkumari Amrit Kaur (Vice-President, All India Women's Conference), Sept. 27, 1937. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, All India Women's Conference IV, F. no. 16, 1937.

Rabindranath Tagore's innovative school and college at Shantiniketan in West Bengal. Professor Thurman and his wife Sue Bailey Thurman subsequently established the Juliette Derricotte Scholarship, which provided funds for several young African American women to study at Shantiniketan. Dr. Merze Tate, the first African American woman to obtain a PhD in government and international relations from Harvard, joined the faculty at Howard in 1942; she was also a strong supporter of the Indian independence movement, as is reflected in her writings of the 1940s. Dr. Charles H. Thompson, who taught in the Department of Education at Howard (later becoming dean of the graduate school) and was famous for founding the *Journal of Negro Education* as well as for being the first African American to obtain a doctorate in educational psychology, was a high-profile supporter of Indian anticolonialism, as is evident from the editorial comments he wrote in the JNE on the subject. Mordecai Johnson, president of Howard, was another major supporter of Indian independence. The list of Howard students and alumni who substantively supported the Indian independence movement is endless, and includes well-known civil rights figures like James Farmer and Pauli Murray. Faculty, students, and administrators from institutions like Fisk, Atlanta University, and various other HBCUs also corresponded and met in person with Indian activists; these African American students and professors wrote letters, published articles, joined organizations, handed out flyers, and attended protest events in support of the Indian movement, placing significant pressure on the Roosevelt administration to adjust its foreign policy accordingly. Indian anticolonial activists thus became beneficiaries of Du Bois' support for Negro institutions of higher education, as the existence of these institutions was one of the conditions of possibility for the rising influence of colored cosmopolitanism and thus for African Americans' increasingly vocal

critiques of British imperialism in India – particularly during the WWII era, a crucial historical moment in the Indian anticolonial struggle. Further, Du Bois used his personal influence and contacts within higher education circles to facilitate Indian visitors’ forging of connections with African American intellectuals. Lajpat Rai, for instance, notes in the preface to his book that his study of Negro education was “materially helped with letters of introduction” from Du Bois.¹⁸²

Rai and Du Bois continued their friendship through written correspondence after Rai returned to India in 1919. Du Bois sent Lajpat Rai copies of *The Crisis*, which Lajpat Rai circulated among his fellow Indian anticolonialists and quoted in his own subsequent writings. In 1928, Du Bois wrote to Rai about a novel he was working on, called *Dark Princess*. The novel was a political love story in which an African American man, Matthew Towns, marries an Indian woman, the “dark princess” Kautilya of Bwodpur; these lovers have an Afro-Indian son, Madhu, who is destined to become a unifying force leading the “darker races” to universal freedom.¹⁸³ Du Bois mailed portions of the manuscript to Lajpat Rai for feedback. Rai sent Du Bois comments on the draft, but may not have gotten to read the final published novel: he died in November of 1928 after being severely beaten by police during a silent march protesting British colonial policies.

Rai and Du Bois had much in common. As Sinha (2015) notes, both men “believed in education as a primary means of deconstructing hegemonic ways of thinking and

¹⁸² *A Hindu's Impressions*, p. v

¹⁸³ Though an extended discussion of *Dark Princess* would be outside the scope of this chapter, it is worth mentioning that this novel has been analyzed extensively by literary scholars, using multiple theoretical frames. See, for example, Miller 2009, chapter 3; Mullen 2003; and Lwin 2011.

advocating new perspectives.”¹⁸⁴ Rather than promoting education as an “attempt to produce uniform subjects,” Rai and Du Bois were “interested in adapting and altering the knowledge gained from their inter-cultural encounters to meet the diverse needs of their respective communities.”¹⁸⁵ After Rai’s death, Du Bois wrote in *The Crisis* that “every member of the 800,000,000 darker peoples of the world should stand with bowed heads in memory of Lajpat Rai, the great leader of India, who died of English violence because he dared persist in his fight for freedom.”¹⁸⁶

Race and caste

In describing the positionality of African Americans within U.S. society, Rai informs his readers that “The Negro is the PARIAH of America.”¹⁸⁷ Rai’s marked use of “PARIAH” reflects an awareness both of this word’s circulation in English, as a general term indicating low status or rejection, and of its origins in India, where it had a more specific meaning (particularly in Tamil-speaking areas) denoting one of the lowest-ranked groups within the odious system of caste. In fact, it was not just the word “PARIAH” that had been incorporated into American English. The word “caste” itself circulated prominently in the U.S. during the first half of the twentieth century. While white U.S. society tended to deploy the notion of “the caste system” as a uniquely

¹⁸⁴ Babli Sinha, “Dissensus, Education and Lala Lajpat Rai’s Encounter with W.E.B. Du Bois” (*South Asian History and Culture*, 6:4, 2015, pp. 462-476), pp. 464-465

¹⁸⁵ Ibid. Note, however, that Sinha also critiques Rai’s vision of India as too Hindu-centric, and additionally argues that Du Bois developed an overly Hindu-centric view of India as a result of Rai’s influence. In my view, some of the quotes Sinha uses to support this argument can actually be read in ways that lead to a different conclusion. An extended engagement with Sinha’s argument in this regard, however, would be outside the scope of this chapter.

¹⁸⁶ Qtd. in Slate 2012, p. 78

¹⁸⁷ *A Hindu’s Impressions*, p. 77

“Indian” evil and to claim that America, by contrast, had no such “system,” African American writers consistently used the term “caste” to describe the U.S. racial system – sometimes explicitly comparing race in America with caste in India, and sometimes simply using the term in the context of discussing race, without needing to reference India at all. Booker T. Washington, in *The Story of the Negro* (a work cited repeatedly by Rai in *A Hindu’s Impressions*), made reference to “a steady growth in the United States both North and South, of a caste system which excluded the Negro from the ordinary privileges of citizenship exclusively upon the ground of color.”¹⁸⁸ Du Bois frequently used the term “caste” in his critiques of U.S. racism, sometimes with reference to a comparison with India but more often without. In a speech decrying the ongoing societal attack on Negro higher education, Du Bois lambasted white paternalists who “openly declare their design to train these millions [of Negroes] as a subject caste, as men to be thought for, but not to think; to be led, but not to lead themselves.”¹⁸⁹ A 1918 book by Dean Kelly Miller critiquing U.S. racism was sub-titled *America’s Code of Caste, A Disgrace to Democracy*.

Following these African American writers, and alluding to the *Manu Smriti* – a set of ancient Sanskrit religio-legal texts which, among other things, codified caste hierarchies, and upon which the British Empire based its own legal system for its Hindu subjects – Rai notes that “[t]he worst features of the code of Manu find their parallel in American life.”¹⁹⁰ Rai engages in a lengthy comparison of race and caste, emphasizing the

¹⁸⁸ Qtd. in *A Hindu’s Impressions*, pp. 135-136

¹⁸⁹ W.E.B. Du Bois, 1903, “Training Negroes for Social Power” (speech), found online at <http://www.blackpast.org/w-e-b-du-bois-training-negroes-social-power-1903>

¹⁹⁰ *A Hindu’s Impressions*, p. 390

hypocrisy of “Christian writers who dare not raise their voice against the color line in the U.S.A. [but] have no hesitation in sitting in judgement on Hindus and denouncing them ... for the institution of caste.”¹⁹¹ At the same time, Rai makes it clear that his own critique of the U.S. as a “caste-ridden” society is not meant to justify or excuse the existence of caste in India. “The rigid caste system we have in India,” writes Rai, “is, without doubt, a social curse and cannot but be denounced in the most unmeasured terms.”¹⁹²

Rai thus compares U.S. treatment of the American Negro both to British colonization of India and to upper-caste Indians’ oppression of low-caste Indian communities, and he therefore sees African American education as holding lessons both for Indian anticolonialists generally, and for the “depressed classes in India” in particular.¹⁹³ By making multiple and cross-cutting analogies and connections between race, caste, and colony, Rai prompts his readers to think in complex ways about the overlapping categories of difference produced through coeval and intersecting systems of inequality.

Education in white America: strategic examinations

In addition to researching and writing *A Hindu’s Impressions*, Lajpat Rai during his second stay in the U.S. established the India Home Rule League of America, which was responsible for publishing a U.S.-based version of the journal *Young India*. The inaugural issue of the journal noted that in British-controlled India, “Only 18 out of 100

¹⁹¹ *A Hindu’s Impressions*, p. 393

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, pp. 397-398

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, p.77

boys and 5 out of 100 girls get school education. The total literate percentage is about seven. Education is neither universal, nor compulsory, nor free.”¹⁹⁴

If Lajpat Rai’s words in the first edition of *Young India* are intended to make U.S.-based readers aware of the dearth of educational opportunities for Britain’s Indian subjects, his aim in some of the chapters of *A Hindu’s Impressions* is apparently to make Indian readers aware of what he perceives as the great abundance of educational opportunities available to white Americans. Rai’s purpose, in his descriptions of white U.S. education, appears to be twofold: first, to fuel his Indian readers’ growing discontent with British rule; but beyond that, to prompt Indians to consider what types of education could and/or should be provided to citizens of an India free from British rule, a hypothetical postcolonial India.

The language and organization of Rai’s discussion in *A Hindu’s Impressions* reflect the racialized structure of the society he is examining. When Lajpat Rai writes of “American” education, he means the education provided to *white* Americans; on this point he is very clear. The Negro, being “the PARIAH of America,” is excluded from the educational opportunities provided by the state. Hence, “American education” and “the education of the Negro” are, for Rai, two separate topics. Rai is interested in both white American education and American Negro education, but – as I argue here – for different reasons.

¹⁹⁴ *Young India*, vol. 1, no. 1 (January 1918), p. 23

Although Lajpat Rai's apparent conflation of "American education" with "white education" may at first glance seem to reproduce white America's own racist normalizing and centering of itself, and its concomitant marginalization and other-ization of African Americans, we need to understand Rai's terminology against the historical fact of *whiteness as a prerequisite for substantive citizenship in the United States*. Accordingly, one can reasonably infer that Rai's use of "American education" as synonymous with "white American education," and his positioning of "Negro education" as an entirely separate matter, reflects not a failure to question whiteness, but rather an accurate assessment of the actual facts on the ground in the country he is observing. In other words, Rai's language and framing are indicative of the fact that, as the path-breaking African American scholar and educator Marguerite Ross Barnett would later write, "The easy identification of the American nation with the white population ... cannot be overlooked."¹⁹⁵ Rai's organization of concepts in *A Hindu's Impressions* makes clear his understanding that – to quote Barnett again – "The equation of the nation with the white population [had] persisted since the eighteenth-century declaration of America as a white man's country."¹⁹⁶ It is also abundantly clear from Lajpat Rai's text that, in the ethical confrontation between "America" and "the American Negro," Rai's sympathies and solidarities are with the latter.

In discussing "American" – i.e. white American – education, Rai offers his readers a series of expansive descriptions of state-supported university and vocational

¹⁹⁵ Marguerite Ross Barnett, "A Theoretical Perspective on American Racial Public Policy" (In Marguerite Ross Barnett & James A. Hefner (eds.), *Public Policy for the Black Community: Strategies and Perspectives*. Sherman Oaks, CA: Alfred Publishing Co., 1976), p. 19

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

training, high schools, elementary schools, early childhood programs, nutritional and medical attention received by students in schools, physical education and sports, children's playgrounds and recreation centers, public libraries, and other publically-funded educational activities and facilities. Many of the educational ideas and practices he describes were regarded as cutting-edge and even controversial at the time, and Rai's purpose in attending to them is not to condone the fact that these various educational programs and facilities are being offered only to whites, but to invite his readers to examine the effectiveness of such programs in enhancing the lives of the populations who have access to them, and to imagine what such educational efforts could do for India.

Rai's distinct emphasis on the role of the *state* in providing all of these different forms of education implicitly invites a comparison with India's British rulers, who make no such efforts on behalf of the population of India. The "funds for educational purposes" in the United States, Lajpat Rai informs his readers, are derived from five sources: federal revenues, state revenues, city funds, private endowments, and fees.¹⁹⁷ "But what impressed me most," he adds, "was the responsibility assumed by the Government for the education of every child born in the country, male or female."¹⁹⁸ The "co-operation of private agencies, individuals and corporations," while welcomed, does not "relieve the Government of its duty and responsibility."¹⁹⁹ Private donations to educational institutions "only supplement what is being done by the various State and City Governments in the performance of their Governmental duty."²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁷ *A Hindu's Impressions*, p. 40

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 41

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

Of course, Rai in fact understands that the state does *not* actually provide education for “every child born in the country” – most prominently, as he clearly notes, the state does little to nothing for the education of African American children. Rai also exaggerates the extent to which progressive educational practices, labor protections for children, health and nutrition in schools, etc., have been universalized among white Americans. One can interpret these exaggerations as intentional, as Rai’s grand statements regarding “American” education are contradicted not only by his chapters on the struggles of African Americans but also by his analysis of class hierarchies among U.S. whites. In other words, rather than seeing Rai’s enthusiastic discussion of “American” education as simply contradictory or in error, we can understand his effusive descriptions of white U.S. education as serving a comparative and rhetorical purpose: he wants his Indian readers to compare their own educational situation (under British rule) with the best of what is available to the white U.S. population – i.e., the “free” population of the United States.

While an in-depth discussion of Rai’s chapters on white American education would be outside the scope of this chapter, my point here is that Rai analyzes African American education and white American education for different purposes. Like other Indian anticolonialists of his era, Rai sees African American communities as sharing certain conditions of oppression with colonized South Asian populations, and therefore views African American education as a model for successfully carrying out educational work under conditions of oppression. He sees U.S. whites, by contrast, as a “free” population, and therefore views white American education as a window onto the

opportunities Indians might have for educational advancement if they were “free” – which is to say, rid of British rule.

There is, nevertheless, an important gap in Rai’s thinking: he fails to understand (or, in any case, to express) the ways in which the educational oppression he condemns is a co-constituent of the educational abundance he envies. He does not explicitly highlight, for example, the ways in which the movement to provide free and compulsory primary education for all white children in America has been *founded upon* the educational exclusion of African American children. While he does critique the fact that African Americans are taxed to pay for educational institutions from which they are excluded, he does not delve deeply into the material role of dehumanized Black labor in facilitating the existence of the white educational realm with its elegant universities, shining parks, libraries, etc.²⁰¹

The failure to examine Black labor in relation to white education is not the only gap in Rai’s analysis. Rai’s antiracist critical capacity fails him entirely when it comes to the education of “the American Indian.” The final section of this chapter examines that failure, not as unique to Lajpat Rai, but as exemplary of a serious gap in many Indian anticolonial activists’ conceptualizations of the U.S. state.

Misrecognition: settler colony as postcolony

²⁰¹ As an example: Wilder (2013) demonstrates the foundational role of chattel slavery in not only constructing the physical facilities of some of the largest and most well-known U.S. universities, but also underpinning the endowments of those universities, which were significantly financed through the slave trade. Rai’s discussion of white U.S. education does not attend to these types of connections.

Rai makes only one significant statement about the education of Native people: “[T]he percentage of literacy among the Indians is relatively low, as they do not take to schools kindly or easily.”²⁰²

Rai’s attitude here is not only problematic; it also ironically reflects a failure to listen to some of the lessons presented by the very scholars he so admires. Du Bois, for example, in a passage decrying white-supremacist educational and social policies towards the Negro – a passage Rai actually quotes in *A Hindu’s Impressions* – also condemns settler-colonial violence against Native peoples:

Everybody knows that segregation is confiscation. Have we not the shameful treatment of the Indian (American) to prove this?

How fine a program of solving the race problem this is which ... lands us right in the same black slough of despond out of which we are just starting to raise the robbed and raped Indian. Fine statesmanship for the twentieth century – fine cowardice for the land of the free.²⁰³

It is not clear why Du Bois thought “we” (U.S. settler society?) were “starting to raise” Native peoples out of the state of oppression that had been imposed on them (Native people would not be granted legal U.S. citizenship until 1924, nor were their lands being returned to them or anything like it), but the point here is that Du Bois specifically *raises* the issue of U.S. structural violence against Native peoples, something Rai apparently misses entirely. In this as in other areas, Rai’s discourse is not exceptional but exemplary of Indian anticolonial writers who visited the U.S. during this era.

²⁰² *A Hindu’s Impressions*, p. 37

²⁰³ Qtd. in *A Hindu’s Impressions*, pp. 170-171

To illustrate this point, we might briefly examine the work of Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya, who spent 18 months in the U.S. during 1939-1940. Like Rai and many other Indian anticolonialists, Chattopadhyaya was particularly interested in issues of race and education, and worked to strengthen and build upon relationships of solidarity with African American scholars and activists. A veteran of British jails due to her anticolonial civil disobedience activities, she also sought to rally international disapproval of British abuses and win sympathy and support for the cause of Indian independence wherever she went. In 1946 Chattopadhyaya published a book based on her travels in the U.S.

Chattopadhyaya's book presents a series of harsh critiques of U.S. society, which, she says, is run according to the values of the "World-Capitalist economy," enabling a malignantly greedy capitalist class to amass not only wealth but also political power, and therefore to dictate the terms of life for the rest of the population.²⁰⁴ She describes legions of malnourished Dust Bowl refugees streaming across the western states, Black southern sharecroppers terrorized by vicious landlords, and underpaid immigrant workers crowded into slums. As for American education, Chattopadhyaya is much less enthusiastic than Rai: she writes that U.S. schools and universities "are conservative," and that "teachers and professors who dare to differ are severely dealt with. Quite a number of teachers have been pitched into for propagating 'un-American' ideas."²⁰⁵ Many teachers and professors have been fired on the basis of "their views or their association with movements which are condemned as un-American."²⁰⁶ The obsession

²⁰⁴ Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya. *America: The Land of Superlatives* (Bombay: Phoenix Publications, 1946) (hereafter, *Land of Superlatives*), p. 68

²⁰⁵ *Land of Superlatives*, p. 40

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

with “100% ‘Americanism’” is reflected in textbooks, “which means that young seeking minds must never be touched by the breath of doubt and if they are bewildered by the contradictions in society, by the waste and misery, if they are not altogether impressed by the glory that is America, they must shake off these questions as they would irritating flies.”²⁰⁷

The treatment of the Negro, says Chattopadhyaya, is by far the worst “blot” on the character of U.S. society. Like Rai, Chattopadhyaya weaves quotes from African American professors, publications, and organizations into a discussion outlining white U.S. society’s systematic brutality towards African Americans, historically and in the present. “Probably never before in history,” writes Chattopadhyaya, “has a people been so completely stripped of its social heritage as the Negroes brought to America.”²⁰⁸ Also like Rai, she exceptionalizes African American “progress” (“Their 60 years’ progress since emancipation has few parallels”), while noting that this “progress” has been made in spite of U.S. society, not because of it: “These [strides] they have achieved by overcoming gigantic hurdles, for the rights and opportunities though granted in principle by constitution, are in practice still denied them.”²⁰⁹

And yet, Chattopadhyaya still somehow believes that all of these atrocities actually constitute a betrayal – rather than a logical outcome – of the “true” America. The “true Americanism,” according to Chattopadhyaya, is the “heritage of the Pilgrim Fathers.”²¹⁰ This “Pilgrim” history constitutes the “long submerged precious heritage” of

²⁰⁷ *Land of Superlatives*, pp. 41-42

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 179

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 178

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 94

America.²¹¹ Growing out of this precious tradition was a society “[f]ounded by wanderers ... nurtured and built up by further batches of fearlessness, an ability to face unfamiliar landscapes, challenge new horizons, battle with unknown factors, and adjust to strange situations.”²¹² Chattopadhyaya imagines this tradition as having led to a noble anticolonial revolution:

The North American revolt had positive and decisive results on the trend of events in the Western Hemisphere and the world at large. It set the stage for the break away of the whole Southern Continent from the old world and the liberation of its millions from foreign rule. It also paved the way for a new experiment by a band of men and women inspired by a yearning for a new way of life, who wanted it to be the land of the Pilgrim Fathers, the haven of all pioneers.²¹³

Chattopadhyaya, unlike Rai, did actually meet some Native people during her stay in the United States. But, in contrast to her discussions of meetings with African American scholars and activists (and, for that matter, with white allies of the anticolonial and antiracist movements), her descriptions of her encounters with Native people are not only largely apolitical, but also rather patronizing and objectifying. She writes of having had the opportunity to “wander over the Indian Reservations, and see those ancient people in their own setting, hear their brave sagas, listen to their songs, see their arts and crafts, and trace the pattern of their social life.”²¹⁴ Chattopadhyaya’s take-away on education after visiting these reservations? The importance of crafts and folklore in the education of the young!

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² *Land of Superlatives*, p. 13

²¹³ Ibid., p. 11

²¹⁴ Ibid., p. iv

If the networks of colored cosmopolitanism allowed South Asian anticolonial activists to derive lessons about various educational practices, educational values, and educational projects from their African American counterparts, we can also see colored cosmopolitanism *itself* as an educational project, whereby African American and South Asian thinkers interactively constructed complex transnational understandings of the intersecting and overlapping socio-political phenomena of race, caste, nation, colony, and empire. But with regards to specifically *settler*-colonial formations such as the United States (along with the settler states of the “Southern Continent” invoked by Chattopadhyaya in her praise of the American Revolution²¹⁵), South Asian colored-cosmopolitan thinkers failed to meaningfully apply any of these critical understandings. Multiple arguments could be made as to why the conceptual framework of colored cosmopolitanism was not sufficient to bring the “Indians” of Asia into a sense of solidarity with the “Indians” of the Americas, but what I want to suggest here is that for activists like Rai, Chattopadhyaya, and others, the idea of the United States as a former colony that had broken away from the British Empire was too attractive to give up – making these South Asian activists cling to a willful ignorance of the fact that the U.S. was not a departure from British imperialism, but an extension of it. The United States, within the mainstream of the Asian Indian anticolonial imaginary, was “proof” that a colony could separate from the empire; and, if the American Revolution had (as Chattopadhyaya suggested) “set the stage for the break away”²¹⁶ of multiple other colonies from their imperial metropolises, then the stage could be seen to have been set for

²¹⁵ *Land of Superlatives*, p. 11

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*

India's own imminent breakaway. Of course, the separation of the white-supremacist U.S. settler state from the British Empire did not actually constitute the type of anticolonial revolution South Asian activists wanted – notably, it was not a breakaway from white supremacy but a new and virulent iteration of it – but the *idea* of a successful revolution against the British Empire was affectively and rhetorically so inviting that these activists continued talking about the American Revolution as if it were some radical leap forward towards the liberation of humanity. They vigorously critiqued the *nature* of the United States (as racist), but refused to critique the *existence* of the United States – which is to say, they remained willfully immune to an understanding of *settler* colonialism as distinct from franchise colonialism, and therefore uninterested in the difference between a settler colonial state and a postcolonial state. They could thus only see Native peoples of the Americas as historical curiosities (“those ancient people”) and/or as out of step with the demands of modern life (“they do not take to schools kindly or easily”). U.S. racism was understood as a “blot” on an otherwise legitimate society, rather than as an organizing tool for the construction of a *settler* society founded upon structural genocide.

Colored cosmopolitanism in education: What did it produce?

Lajpat Rai's *The United States of America*, for all of its problematic gaps and flaws, is emblematic of Indian anticolonial educational thought – most specifically, of Indian perceptions of African American education as a model (or rather, a set of different models) to be studied and emulated. The Indian anticolonial engagement with African American education was a central strand of colored cosmopolitanism, which itself can be

regarded as a transnational and transgenerational educational project. This educational project that was colored cosmopolitanism, for all of *its* gaps and flaws, played a major role in shaping and promoting the Indian independence movement, along with a series of other liberatory social and political projects, including anti-caste activism in India, antiracist labor movements in the U.S., anticolonial movements in other parts of Asia and in Africa, and – as I discuss in the next chapter – an important historical phase of the African American civil rights movement. Indian anticolonial interest in African American education during the early twentieth century was matched by African American interest in Indian politics. As the Indian independence movement gained in visibility during the inter-war period, African American activists threw their support behind the Indian movement and debated the applicability of its tactics to their own struggles. By the late 1930s, a significant number of African American intellectuals had become convinced that the idea of *satyagraha*, one of the major methodologies of the movement in India, could potentially be an effective weapon in the battle against Jim Crow. Moving into the forties, African American scholar-activists and inter-racial allies began forming discussion groups and study circles to theorize and plan for nonviolent direct action in opposition to white supremacist policies.

One of the most carefully studied and most prominently referenced texts within these circles was a 300-page dissertation written by a flamboyant young anticolonial activist named Krishnalal Shridharani. Shridharani was a product of the Indian anticolonial education movement: he was a graduate of an anticolonial nationalist elementary and high school, and had subsequently become a favorite student at MK Gandhi's *Rashtriya Vidyapith*, or "National University" – Gandhi's alternative to India's

British-controlled university system. After accompanying Gandhi on the famous 240-mile “Salt March to the Sea” in 1930, and spending several months in prison as a result of his civil disobedience, Shridharani had completed his undergraduate studies at Viswa Bharathi University, the school founded at Shantiniketan by the famous anticolonial philosopher and poet Rabindranath Tagore.

Arriving in New York for graduate study in 1934, the flashy, cigar-smoking Shridharani quickly became a remarked-upon presence within the various networks of the U.S. Left, particularly among African American anti-racist organizers. His dissertation, a study of nonviolent civil disobedience as a strategy within mass movements, was published in 1939 under the title *War Without Violence*, and was avidly taken up by U.S. civil rights activists. In the next two chapters I discuss Shridharani’s life, and inquire into the unique appeal of his work among young scholar-activists of the Black Left during the 1940s.

Chapter I contains material that appears in Iyengar, Malathi, “Colored Cosmopolitanism and the Classroom: Educational Connections between African Americans and South Asians,” in the *Encyclopedia of Educational Philosophy and Theory*, edited by M.A. Peters (Singapore: Springer Business and Science Media, 2015). The dissertation author was the sole author of this material.

Chapter II – Colored Cosmopolitanism 2.0: Queering Transnational Consciousness

On June 15, 1943, activists from around the United States convened at the Woodlawn AME Church in Chicago for the first conference of the National Federation of Committees of Racial Equality – soon to be renamed the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE). It was a major milestone for twenty-three-year-old James Farmer, who had been working to build such a national organization since 1941. The conference, Farmer would later recall, was “filled with the highest hopes of reshaping the social contours of America”; the participants “could not have been more consumed with fire had they been a band of abolitionists convening in the mid-nineteenth century.” That inner fire alone would have to sustain the organization, since there was virtually no funding for the group. Nevertheless, the conference was “graced with one guest speaker”: an individual whom Farmer described as “a roundish, well-fed, thirty-two-year-old Brahmin, meticulous in a three-piece Brooks Brothers Suit, lavender silk shirt, and impeccably shined shoes.”²¹⁷ This swanky personage was Krishnalal Shridharani.

Born in 1911 in the state of Gujarat, Krishnalal Shridharani was a product of the Indian anticolonial education movement: he had attended anticolonial nationalist schools from the age of eleven through his undergraduate years. At the age of seventeen, while a student at MK Gandhi’s *Rashtriya Vidyapith* (“National University”), he had been among

²¹⁷ All quotes in this paragraph are from James Farmer, *Lay Bare the Heart: An Autobiography of the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Arbor House, 1985), p. 112.

the famous “first batch” of satyagrahis in the Great Salt March of 1930, walking 240 miles, from Sabarmati Ashram to Dandi, with Gandhi to defy British tax laws by making salt from seawater.²¹⁸ Shridharani’s doctoral dissertation, a study of satyagraha as a strategy of the Indian independence movement, with an additional emphasis on the potential applicability of satyagrahic methods within other (non-Indian) contexts, was published under the title *War Without Violence* in 1939. Three years later, in the winter of 1942, James Farmer used *War Without Violence* as a sort of guidebook in planning what he considered to be “the first organized civil rights sit-in in American history,” in which twenty-eight Black and white activists refused to leave the segregated Jack Spratt Coffee Shop in Chicago without being served together.²¹⁹ Shridharani’s subsequent presence as guest speaker at the first national CORE conference, then, was a nail in the milepost that the conference represented for Farmer.

But Farmer was not the first African American activist to make use of Shridharani’s book. Pauli Murray had read *War Without Violence* just after its publication in 1939, and had “pondered the possibility of applying the technique [of satyagraha] to the racial struggle in the United States,” subsequently discussing some of her ideas with friend Adelene McBean.²²⁰ In 1940, Murray and McBean found

²¹⁸ “Satyagrahi” is the word for a practitioner of “satyagraha,” a term composed of the Sanskrit *satya*, meaning “truth,” and *agraha*, meaning “holding to” or “insisting upon.” *Satyagraha* is variously glossed in English as “insistence upon the truth,” “holding to the truth,” “truth force,” “soul force” (a strategic translation coined by Gandhi), or simply “nonviolent resistance.”

Both Gandhi and others used the expression “first batch” to describe the group of seventy-eight satyagrahis, drawn from all the provinces of India, who started out from Sabarmati to Dandi. Many activists had requested to be included in the first batch, but only a fraction of the requesters were selected at the beginning. The sixty-one-year-old Gandhi was the eldest marcher, while Shridharani, at eighteen, was one of the youngest.

²¹⁹ *Lay Bare the Heart*, p. 106

²²⁰ *Pauli Murray: The Autobiography of a Black Activist, Feminist, Lawyer, Priest, and Poet* (1987), p. 138

themselves in jail after refusing to “move back” (to a broken seat) on an interstate bus. Decades later, in discussing the bus incident, her subsequent jail stay, and her nonviolent resistance activities in the jail, Murray would note that she had been influenced by the writings of “not so much Gandhi, but one of his young followers, Krishna Shridharani.”²²¹ By 1942, Murray was corresponding with Shridharani.

In fact, the well-fed Brahmin²²² and his 300-page book appear with surprising frequency in accounts of civil rights activities carried out by young African American scholar-activists and inter-racial allies during the 1940s. I say “surprising” because *War Without Violence* was not the only book on satyagraha available to U.S. readers during this era. The well-known white American social philosopher Richard Gregg had written several books on satyagraha, including the highly-publicized *Gandhiji’s Satyagraha or Nonviolent Civil Disobedience* (1930) and *The Power of Non-Violence* (1935), based upon his personal observations of the Indian independence movement during an extended research trip. Haridas Muzumdar, a middle-aged Gandhian living in New York, had

²²¹ Qtd. in Horne (2008), p. 141

²²² Farmer’s use of the term “Brahmin” to describe Shridharani needs to be understood in its proper context. Farmer certainly is not endorsing caste – in India or anywhere else – and he is not using the term “Brahmin” to refer to a caste. Were Farmer to have been making a comment about caste, his description would have been incorrect, since Shridharani’s assigned caste was not Brahmin but Vaishya. Like many Americans, Farmer apparently uses the word “Brahmin” to refer loosely to a person who seems to belong to some sort of upper class, or to be generally privileged in some way – as in the expression “Boston Brahmin.” In the case of Shridharani, it is his elegant bearing (possibly bordering on vanity), his obvious material comfort and his educational privilege that lead Farmer to describe him as a “well-fed Brahmin.” Shridharani himself, though opposed to caste, did not attempt to conceal either his family’s caste-background or the privilege he gained from it. In *My India, My America* (1941), Shridharani notes that the Vaishya in Gujarat is “generally well-to-do, more secure than the Kshatriya or even the Brahmin, and invariably better off than the Shudra [the lowest caste within the *chaturvarna* (caste) system]” (4-5). As I discuss later, however, Shridharani’s opposition to caste did not extend to any real engagement in anti-caste activism; his rejection of caste simply meant that he did not follow caste rules or personally practice caste-based discrimination in his individual life. There is no record of Shridharani being involved in broader movements aimed at dismantling the *chaturvarna* system.

written *Gandhi Versus the Empire* in 1932. But none of these books are mentioned nearly as often or as passionately as is *War Without Violence* in firsthand accounts of the civil rights activities of the 1940s.

In the words of celebrated activist Bayard Rustin, “Shridharani’s book became our gospel, our bible” during the 1940s.²²³ Bernice Fisher, a white member of the FOR in Chicago and a co-founder of CORE, recalled that the students in her FOR “cell” in the early forties “studied and debated, chapter by chapter, Shridharani’s *War Without Violence*.”²²⁴ Fisher, who would later be dubbed “the godmother of the restaurant ‘sit-in’ technique,” actually used Shridharani’s book to create a list of instructions and guidelines for sit-ins.²²⁵ The list was often distributed to demonstrators in the form of a handbill. A group of prominent activists and organizers in New York, including such figures as A. Philip Randolph and the Reverend Glenn Smiley, formed a reading circle specifically to discuss *War Without Violence* “and its possible application to the racial conditions in the United States.”²²⁶ As Jervis Anderson (1997) notes, Randolph’s 1941 mobilization for a mass march on Washington – a specter that successfully pressured FDR into creating the Fair Employment Practices Commission – was “influenced greatly by the exegesis ... in Shridharani’s *War Without Violence*.”²²⁷ Invited to speak at multiple conferences devoted to themes of racial justice, Shridharani’s name appears and re-appears in the NAACP journal *The Crisis*. According to Gerald Horne (2008),

²²³ Qtd. in Anderson 1997, p. 69

²²⁴ Qtd. in Horne (2008), p. 138

²²⁵ It was the renowned African American labor leader and civil rights activist Ernest Calloway who originally dubbed Fisher “godmother of the restaurant ‘sit-in’ technique.”

²²⁶ Qtd. in Anderson 1997, pp. 69-70

²²⁷ Anderson 1997, p. 84

Shridharani's "presence in northern Manhattan ... was to have a dynamic impact on the [growing] relationship [of solidarity] between Black America and India" during the late 1930s and early '40s.²²⁸

Given the frequency and intensity of such references to *War Without Violence* and its author, both this chapter and the following one revolve around the question: *Why?* What were the factors, both within the text and outside of it, that led so many African American activists to so avidly engage with a lengthy doctoral dissertation by a cigar-smoking Indian dandy? Both this chapter and the next one explore this question by focusing on three specific readers, three prolific young intellectuals of the era: James Farmer, Bayard Rustin, and Pauli Murray. What could have made Shridharani's book so compelling to these three readers – and, by extension, to the larger intellectual circles and activist communities they participated in shaping?

Situating my analysis within a historical framework that understands both the writer and his readers as young colored cosmopolitans, connected through a shared transnational intellectual and political genealogy that had been forged in earlier decades by figures such as Lala Lajpat Rai and W.E.B. Du Bois, I argue that Shridharani's work "spoke" to readers like Farmer, Rustin, and Murray largely because it reflected the understandings, experiences, and concerns of the colored cosmopolitanism of their generation. This generation of colored cosmopolitans both revered and rebelled against the older generation that had educated them into the transnational, transracial, trans-imperial solidarities of colored cosmopolitanism itself. Thus, I argue that the appeal of

²²⁸ Horne 2008, p. 123

Shridharani's work can be understood with reference to two major factors: (1) the transnational intellectual and political traditions that had shaped the perspectives and sensibilities of both the writer and his readers, and (2) the shared impulse of the writer and his readers to creatively push the boundaries of those traditions, and, as I will explain, to "queer" colored cosmopolitanism. My use of the term "queer" follows Cathy Cohen's (1997) discussion of a theoretical conception of queerness that goes beyond the naturalized presupposition of a gay-straight binary, and that attends to the complex ways in which gendering, sexualization, and racialization are constitutively woven together within a social world shaped by imperial modernity. Without implying that Shridharani and/or his readers were infallible exemplars of radical politics, I point out that all of them, in various ways, defied normative ideologies of gender and sexuality while also working to disrupt entrenched systems of race and empire. In this and other ways, their generation moved colored cosmopolitanism beyond the boundaries of its earlier instantiations.

To understand the importance of my argument, it is necessary to attend to the ways in which it differs from many existing accounts that attempt to explain the adaptation of satyagraha by African American activists during the 1940s. That is to say, the specific scholarly standpoint from which I make my argument diverges from the priorities and foci of most of the existing historical studies that touch upon *War Without Violence*. While there have been no in-depth historical-textual analyses of *War Without Violence* and/or its author per se, the text and writer are mentioned in multiple studies that deal broadly with civil rights, civil disobedience, nonviolence, etc. Many of these existing studies position African American interest in *War Without Violence* within

genealogies centered around white thinkers and organizations. In contrast, I locate African American scholar-activists' readings of *War Without Violence* with reference to the transnational intellectual and political genealogies of colored cosmopolitanism. Hence, for example, while Sean Scalmer (2011) discusses *War Without Violence* within the context of Western fascination with Gandhi, and notes that "White Americans were among the first to proclaim the Mahatma's significance,"²²⁹ my analysis highlights the fact that African American intellectual interest in Shridharani's work grew out of a much longer history of African American engagement with India, a history separate from and independent of white proclamations of "the Mahatma's significance" – indeed, a history that predated "the Mahatma's significance." Lewis Perry (2012) positions Black scholar-activists' interest in *War Without Violence* within an "American tradition" of civil disobedience harking back to the Boston Tea Party and various other white settler tax revolts – a U.S. exceptionalist framing that elides many of the connections I seek to highlight here. Joseph Kosek (2009) understands the engagement with *War Without Violence* as emerging from a history of Christian pacifism, with A.J. Muste and the white-dominated Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) as the important progenitors. By contrast, I highlight the importance of colored cosmopolitanism, and its role in the education of both Shridharani and his readers, as the essential context for an understanding of the circulations of *War Without Violence*.

On Methods: Archives, Speculation, and Narrative

²²⁹ Scalmer 2011, p. 6

The methodology that produces and supports this chapter's arguments entails an examination of – to borrow a phrase from Gabriel Mendes – the “intellectual biographies, and in some sense, geographies” of the writer and his readers.²³⁰ In other words, my analysis positions *War Without Violence* within an intertextual field that includes not only Shridharani's other writings, but also his *life as text*; and this intertextual field also includes the writings and life-stories of Farmer, Rustin, and Murray. To put it another way: I read – to use historian Dayo Gore's (2011) words – the “political and life paths”²³¹ that brought these four figures together, highlighting the broader transnational connections that produced the specific historical moment in which these different lives converged around Shridharani's well-traveled dissertation.

What does it mean to read a person's life as text? My discussion here relies upon historical data from published biographical and autobiographical works on the individuals in question, and also turns to archival sources for further information. Nevertheless, to read a life as text is not to write a biography. In exploring the lives of these historical figures, I do not primarily aim to add previously-unknown data to the scholarly corpora that have already been built up around all of them. Rather, I am interested in the multiple speculative histories that emerge from the application of literary reading practices to the study of these intersecting life-stories. This chapter employs historical and archival methods, but also uses speculation as a method of imaginatively tracing the life of a text as it intersects and interacts with other lives/texts or life-texts.

²³⁰ Gabriel Mendes, *Under the Strain of Color: Harlem's Lafargue Clinic and the Promise of an Antiracist Psychiatry* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2015), p. 17

²³¹ Dayo F. Gore, *Radicalism at the Crossroads: African American Women Activists in the Cold War* (New York: New York University Press, 2010), p. 12

This chapter's argument is presented in the form of a narrative. In the pages that follow, I lay out a narrative of the formative years of Farmer, Rustin, Murray, and Shridharani, focusing on how these four figures' "routes to politicization" (Gore 2011) were shaped by the era's transnational solidarities between African American and Asian Indian political networks.²³² I trace how these four figures were educated into a shared transnational intellectual and political worldview – that is, colored cosmopolitanism. "Education" here refers to formal schooling, but also takes account of the central educational role of factors such as print media. In constructing this collective intellectual and political (i.e. educational) biography, I also attend to the ways in which these four individuals departed from normative expectations around gender, sexuality, and reproductivity – i.e., the *queerness* of Shridharani and his readers. Overall, the story I tell here shows how these four scholar-activists were shaped by the currents of colored cosmopolitanism, and how they in turn creatively rechanneled those currents to produce new whirlpools of political praxis. The argument presented through this story sets the stage for the task I undertake in Chapter III, which is a close reading – informed by historical and biographical context – of *War Without Violence* itself.

Beginnings: Born into a transnational colored world

Krishnalal Shridharani, Pauli Murray, Bayard Rustin, and James Farmer were born into a world of colored cosmopolitanism. From their earliest years, they were exposed to the transnational discourses of colored cosmopolitanism via the adults in their

²³² Gore 2011, p. 16

lives – parental figures, teachers, family friends – and via particular texts, including newspapers and journals, which were present in their environments. In this sense, it is not surprising that Shridharani’s writing was of interest to Farmer, Rustin, and Murray during the 1940s: these four figures had, as I discuss in this section, been educated into a shared set of ideas and ideals throughout their lives, beginning with their earliest moments. I turn now to a discussion of the childhood years of these future scholar-activists, pointing out the ways in which their experiences were shaped by specific historical events and currents, and particularly highlighting the ways in which they can be seen to have “grown up” with colored cosmopolitanism.

In November of 1910 the NAACP released the very first edition of its journal *The Crisis: A Record of the Darker Races*. Under the editorship of founder W.E.B. DuBois, *The Crisis* would quickly become one of the most widely read and highly respected publications within the expanding galaxy of African American journalism. The Black press in the U.S. was steadily advancing towards its “golden age,” and *The Crisis* swiftly established itself as one of the leading lights for that advance.²³³

November 1910 also saw the birth of Anna Pauline Murray. Nicknamed “Pauli,” Murray would grow up with the journal that was “born” at the same time as she was. The shared birthdate was important enough to Murray to warrant a mention in her autobiography: “I grew up with copies of *The Crisis* in our home, the NAACP

²³³ Jessie Carney Smith (1996) says that the “golden age of the Black press . . . began during World War I and ended in the early 1960s” (p. 240). Nikhil Pal Singh (2004) points out that “By the mid-1930s more than one third of Black families subscribed to the commercial Black press, which was now entering what some have called its ‘golden age’” (p. 69). Penny Von Eschen (1997) more specifically pinpoints “the years of World War II and its immediate aftermath” as the high point of this “golden age” (p. 8).

publication which I knew had produced its first issue in the year and month of my birth.”²³⁴

Circulating transnationally, *The Crisis* would, according to Slate (2012), play a major role in helping “bring Indians and African Americans into greater awareness of each other as fellow colored people”; the journal was “one of many ways that DuBois maintained a leading role in the construction of colored solidarity.”²³⁵ In September of 1911, for example – when Pauli Murray and *The Crisis* were both eight months old – the journal reprinted what its editor called “a delicious editorial” from the *New York Evening Post*, the newspaper owned by Oswald Garrison Villard (a grandson of William Lloyd Garrison, and a co-founder, with DuBois, of the NAACP).²³⁶ The editorial blasted British imperial policy in India and Egypt, mocked former U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt for his fanatical support of British imperialism, and warned that “To expect the Hindu or the Egyptian forever to bow obsequiously to the foreign Sahib or Sidi ... is to court folly and disaster.”²³⁷ That same month – September 1911 – Krishnalal Shridharani was born in Gujarat, the youngest of six children in a well-to-do lawyer’s household. Less than a year later, in March of 1912, Julia and Janifer Rustin – NAACP members and personal friends of Dr. Du Bois – welcomed their new grandson Bayard. Bayard Rustin, Krishnalal Shridharani, Pauli Murray, and *The Crisis* had all been born within a period of less than two years.

²³⁴ Pauli Murray: *The Autobiography of a Black Activist, Feminist, Lawyer, Priest, and Poet* (1987), pp. 30-31

²³⁵ Slate 2012, p. 75

²³⁶ *The Crisis*, Vol. 2, no. 5 (September 1911), pp. 190-191

²³⁷ Ibid.

I draw attention here to the contemporaneous “growing up” of Rustin, Murray, Shridharani and *The Crisis*, not to dwell on a simple historical coincidence, but to reiterate the usefulness of colored cosmopolitanism as a framework for understanding how and why Shridharani’s book was taken up with such enthusiasm by readers like Rustin and Murray. In this regard, *The Crisis* is important for the key role it played in promoting and expanding the connections between Black America and India. Further, the journal’s development during the 1910s, twenties, thirties and forties as a forum for intellectual and political exchange among “the darker races” serves as a metonym for the development of colored cosmopolitan thinking more generally during the same period. As Dohra Ahmad (2009) points out, journals like *The Crisis* and Lala Lajpat Rai’s *Young India* are striking examples of how “a periodical creates an imagined world and solidifies a reading community committed to actualizing that world.”²³⁸ Interlocking arrays of such journals and other publications both *created* and *were created by* transnational communities of colored cosmopolitanism, communities seeking to actualize an imagined world of *colored solidarity in the service of universal freedom*. The political and life paths of Murray, Rustin, and Shridharani were fundamentally shaped by the emergence and growth of such communities; hence, their paths converged in the forties precisely because they had already – from the beginning – been shaped within the same (transnational) intellectual network and political imaginary.

The early environments of Shridharani, Rustin, and Murray, like the trajectory of colored cosmopolitanism itself, were inflected by the events of the First World War. As

²³⁸ Dohra Ahmad, *Landscapes of Hope: Anti-Colonial Utopianism in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp.8-9

war loomed in Europe, and war propaganda proliferated in Britain and the U.S., the “colored peoples” living under white rule in India and America wondered what the call to arms meant for them. Should African Americans, denied freedom at home, heed the call of the white supremacist United States to fight (in segregated regiments) in a war to protect “freedom” in Europe? Should the subject peoples of South Asia make similar sacrifices to support the British war effort? Though opinion among colored leaders was divided on this issue, the U.S. and Britain ultimately derived crucial support (both voluntary and coerced) from their subject “darker races.” Many among the colored peoples believed that their self-sacrificing loyalty during the Anglo-American hour of need would result in some recognition of equality once the war ended. Such hopes proved misguided, as both Asian Indians and African Americans found themselves with less rather than more freedom after the war. While Indians’ hopes for greater self-determination were dashed and their civil liberties decimated, African Americans faced not only a continuation of (Northern and Southern) Jim Crow, but also a surge of lynch mob terror.

Young Pauli Murray, a precocious reader who from an early age was tasked with reading the newspapers to her blind old Grandfather Fitzgerald, would have had a definite awareness of all these events during her early years. Indeed, in one of her autobiographical writings, Murray remembers stammering over the words “ammunition,” “preparedness,” “Allies,” and “conscription” at the age of five or six, and “spelling out the difficult French names” as she read to her grandfather from the *Durham Morning Herald*. “It was tedious work,” Murray recalls, “but Grandfather always wanted to know

every military detail of the world war in France and I dared not skip anything.”²³⁹

Grandfather Fitzgerald, a Civil War veteran and former schoolteacher (who, like Du Bois, had been born and raised the North but had moved south to teach in the southern Negro schools), would certainly have wanted to be read to from *The Crisis* as well as the dailies. When, in 1918, Du Bois advised African Americans to “while this war lasts, forget our own special grievances” and to “close ranks” with “our own white fellow citizens and the allied nations that are fighting for democracy,”²⁴⁰ eight-year-old Pauli undoubtedly read these words, probably aloud to her exacting grandfather. She probably also read Du Bois’ optimistic prediction in *The Crisis* that:

Out of this war will rise, soon or late, an independent China; a self-governing India, an Egypt with representative institutions; an Africa for the Africans and not merely for business exploitation. Out of this war will rise, too, an American Negro, with a right to vote and a right to work and a right to live without insult.²⁴¹

Pauli may also have been aware of the cries of hypocrisy that greeted Du Bois’ order to “close ranks.” As a daily newspaper-reader, she might have noticed “the mauling he [Du Bois] received in the Black press and his struggles to defend himself.”²⁴² And she would have seen how Du Bois ultimately muted his enthusiasm for the war, which had

²³⁹ Pauli Murray, *Proud Shoes*, (New York : Harper & Row, 1978), pp. 5-6

²⁴⁰ *The Crisis*, Vol. 16, no. 3 (July 1918), p. 111

²⁴¹ Qtd. in Mark Ellis, “‘Closing Ranks’ and ‘Seeking Honors’: W.E.B. Du Bois in World War I” (*The Journal of American History*, Vol. 79, No. 1 (Jun., 1992), pp. 96-124), p. 100

²⁴² Ellis 1992, p. 96

not produced an expansion of “democracy” to include the darker races, but had instead led to increased violence against African Americans and other colored peoples.

When, at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference (Versailles), Japan proposed that the new League of Nations charter should include a statement on the equality of all people regardless of race, Pauli probably read about this proposal in the newspapers. She probably also read of how the proposal, despite having the approval of the majority of delegates at the conference, was blocked by the U.S. president, who – backed by Britain and Australia – declared that there were “too serious objections on the part of some of us” to include a statement on racial equality in the League covenant.²⁴³ Du Bois, in his critiques of these international developments, repeatedly referenced India as an example of the fraudulence of the Wilsonian rhetoric that had portrayed the “Great War” as a grand defense of “freedom” by the U.S. and its allies. “The sympathy of Black America,” Du Bois wrote in *The Crisis* in 1919, “must necessarily go out to colored Egypt and colored India.”²⁴⁴ In the same article, Du Bois added a phrase he would later repeat in *Darkwater*: “[W]e are all one, the Despised and Oppressed, the ‘niggers’ of England and America.”²⁴⁵ Nine-year-old Pauli Murray undoubtedly read these words when they appeared in *The Crisis*, the journal that had issued its first edition in the year and month of her birth.

Du Bois’ 1919 article on the oneness of the “Despised and Oppressed, the ‘niggers’ of England and America” contains an interesting reflection on the ethics and

²⁴³ Michael Krenn, *The Color of Empire: Race and American Foreign Relations* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2006), p. 65

²⁴⁴ *The Crisis*, Vol. 18, no. 2 (June 1919), p. 62

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

efficacy of violent and nonviolent methods of resistance. “We [African Americans],” wrote Du Bois, “fight the great fight of Peace – we agitate, we petition, we plead, we argue.”²⁴⁶ The use of such methods constitutes “a long, slow, humiliating path,” Du Bois said, but African Americans had no alternative: “War, Force, Revolution are impossible” for American Negroes, as such measures would lead to bloody casualties “so vast and uncounted that they must bring to pause the wildest” revolutionary.²⁴⁷ “Yet,” Du Bois then added, “who can judge others? Who sitting in America can say that Revolution is never right on the Ganges or the Nile?”²⁴⁸ What is interesting about this passage is that Du Bois, while refusing to discount the possibility of armed insurrection against white supremacy in India or Egypt, states that African Americans must adhere to nonviolent methods (agitation, petition, argument) – not because Black people have some moral obligation to “love” their oppressors, but because warlike methods in the U.S. would result in a wholesale slaughter of a minoritized population by a violent white majority.²⁴⁹

In this same edition of *The Crisis* – June 1919 – Du Bois offered a provisional outline of “A History of the Black Man in the Great War.”²⁵⁰ After introducing his essay as “a first attempt at the story of the Hell which war in the fateful years of 1914-1919 meant to Black Folk, and particularly to American Negroes,” Du Bois went on to note that while war, in general, necessarily leads to disillusionment among the soldiers who have to face the “frank truth of murder, maiming and hatred,” American Negro troops had faced a

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ *The Crisis*, Vol 18, no. 2 (June 1919), p. 63

“double disillusion” – for along with the all the horrors of combat had come “the flat, frank realization that however high the ideals of America or however noble her tasks, her great duty as conceived by an astounding number of able men, brave and good, as well as of other sorts of men, is to hate ‘niggers.’”²⁵¹ Again, young Pauli Murray would probably have read these words in *The Crisis*.

Bayard Rustin, being raised in the Pennsylvania home of his grandparents, must also have been aware of these developments, if only vaguely. Julia and Jannifer Rustin received frequent visits from Black public intellectuals – James Weldon Johnson, Mary McLeod Bethune, and Du Bois himself, among others. Julia Rustin, the dominant figure in young Bayard’s life, had been raised as a Quaker and remained a pacifist. Julia was the “chief moral and religious influence” on the large household, within which Bayard was the doted-upon baby of the family and his grandmother’s special favorite.²⁵² As a pacifist, Julia certainly would not have failed to point out that African Americans’ sacrifices in the war had not led to a reduction in white-supremacist violence, and that white supremacy had been strengthened rather than weakened in the wake of the allied victory in the so-called “war for democracy.”

Besides being born within the same two-year period, Pauli Murray and Bayard Rustin shared something else in common with each other – and, as we will see, with Krishnalal Shridharani: All three, for various reasons, were raised largely without biological fathers. Rustin’s grandfather Janifer played the role of father to Bayard. His

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Anderson 1997, p. 23

grandmother Julia was his mother figure, while his biological mother, Florence Rustin, was more like an older sister. As for Pauli, her father died in a hospital in Maryland – but he did not die of the condition for which he had been hospitalized; rather, he was brutally murdered by a white hospital guard, who reportedly presaged the attack with a vow to “get that nigger.”²⁵³ In an interview later in life, Murray connected the murder of her father to the broader U.S. context of lynching: “The same had happened to me that happened to any nameless poor child in the swamps of Mississippi.”²⁵⁴ She added that the knowledge of her father’s murder was something that led her “to seek an alternative ... to violence” in her personal life and in her political engagements.²⁵⁵

Pauli’s mother died young as well, and Pauli was raised by her schoolteacher aunts, in a multigenerational household that also included her elderly grandparents. “My aunts,” she would later recall, “were ‘race women’ of their time. They took pride in every achievement of ‘the race’ and agonized over every lynching, every Black boy convicted and ‘sent to the roads,’ every insult to ‘the race.’ I would hear: ‘The race is moving forward!’ ‘You simply can’t keep the race down!’ ‘The race of colored people is going to show the world yet!’”²⁵⁶

Being “sent to the roads,” in the language of Pauli Murray’s North Carolina childhood, meant being sentenced to a chain gang. During the early decades of the twentieth century, the state of North Carolina constructed its modern highway system by using the coerced labor of African American men and boys convicted of misdemeanor

²⁵³ Pauli Murray, 1975 interview, Pauli Murray Papers, Box 1, Folder 8, MC 412.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ *Pauli Murray: The Autobiography of a Black Activist, Feminist, Lawyer, and Poet*, p. 30

“crimes” such as loitering. These captives, chained together while working on the highways, were housed and hauled from one worksite to the next in portable cages. Individuals who were “sent to the roads” in the South (with the support of the U.S. federal government via funding for highways to be built using convict labor) would experience, in the words of Dennis Childs (2009), “a banality of terror that blurred the line between life and death and offered a dubious replay of coerced performance spectacles that took place on the slave ship, the coffle, and plantation.”²⁵⁷ As one survivor recalled, “After 24 hours there we prayed for death. . . . If we did not work fast enough we were whipped cruelly. [And] after beating us all week [the guard captain] and his guards would come and make us sing and dance for them.”²⁵⁸

The average life expectancy for those working on the chain gangs was no more than five years. As a quote in *The Crisis* put it, “[A] chain gang does not mean reformation, it means death.”²⁵⁹ Thus, when Pauli’s aunts spoke of Black youth “convicted and ‘sent to the roads,’” they were often referring to the horrifying fact of young boys receiving death notices. Little did they know that a boy the same age as Pauli, growing up in Pennsylvania, would one day be willingly sentenced to thirty days on a chain gang, after traveling to North Carolina in order to deliberately violate the state’s Jim Crow laws. That individual, of course, was Bayard Rustin, who – guided by *War Without Violence*, among other influences – would not only play a role in

²⁵⁷ Dennis Childs, “‘You Ain’t Seen Nothin’ Yet’: Beloved, the American Chain Gang, and the Middle Passage Remix” (*American Quarterly*, Volume 61, Number 2, June 2009, pp. 271-297), p. 274

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ *The Crisis*, Vol. 44, no. 10 (October 1937), p. 298

combatting legalized Jim Crow, but would also help to end North Carolina's use of chain gang labor.

In 1920, the year Du Bois published his famous *Darkwater: Voices from Within the Veil*, Indian anticolonial activists initiated the nationwide noncooperation movement. Nonviolent protesters “walked out of schools and government jobs and boycotted public transportation, English-made clothing, and courts of law.”²⁶⁰ As Nico Slate notes, the African American press “covered the noncooperation movement closely, at times debating the applicability of Gandhian nonviolence to the struggle against American racism.”²⁶¹

Pauli Murray, age ten, had a job selling newspapers that year. As she would later recall, this work took her to “all the Negro family homes around the town of Durham, North Carolina – factory workers, people who lived in the bottom, particularly what we would now call the slums.”²⁶² The families who lived in the “little shacks” would “put up rotogravure sections ... brown sepia sections of the Sunday newspapers, they would paper the walls with rotogravure sections.”²⁶³ Pauli, in other words, was surrounded by newsprint – reading it at home, carrying it from place to place, even seeing it on the walls of the houses and “shacks” she visited. As the Harlem Renaissance flowered and the “New Negro Movement” was born, Pauli saw, touched, and carried the names of these movements’ early luminaries from house to house, rolled or folded into newspaper

²⁶⁰ Slate 2012, p. 42

²⁶¹ Ibid.

²⁶² 1975 interview with Pauli Murray, Pauli Murray Papers, Box 1, Folder 8, MC 412.

²⁶³ Ibid.

packets together with other national and international stories: the Versailles Treaty, the first meeting of the League of Nations, the Indian noncooperation movement.

1920 was also the year that James Leonard Farmer, Jr., was born in Marshall, Texas. His mother was a former schoolteacher, his father the first African American PhD to live in the state of Texas. Professor Farmer, a son of former slaves from South Carolina, taught at Wiley College, a private African American university. “J. Leonard” junior (as he was called during his youth), though ten years younger than the Murray-Rustin-Shridharani generation, would quickly become an intellectual peer to many people much older than himself. Regarded as a child prodigy, he would start college at fourteen, and would earn two separate bachelor’s degrees from two separate institutions by the age of twenty-one. Like Murray and Rustin, Farmer would grow up experiencing the intellectual influence of Du Bois. As a teenager he would work to establish an NAACP chapter at Wiley College. His autobiography recounts a memory of seeing Du Bois at a train station in 1941: Farmer, a recent Howard graduate, instantly recognizing the older man and rushing through a crowd to get to him, calling enthusiastically, “Dr. Du Bois!” And Du Bois, obviously not knowing who this young man was, asking haughtily, “Do I know you?”²⁶⁴ Farmer would recall this encounter as an embarrassing moment, but a moment in which he also vowed that Du Bois *would* come to know who he was – and that did happen, as Farmer’s name became linked with a growing satyagraha movement against Jim Crow. By the mid-1940s, Farmer’s writings were being published in *The Crisis*.

²⁶⁴ James Farmer, *Lay Bare the Heart*, p. 78

As the Indian noncooperation movement continued into 1921, the African American press maintained its support for Indian independence, with Black observers expressing a wide range of opinions on Gandhi's leadership of the movement. Some writers, while praising Indian activists for defying British rule, wondered whether nonviolent civil disobedience would really succeed in the face of imperial power. Others thought satyagraha would succeed in India, but did not consider such methods applicable to the racial situation in the U.S. Other writers did think satyagraha could be effective against American Jim Crow. In December of 1921, a columnist for the *Chicago Defender* suggested that African Americans take up some of the methods being used in India, and added, "We believe that some empty Jim Crow cars will some day worry our street car magnates in Southern cities when we get around to walking rather than suffer insult and injury to our wives and children."²⁶⁵ Du Bois, writing in *The Brownies' Book*, a magazine for African American children, lauded the noncooperation movement. "In India," Du Bois told his young readers, "several hundred millions of brown people are much incensed at the injustice of English rule."²⁶⁶ As Nico Slate points out, Du Bois' description of the movement did not center the figure of Gandhi; Du Bois "emphasized the mass mobilization and the color dynamics of the Indian struggle more than its leadership. . . . Only at the end of a dense paragraph on the struggle of the Indian masses did Du Bois add, 'Their leader is named Gandhi.'"²⁶⁷

²⁶⁵ Qtd. In Slate 2012, p. 45

²⁶⁶ Qtd. in Slate 2012, p. 43

²⁶⁷ Slate 2012, p. 43

Bayard Rustin, nine years old by this time, perhaps read Du Bois' article in *The Brownies' Book*. Bayard attended the all-Black Gay Street Elementary School in his Pennsylvania town of West Chester. Much later in life, Rustin would remember the profound influence of some of the teachers at Gay Street – particularly Maria Brock, the teacher of English and elocution. Biographer Jervis Anderson writes that Brock “invited literary luminaries of the Harlem Renaissance movement” to speak to her classes. One such speaker was Arthur Huff Faucet – whose sister, the writer Jessie Faucet, worked with Du Bois on *The Crisis* and also served as co-editor of *The Brownies' Book*.²⁶⁸

When, in 1921, *Young India* published an “Open Letter from Gandhi” to “Every Englishman in India,” *The Crisis* reprinted the message.²⁶⁹ Gandhi's letter, which eleven-year-old Pauli undoubtedly read in the NAACP journal, reminded the everyday Englishman of India's support for Britain during the war, and of the brutal treatment Britain had meted out to Indians in return. Making much of his own early loyalty to the British Empire, Gandhi noted that the “treachery” of India's British rulers had “completely shattered my faith in the good intentions of the Government and the [English] nation which is supporting it.”²⁷⁰ This narrative of loyalty and treachery would have resonated with many readers of *The Crisis*, given the “double disillusion” of World War I. The letter went on to decry the “[e]xploitation of India's resources for the benefit of Great Britain,” the “ever increasing military expenditure” and “extravagant” spending on bureaucracy “in utter disregard of India's poverty,” the imperial enactment of

²⁶⁸ Anderson 1997, p.25

²⁶⁹ *The Crisis*, Vol. 22, no. 4 (August 1921), p. 170

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

“progressively repressive legislation in order to suppress an ever-growing agitation seeking to give expression to a nation’s agony,” and the “degrading treatment of Indians residing in [British] dominions.”²⁷¹ Interestingly, Gandhi also condemned the British policy of “disarmament and consequent emasculation of a whole nation lest an armed nation might imperil the handful of you [white people] living in our midst.”²⁷² This last point – the objection to disarmament – seems contradictory, given Gandhi’s vaunted moral commitment to nonviolence. Of course, he was not objecting to disarmament *as such*, but to selective disarmament *as a function of white supremacy*: whites were armed, Indians could not be armed. Nevertheless, his objection to disarmament (“and consequent emasculation”) may have surprised some readers of *The Crisis*. In fact, much of the broader nationalist objection to the disarmament of Indians rhetorically centered the security of rural and village people who needed arms to protect their villages from wild animals – but Gandhi’s letter did not mention wild animals; instead, he emphasized the fact that Indians could not engage in armed confrontation with their British rulers. “You know we are powerless to [gain independence via force],” Gandhi tells his imagined English readers, “for you have ensured our incapacity to fight in an open and honorable battle. Bravery on the battlefield is thus impossible for us. Bravery of the soul still remains open to us.”²⁷³ For some readers of *The Crisis*, this particular framing of nonviolent resistance may have recalled Du Bois’ 1919 discussion of the “great fight of

²⁷¹ Ibid.

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ Ibid.

Peace” being waged by African American activists, for whom “War, Force, Revolution are impossible.”

In 1922 James Weldon Johnson, then serving as secretary of the NAACP, wrote in an editorial in *The New York Age*: “If non-cooperation brings the British to their knees in India, there is no reason why it should not bring the white man to his knees in the South.”²⁷⁴ Du Bois wrote enthusiastically that satyagraha “kills without striking its adversary.”²⁷⁵ Meanwhile, a United States intelligence official ominously warned the director of the office of Naval Intelligence that “The present Hindu revolutionary movement has definite connections with the Negro agitation in America.”²⁷⁶

By this time, young Pauli Murray and Bayard Rustin were certainly well aware of the Indian non-cooperation movement, thanks to the movement’s extensive and sympathetic coverage by the African American press. What Pauli and Bayard could not have known at the time was the dramatic twist these political events had given to the personal life of one Gujarati child their age, namely Krishnalal Shridharani.

Nationalist schooling and transnational connections

Shridharani’s early immersion in an explicitly and intentionally transnational environment, and his educational contact with African American intellectual and political currents, came as a result of his mother Laheriben’s decision to send him to one of the anticolonial schools formed during the Indian independence movement. In this section I

²⁷⁴ Qtd. In Slate 2012, p. 45

²⁷⁵ Qtd. In Murali Balaji, *The Professor and the Pupil: The Politics and Friendship of W.E.B. Du Bois and Paul Robeson* (New York: Nation Books, 2007), p. 44

²⁷⁶ Qtd. In Slate 2012, p. 50. Although, as Slate notes, the details of this letter were “a jumble of falsities” (and misspelled names), the letter exemplifies U.S. government fears of an alliance between Asian Indians and African Americans.

discuss Shridharani's education during these years, with particular attention to how this education would have brought him into contact with some of the same ideas and influences that young people like Bayard Rustin and Pauli Murray were simultaneously experiencing in the U.S.

In 1921, Shridharani's widowed mother Laheriben undertook a long pilgrimage to pray at four sacred shrines. As Shridharani would later write, "What is so significant about the pilgrimage to the four sacred Hindu shrines is that between these four points almost the entire kite-like shape of India is spanned, from top to bottom and across the wings."²⁷⁷ It is not clear exactly what happened on this long pilgrimage, except that Laheriben came back transformed by a "nationalist fervor," having "indeed received the vision of All-India" – but having simultaneously learned, along with "thousands of [other] mothers and fathers," that they "lived on a beautiful kite that was not floating."²⁷⁸ In order to allow the kite of India to fly free of British rule, the mothers and fathers of the country were told, they had to reject British-controlled education; and so Laheriben announced: "You shall go to a nationalist school, Krishnalal."²⁷⁹

Laheriben chose the experimental nationalist school Dakshinamurti, partly because it was close enough so that the eleven-year-old Krishnalal could come home on weekends. The school "became a second home" for the young boy.²⁸⁰ Shridharani's description of Dakshinamurti, in his autobiographical *My India, My America*, epitomizes

²⁷⁷ Krishnalal Shridharani, *My India, My America* (New York: Duell, Sloan, and Pearce, 1941), p. 23

²⁷⁸ *My India, My America*, pp. 24-25

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 25

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

the cosmopolitan and transnational character of the Indian anticolonial education movement during the 1920s and 1930s:

The school had joined forces with Mahatma Gandhi's 'national education,' and in more than one respect it represented a new pedagogical departure; it was very nearly a center of educational, social, and political revolution. The first children's school in India to adopt the Montessori method was one of Dakshinamurti's family of institutions; the first high school to adopt the Dalton plan was the heart of this educational enterprise; the first Indian disciples of Freud and Jung and Adler were on the school's faculty; and the institution was also one of the very few coeducational schools in India at that time. Moreover, it had a teachers' training division which became the boast of Gujarat.²⁸¹

In *War Without Violence*, Shridharani writes of Dakshinamurti just one sentence: "There I thrived for seven years, reading nationalist literature and gritting my teeth with the resolve that 'something must be done.'"²⁸² But his description in *My India, My America* makes it clear that Dakshinamurti provided young Krishnalal with educational opportunities far beyond the reading of nationalist literature and gritting of the teeth. "I could draw and paint and take lessons from celebrated artists," he writes – a new experience for a student whose penchant for drawing, painting, and poetry had previously been seen as a waste of time.²⁸³ The well-known artist Somalal Shah, who taught

²⁸¹ *My India, My America*, pp. 25-26

²⁸² Krishnalal Shridharani, *War Without Violence* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1939), p. xxxiii

²⁸³ *My India, My America*, p. 26

drawing and painting at Dakshinamurti, “became a personal friend” and later illustrated many of Shridharani’s books.²⁸⁴

It was at Dakshinamurti that Shridharani found encouragement in the pursuit of “serious creative writing.”²⁸⁵ At the age of twelve, he composed a long ballad which was “sung and acted in the annual dramatic production of the school.”²⁸⁶ His Gujarati composition teacher, a moderately well-known regional poet, sent another of Krishnalal’s poems to the literary magazine *Kumar*, which published the work. “The thrill I got out of its publication,” Shridharani would later recall, “cannot be described. I was encouraged to go on writing. A rain of my sonnets, ballads, and lyrics fell on the literary magazines of the Province of Gujarat”²⁸⁷ As he continued learning and writing, Shridharani’s work attracted increasing attention in Gujarati literary circles. By the time he sailed for New York for graduate study in 1934, he had become recognized as an established writer of fiction, poetry, and plays in Gujarati.

Shridharani’s education at Dakshinamurti, though supported by his mother, brought him into conflict with the more conservative members of his extended family. Within the first couple of years of his nationalist schooling, Shridharani found himself “steadily drifting away from the old ways, from religious traditions and caste conventions”²⁸⁸ He “fraternized with two untouchable friends,” something his family barely tolerated.²⁸⁹ “I began to avoid my family,” Shridharani later wrote in *My India, My*

²⁸⁴ *My India, My America*, p. 26

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 29

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁸ *My India, My America*, p. 27

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 28

America, “and I no longer attended caste dinners, nor did I pay respect to the caste’s numerous social observances.”²⁹⁰ Among what his conservative relatives referred to as the “advanced and ruinous ideas” propagated at the school was the nationalist view that “early betrothal and child marriage were a curse of Hinduism.”²⁹¹ In his mid-teens, Shridharani was “the only eligible bachelor left in a family where the luxury of bachelorhood was unknown.”²⁹² He had, as he later wrote, “come to believe by that time that to serve Mother India one must remain free of all entanglements.”²⁹³ He protested against the early marriage of any member of the family, refusing to attend such weddings. “I wanted to be a good Hindu, always,” he later wrote, “but of the year 1925 A.D., not 1925 B.C.”²⁹⁴ His determination to remain single brought him into repeated conflict with “the conservatives among our kinsmen,” who “continuously conspired to betroth me to somebody’s innocent daughter.”²⁹⁵ In one scene worthy of the Hindi cinema that would flourish after India’s independence, he was called home in order to supposedly attend his brother’s birthday celebration – only to find, upon arriving at the event, that it was actually a wedding celebration: *his* wedding celebration, with the bride and her family ready and waiting for the ceremony. “With the instincts fostered by my rebel school,” Shridharani later wrote, “I realized that nothing short of a scene could save me this time. It is not pleasant to dwell on the encounter I had with my intended father-in-law.”²⁹⁶ Even after this disaster, the relatives “persisted and made one final attempt to marry me

²⁹⁰ *My India, My America*, p. 27

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 26

²⁹² *Ibid.*

²⁹³ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁴ *My India, My America*, p. 27

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 26

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 26-27

off, this time to a millionaire's daughter."²⁹⁷ When this plan fell through, they gave him us as a "hopeless case."²⁹⁸

After his mother died, Krishnalal's contact with the extended family dropped off dramatically. Increasingly, Dakshinamurti became his home. He preferred to stay at school even during vacations, when, rather than spend time with his biological family, he became a welcome guest in the headmaster's home. Also during this time, Shridharani came "more and more under the influence of Swami Rao, a magnificent specimen of Sikh manhood and a man of mystery."²⁹⁹ Swami Rao, writes Shridharani, "lit for me a lamp of devotion to India" – but, although he was a favorite teacher, none of the students knew his true identity.³⁰⁰ Years later, Shridharani would learn that the teacher calling himself Swami Rao was actually Sardar Prithvisingh, "a great hero of India's violent revolution, with a price on his head."³⁰¹ Sardar Prithvisingh had been a member of the revolutionary Ghadar Party, founded largely by Sikhs on the U.S. west coast and in Canada. The price on Prithvisingh's head was a result of his participation in a transnational conspiracy to carry out a violent overthrow of British rule in India during the First World War.³⁰²

Though Shridharani writes in his autobiography of "reading nationalist literature" during his seven years at Dakshinamurti, he does not specify any titles, so we can only speculate as to which specific books, journals, and newspapers he might have encountered there. Certainly he must have read some writings by the famed nationalist

²⁹⁷ *My India, My America*, p. 27

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁹ *My India, My America*, p. 28

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*

³⁰² *My India, My America*, pp. 28-29

Lala Lajpat Rai, the “Lion of Punjab.” Did the young Krishnalal perhaps read Rai’s *The United States of America: A Hindu’s Views and a Study*? If so, he would have learned of the work of numerous African American intellectuals, particularly Dean Kelly Miller of Howard University, and of course Du Bois. Rai reprinted essays from these thinkers in his book, which also included sections on various African American educational institutions and projects, and on organizations such as the NAACP. Did the students at Dakshinamurti read Rai’s *Unhappy India*, written as a response to Katherine Mayo’s racist *Mother India*? In formulating this critique, Rai had been aided by his friend Dr. Du Bois, who kept Rai updated on the U.S. racial climate and sent him copies of *The Crisis*. Students reading *Unhappy India* would also have become familiar with Du Bois and Miller. Rai’s work called for the abolition of both caste and racial hierarchies, and compared U.S. treatment of African Americans both to upper-caste Indians’ oppression of Dalits and to British colonization of India as a whole, such that his readers were prompted to think in complex ways about the constructions of race, caste, and colonialism. Meanwhile, African American writers contributed letters and articles to numerous Indian nationalist publications; in all likelihood, Shridharani read some of these pieces during his years of nationalist schooling.

If the students at Dakshinamurti were reading Gandhi’s journal *Young India*, they would have seen a 1924 telegram from Marcus Garvey to Gandhi, published by the latter: “The Negroes of the world through us send you greetings for [*sic*] fight for freedom of your people and country.”³⁰³ Garvey signed this telegram in his capacity as “chairman of

³⁰³ Qtd. in Slate 2012, p. 51

the Fourth annual convention of Negro peoples of the world.”³⁰⁴ Like Du Bois and the NAACP, Marcus Garvey and his United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) closely followed events in India. Garvey met with various prominent Indian independence activists, including Lala Lajpat Rai, and invited various Indian intellectuals to speak at the UNIA’s Liberty Hall in New York.

Perhaps Krishnalal and the other students were also reading the Hindi magazine *Chand*, edited by the prolific writer Benarasidas Chaturvedi. If so, they might have read this message from Du Bois “To the People of India,” published in 1925:

Twelve million Americans of Negro descent, grandchildren and great grandchildren of Africans, forcibly stolen and brought to America, are fighting here in the midst of the United States a spiritual battle for freedom, citizenship and the right to be themselves both in color of skin and manner of thought. This is the same terrible battle of the color bar which our brothers in India are fighting. We stretch out, therefore, hands of fellowship and understanding across the world and ask for your sympathy in our difficulties just as you in your strife for a new country and a new freedom have the good wishes of every Negro in America.³⁰⁵

This letter to the readers of *Chand* had come at the invitation of Chaturvedi, who had read *The Crisis* and believed that Du Bois’ message of unity “should reach all coloured peoples.”³⁰⁶

One way or another, Du Bois would undoubtedly have been a familiar figure to Krishnalal and his classmates. As Chaturvedi wrote to Du Bois in 1924, “Your name is

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

³⁰⁵ Qtd. In Slate 2012, p. 74

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

already known to a very large number of educated Indians.”³⁰⁷ Anticolonial activists in India were avidly engaging with *The Crisis*, reading the most recent numbers they could get their hands on and then passing them along to their friends. Articles from the NAACP journal were discussed in various Indian periodicals. In 1925, for example, *The Servant of India* discussed an article written by Horace Mann Bond, the well-known African American educational theorist, for *The Crisis*. Applying Bond’s discussion of African American race consciousness to an analysis of Indian nationalism, *The Servant of India* asserted that both of these phenomena could be important tools for liberation, but should not be allowed to degenerate into chauvinism. The writer for *The Servant of India* applauds Bond’s nuanced approach to the dual values of Negro racial consciousness and universal humanism, and suggests that Indians should learn from Bond’s approach:

The writer [Bond] admits that, as a defense mechanism, the American Negro is developing a race-consciousness (in this country we call it Nationalism!) – “which is of utility in destroying the submissive and dependent attitude hitherto assumed.” But, he continues – and how one wishes his words would find an echo in the hearts of our people! – “too strong a race-consciousness may be as disastrous as none at all. What we should value as more enduring and important than any race-consciousness is a realization of ourselves as simply and wholly human.”³⁰⁸

Indian scholars, educators and activists repeatedly wrote to Du Bois requesting additional copies and renewed subscriptions to *The Crisis*, which they often received free of charge. Nationalist students became one of the journal’s major audiences in India. N.A. Khan, secretary-general of the Bureau of Information in the Punjab, wrote to Du Bois in 1927

³⁰⁷ Horne 2008, pp.83-84. (Note that Chaturvedi’s name is spelled differently here, but he is the same person.)

³⁰⁸ Qtd. In Slate 2012, p. 53

that “so many students and other interested persons are asking us for *The Crisis* that once more we are compelled to request you earnestly for the gratis supply of your esteemed and valuable monthly.”³⁰⁹

In short, through his nationalist education at Dakshinamurti, Shridharani would certainly have developed some awareness of African American histories and struggles. He also would have known of the political relationships between Indian and African American leaders, and the connections they were making between their respective (incommensurate yet intimately linked) freedom struggles. Hence, we can historically understand Shridharani’s education during his preteen and teenaged years at Dakshinamurti as sowing the initial seeds of what would later become a fruitful series of engagements with African American scholars and activists.

The Rashtriya Vidyapith: Gandhi and “just the opposite”

The year 1928 marked an important moment in the trajectory of colored cosmopolitanism, as well as in the educational paths of Shridharani, Pauli Murray, and Bayard Rustin.

Lala Lajpat Rai died following a police beating in 1928. Upon his death, *The Crisis* published an elegiac article declaring Rai a “martyr to British intolerance” and proclaiming that “every member of the 800,000,000 darker peoples of the world should stand with bowed heads in memory of Lajpat Rai, the great leader of India, who died of

³⁰⁹ Qtd. in Horne 2012, p.83

English violence because he dared persist in his fight for freedom.”³¹⁰ Murray and Rustin would certainly have seen this article in *The Crisis*, while Shridharani would have read Du Bois’ similarly-written piece in the special memorial edition of Rai’s newspaper *The People*. Remembering Lajpat Rai’s “restraint and sweet temper,” Du Bois told Indian readers that “When a man of his sort can be called a Revolutionist and beaten to death by a great civilized government, then indeed revolution becomes a duty of all right thinking men.” He further added that “the people of India, like the American Negroes, are demanding today things, not in the least revolutionary, but things which every civilized white man has so long taken for granted.”³¹¹

1928 was also the year Du Bois’ *Dark Princess* was published. The novel was, as Du Bois put it, a “romance with a message.”³¹² In it the author – who would, towards the end of his life, describe it as his “favorite” of all his works³¹³ – constructs a love story between an Indian woman and an African American man as a metaphor for the transnational solidarities he had been attempting to build through his own political work. Did Shridharani, a young man with a distinct love of literature and a specific interest in English language works (he would later complete a degree in English literature at Viswa Bharati) happen to read this novel? There is no record as to whether or not Shridharani encountered this work, or of what his response to it might have been. It is interesting, however, to think about some of the correspondences between Du Bois’ imaginary characters and the real historical figure that Shridharani became. Michael Towns, the

³¹⁰ Qtd. in Horne 2012, p. 78

³¹¹ Ibid.

³¹² Qtd. in Lwin 2011, p. 177

³¹³ Qtd. in Lwin 2011, p. 181

main character of Du Bois' novel, is – as Monica Miller (2009) insightfully points out – a “diasporic race man” and a “racialized dandy.”³¹⁴ As I discuss in greater detail later, Shridharani would become both of these things during his time in New York.

Pauli Murray began her university education in 1928, enrolling at Hunter College in New York City. During part of her student years she lived at the Harlem YWCA, which “offered an entrée into the rich political, social, and cultural life of Black Manhattan.”³¹⁵ As Rosalind Rosenberg (2017) writes,

Every important politician, civil rights leader, minister, and writer made an appearance. Langston Hughes and Countee Cullen read their poetry, served as judges of an essay contest, and encouraged Pauli's early writing efforts. [Murray's family's] idol, W.E.B. Du Bois, addressed her. Paul Robeson filled the YWCA's auditorium with his splendid basso voice. A. Philip Randolph ... instructed her about the need for a trade union movement. The venerable clubwomen Mary Church Terrell and Mary McLeod Bethune inspired her with their lectures on the contributions of black women in America.³¹⁶

Over the years, Murray would work closely with many of these legendary activists, artists, and intellectuals, particularly with A. Philip Randolph and his March on Washington Movement. Living in Harlem also brought Pauli into personal contact with multiple anticolonial activists from India, including Shridharani. She would devote significant time to supporting the Indian independence movement during these years, and would consistently link her support for Indian anticolonialism with her opposition to American Jim Crow. In a 1942 article titled “Harlem and India,” for example, she declared India an “acid test of good faith and the truth of the war aims which the United

³¹⁴ Miller 2009, p. 11, p. 137

³¹⁵ Rosenberg 2017, p. 36

³¹⁶ Ibid.

Nations profess,” and added that “a dozen Harlems throughout the United States have their eyes fixed on India, where they seek some light concerning the future of the Colored peoples.”³¹⁷

Bayard Rustin would remember 1928 as the year of his first arrest. He was arrested, as he later put it, “merely for distributing leaflets on behalf of Al Smith’s candidacy for President in a climate of anti-Catholic hysteria.”³¹⁸ Over the next several decades, he would be arrested dozens more times for his activism on behalf of civil and human rights. He would move to New York in the 1930s and enter into the same circles in which Pauli Murray was working. He would sing in one of Paul Robeson’s musicals, socialize with Harlem Renaissance poets, and become a youth organizer for the March on Washington Movement. Like Murray, he would work with multiple Indian independence activists during this era, including the “big, cigar-smoking” Shridharani, whom Rustin later remembered as “a great guy. I liked him.”³¹⁹

It was also in 1928 – the year of Lajpat Rai’s killing, and the year of *Dark Princess* – that Shridharani graduated from the anticolonial school Dakshinamurti. Turning down an offer from an uncle to send him to England to study law in order to get job in a “Government institution,” he joined Gandhi’s Rashtriya Vidyapith (“National University”) at Ahmedabad.³²⁰ Living and studying at Gandhi’s institution, he quickly

³¹⁷ Qtd. in Solnit 2012, p. 40

³¹⁸ “Bayard Rustin’s Statement on Proposed Amendments to Law Banning Discrimination on the Basis of Sexual Orientation” (April 17, 1986). In Podair, Jerald. *Bayard Rustin, American Dreamer*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009.

³¹⁹ “TB Second interview with Bayard Rustin, Tuesday Feb 21, 1984, NYC.” 5047. BRANCH, TAYLOR. Series 4, Subject Files. Folder 852. Taylor Branch papers, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

³²⁰ *My India, My America*, p. 30

became a favorite student, just as he had at Dakshinamurthi. He soon found, however, that the Rashtriya Vidyapith lacked the creative atmosphere of Dakshinamurthi.

“Although some of India’s best scholars had gathered at Gandhi’s university,” he later recalled, “I did not particularly enjoy attending the classes which I found dull and unduly serious as we pondered the fate of India.”³²¹ Bored with the content of the coursework, Shridharani was more interested in the personal presence of Gandhi. He mentions being particularly moved by the Mahatma’s “discourses on ‘The Sermon on the Mount.’”³²²

The study of Matthew 5-7 clearly represents another connection between Shridharani and his African American peers. The young Bayard Rustin, who had embraced his grandmother’s Quaker ideas and in fact formally became a Quaker around this time, placed “great emphasis in the Sermon on the Mount” as a central expression of his faith. Pauli Murray, who would later become an Episcopal priest (as well as a teacher and an attorney) had certainly studied Matthew 5-7 growing up. And James Famer, son of a PhD theologian, would also have been familiar with the famous Sermon on the Mount, though he was only eight years old in 1928. Importantly, the Sermon on the Mount is not merely an admonition to “turn the other cheek,” though this phrase does appear in the text. Within the context of antiracist and anticolonial movements, the Sermon was understood within the framework of what would later come to be known as the Social Gospel; the focus was on the Sermon’s prophetic message of liberation of the oppressed.

³²¹ *My India, My America*, p. 31

³²² *My India, My America*, pp. 31-32

Multiple connections with African American thought were present at the Rashtriya Vidyapith. As Slate (2012) extensively demonstrates, Gandhi was deeply influenced by multiple African American thinkers, and corresponded with various well-known figures, including W.E.B. Du Bois. In 1929, while Shridharani was a student at the Rashtriya Vidyapith, Du Bois wrote to Gandhi asking for “a message from you to these twelve million people who are the grandchildren of slaves,” adding, “I know you are busy with your own problems, but the race and color problems are world-wide, and we need your help here.”³²³ Gandhi, writing from Sabarmati Ashram, responded with a “little love message” that Du Bois then published in *The Crisis*.³²⁴ “Let not the 12 million Negroes,” Gandhi’s message declared, “be ashamed of the fact that they are the grand children of the slaves. There is no dishonour in being slaves. There is dishonour in being slave masters.”³²⁵ Together with Gandhi’s note, Du Bois offered “his own summary of the Mahatma and his message.”³²⁶ As Du Bois wrote, “Agitation, nonviolence, refusal to cooperate with the oppressor, became Gandhi’s watchword and with it he is leading all India to freedom. Here and today he stretches out his hand in fellowship to his colored friends of the West.”³²⁷

Slate also points out that Gandhi’s evolving “understanding of race and caste” was indebted to his contact with African American thinkers, including his “over forty years of interest in the work of Booker T. Washington.”³²⁸ In a 1926 article on “race

³²³ Qtd. in Slate 2012, p. 98

³²⁴ Qtd. in Slate 2012, p. 98

³²⁵ Ibid.

³²⁶ Qtd. in Slate 2012, p. 98

³²⁷ Ibid.

³²⁸ Slate 2012, p. 120

arrogance,” Gandhi lambasted “the injustice of America in the name of and for the sake of maintaining white superiority,” and simultaneously reminded his readers that “Our [Indian] treatment of the so-called untouchables is not better than that of coloured people by the white man.”³²⁹ The young Shridharani, spending many hours sitting on the floor of Sabarmati Ashram listening to the Mahatma’s conversations and lectures, would certainly have heard his teacher talk about the insights he was gaining from his engagements with African American intellectual, political, and spiritual traditions.

“I used to go to Gandhi’s ashrama almost every evening to attend prayers,” Shridharani recalls of his time at the Rashtriya Vidyapith, “and to meet visitors of whom there was an unending procession. These busy precincts were in those days the real headquarters of the nationalist movement, and I had the exciting opportunity of observing the inner circle at close range.”³³⁰ The young Krishnalal was thus present for the discussions leading up to Gandhi’s 1930 call for a second mass civil disobedience campaign. In January of that year, when Shridharani was seventeen and in his second year at the Rashtriya Vidyapith, the Indian National Congress issued its *Purna Swaraj* declaration. A few months later, Gandhi “gave his signal” initiating the second civil disobedience movement.³³¹ “Without so much as a by-your-leave from home,” writes Shridharani in *War Without Violence*, “I marched to the sea . . . to break the Salt Law.”³³²

Shridharani’s *My India, My America* goes into a bit more detail about his decision to join the salt march. Knowing that his family would disapprove, as “they had no wish

³²⁹ Qtd. in Slate 2012, p. 119

³³⁰ *My India, My America*, p. 32

³³¹ *War Without Violence*, pp. xxxiii-xxxiv

³³² *Ibid.*

to see me, wayward or not, in the toils of imprisonment, fines, confiscation of property, and, possibly, sudden death at seventeen,” Krishnalal turned to “the old, old solution” – “Go, a voice said, and tell them later.”³³³ This inner voice was a call for disobedience, as Shridharani writes: “[I]t was just the opposite of the voice of Gandhi.”³³⁴

Roaming the Countryside

The Salt March – referred to in Indian history textbooks as “The White Flowing River” because of the way it slowly broadened and extended with tens of thousands of additional marchers, all clad in white *khadi* cloth, as it moved southward toward the sea – carried Shridharani through dozens of towns and villages where he was assigned to “address farmer-labor gatherings, and to mobilize them for an attack on the government’s salt monopoly.” Eventually he found himself in court in Jalalpur, charged with breaking the Salt Law. At this point he “annoyed the judge by asking him to ‘Give me all you can, because if you don’t, I’ll be here again and for the same reason.’”³³⁵ He then spent the next several months in His Majesty’s prisons.

The experience of travelling through vast stretches of countryside, stopping in small towns and farming communities to carry out what could be described as a pedagogical as well as political mission, was another thing Rustin and Murray would come to have in common with Shridharani. In the summer of 1937, as World War II

³³³ *My India, My America*, p. 33

³³⁴ *Ibid.*

³³⁵ *War Without Violence*, p. xxxiv

loomed, Rustin would serve as a “Peace Volunteer” with the American Friends Service Committee, a Quaker organization. The Peace Volunteers

... went to small towns in what the *New York Times* described as “the grain and corn belts.” They worked with the farmers during the day and spent evenings speaking to any group who would listen on the absolute necessity of avoiding war and, if it should come to Europe, of keeping the United States out. On weekends they taught Sunday school, wrote sermons, or actually preached in the churches.³³⁶

In subsequent years Rustin would travel the country, particularly in rural areas, speaking on behalf of the Fellowship of Reconciliation. Later in life, he would trace his success as a traveling speaker to the experience he had gained as a first-year college student traveling as principal soloist with the Wilberforce Quartet, a musical group that did cultural outreach and fundraising for Wilberforce University. A “typical two-week tour on behalf of the university,” writes biographer Jervis Anderson, “would take [the quartet] through Ohio, to the Deep South, to Pennsylvania, and even to New York City. They appeared occasionally on radio and more frequently in the larger AME congregations.”³³⁷

Explaining how his travels with the Wilberforce Quartet had contributed to his development as a public activist, Rustin said:

As we traveled doing these concerts, making these appearances ... one or another of us would have to explain to an audience the meaning of what we were going to sing. That job usually fell to me. I was young and fairly dumb when I arrived at Wilberforce. I had a feeling of unease, as anyone would, being poor and not knowing where the next penny was coming from to pay my personal expenses on campus. But while explaining and describing the songs we were going to sing, I developed a considerable aplomb, a great sense of how to present myself as a speaker.³³⁸

³³⁶ Levine 2000, p. 15

³³⁷ Anderson 1997, p. 33

³³⁸ Anderson 1997, p. 35

Pauli Murray also traveled through the rural South on various projects – most notably, making speeches to raise money for the legal defense of Odell Waller, a young Black sharecropper sentenced to death for shooting his landlord after the landlord refused to give Waller his share of the wheat harvest and reached for a gun to drive him off. Visiting Waller in his jail cell, Murray “glimpsed for the first time the horrible reality of capital punishment – the oppressiveness of his somber surroundings, the unrelieved gloom of barren walls and darkened cells, the desolate hours spent in waiting, and the terrifying nearness of the electric chair a few yards away.” Waller eventually became “a symbol of some nine million sharecroppers in the rural South condemned to a lifelong struggle against starvation and disease,” excluded from New Deal benefits like social security, largely isolated and unprotected by regulations, living at the mercy of brutal landlords who did not hesitate to use terrorism to keep them in line. After organizing in the South for Waller’s cause, Murray traveled from coast to coast with Waller’s mother, speaking before small groups in various cities. Unfortunately, the campaign failed to save Waller; he was executed the following summer.

Shantiniketan

When Shridharani was released from jail, he found that the Rashtriya Vidaypith at Ahmedabad was closed, pending negotiations in London. He therefore enrolled in Tagore’s famous Viswa Bharati University at Shantiniketan.

Tagore’s forest school, Shridharani writes in his autobiography, was “a poet’s paradise,” and there he continued to write prolifically and publish widely in Gujarati,

while completing a degree in English.³³⁹ “Some of India’s greatest artists and philosophers and weavers of words” had gathered at Shantiniketan, together with “famous teachers from all over India, from the distant United States, from England and Germany and France and China and Japan and many other lands.”³⁴⁰ After being “awakened by the sweet music of the ashrama choir . . . who made the rounds of the campus and hailed the rising sun with their offering of song,” the students and teachers would gather for their classes “under the shady shal trees, surrounded by jasmine creepers which perfumed the air.”³⁴¹ The life of the school revolved around literary readings, music, dance-drama performances, and seasonal festivals. It was “all play and no work” – an atmosphere Krishnalal found very much to his liking.³⁴² “Harmonious play in an alive and friendly atmosphere,” he writes, “was the source of our education.”³⁴³ Presiding over all of this activity was the Nobel-prize-winning poet, “the towering figure of silver-haired Tagore.”³⁴⁴

A photo from this era shows Shridharani and two other men – one young, one middle-aged, possibly a student and a teacher – sitting with the white-bearded Tagore at Shantiniketan. Tagore is seated on a chair in front of one of the plain campus buildings. Seated on the ground on Tagore’s left is the middle-aged man, wearing heavy black-rimmed glasses. Shridharani is seated on the ground on Tagore’s left, and the other student is standing behind him, near Tagore’s chair. The two students and the middle-

³³⁹ *My India, My America*, p. 44

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*

³⁴² *My India, My America*, p. 45

³⁴³ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁴ *My India, My America*, pp. 44

aged teacher are dressed entirely in white – *khadi*, perhaps – while Tagore wears a darker, flowing robe. The young Shridharani, leaning sideways towards Tagore’s knees while staring ahead and the camera, appears thin and intensely serious – a far cry from the well-fed Brahmin who would appear at James Farmer’s CORE conference in his Brooks Brothers suit and lavender silk shirt less than a decade later.³⁴⁵

In 1936, two years after moving to New York, Shridharani would write wistfully of his time at Shantiniketan:

Often I sat there long before the daybreak, before the Ashram choir was out to welcome the sun with the serene peace that surrounded me. The morning star glimmered down through the foliage at me, a tiny speck in human flesh seated on stone. The synthetic process of mind that naturally flowed there amid the speaking silence of the forest and under the open sky has disappeared in the fast-moving life of Manhattan.³⁴⁶

African American intellectual currents continued to form a part of Shridharani’s education at Shantiniketan. As Slate (2012) notes, Tagore was another “conduit between South Asian and African American freedom struggles.”³⁴⁷ The poet had met Du Bois in New York in 1930. In 1931 – Shridharani’s first year at Shantiniketan – Du Bois sent a year’s supply of *The Crisis* to the school.³⁴⁸ Tagore had also met with Robert Russa Moton, principal of Tuskegee, and the two had discussed a student-exchange between the two colleges.

Given the international presence of poets and poetry at Shantiniketan, it is likely that Shridharani came into contact there with some of the African American poetry of the

³⁴⁵ This photo appears in Shridharani’s article “Tagore: prophet of the East.” In *Current History* (New York); August 1, 1936; 44, 5, pp. 77-81

³⁴⁶ From Krishnalal Shridharani, “Tagore: prophet of the East” (see citation above), p. 79

³⁴⁷ Slate 2012, p. 99

³⁴⁸ Ibid.

Harlem Renaissance. Langston Hughes, in particular, was widely read in India. Hughes wrote multiple poems that mentioned India and foregrounded a sense of colored solidarity in the face of interrelated systems of racial oppression – although, according to Slate (2014), most Indian readers were less interested in the poems that explicitly referenced India than in some of Hughes’ other work: “[M]any of the poems that Indian readers found most compelling concern the African American experience. By making sense of them in Indian contexts, Hughes’s Indian readers rendered his poems agents of colored solidarity.”³⁴⁹ As with Dakshinamurti, though, Shridharani does not say exactly what he read at Shantiniketan, either in the way of poetry or prose.

In 1936, the renowned African American theologian Howard Thurman would visit Shantiniketan. Thurman and his wife Sue Bailey Thurman, along with Howard and Phenola Carroll, were on a “Pilgrimage of Friendship” to India. The four African American intellectuals traveled the country, meeting with Indian students, teachers, religious figures, and independence activists. During their two days at Shantiniketan they took classes, had long conversations with Tagore in his little house on campus, and gave lectures. Howard Thurman lectured on “The Negro in American History,” and Sue lectured on the “History of Negro Music.”³⁵⁰ The Thurmans later raised money for a scholarship to enable a series of African American students to study at Shantiniketan.³⁵¹ Marian Martin Banfield, Betty McCree Price, and Margaret Bush Wilson (future chair of the NAACP) all came to spend a semester at Tagore’s school, with the help of this

³⁴⁹ Slate 2014, p. 58

³⁵⁰ Dixie and Eisenstadt 2011, pp. 92-93

³⁵¹ Slate 2012, p. 115

fellowship.³⁵² As Dixie and Eisenstadt (2011) demonstrate, Howard Thurman offered important lessons to the multiple Indian intellectuals he interacted with during his time on the Subcontinent, and his long conversations with Indian anticolonialists also crucially helped him to clarify and codify his own thinking on the relationships between oppression, resistance, and faith. In 1939-40, Thurman would serve as a mentor and thesis advisor to James Farmer at Howard University; Farmer would later remember Thurman as one of the major intellectual influences of his life.

Shridharani, however, had left Shantiniketan by the time these latter events took place. Having graduated from Viswa-Bharati in 1934, he had set his sights on graduate school in the U.S. With the help of Tagore, he had secured a scholarship from the Maharaja of Bhavnagar and, in May of 1934, sailed for New York.

Queer colored kids on two continents

As we can see from the foregoing narrative, it is not surprising that Shridharani ended up writing a book that spoke powerfully to Farmer, Rustin, and Murray: the writer had in fact been linked to these readers for most of his life, via a very specific set of experiences, publications, institutions, and persons. But these readers, in addition to being captivated by Shridharani's *book*, found Shridharani *himself* to be a uniquely memorable figure. According to the well-known civil rights historian Taylor Branch, these readers' fascination with Shridharani as a person was due to the fact that Shridharani "taught the wide-eyed young Americans that Gandhian politics did not

³⁵² Horne 2008, p. 99

require a lifestyle of dull asceticism.”³⁵³ Without disagreeing with Branch, I want to argue here that Shridharani fascinated scholar-activists like Farmer, Rustin, and Murray, not only because he was un-ascetic, but because he was *queer*; and because in his queerness these readers recognized themselves. All of these young people were racially queer and gender-queer, but also *politically queer*. In this final section, I use a body of queer theory articulated by scholars like Cathy Cohen (1997), Philip Harper et al. (1997), and Siobhan Somerville (2014), together with Monica Miller’s theorizations around the historical-cultural meanings of the “black dandy” and the dandy of color or “racialized dandy” to delve into the idea of queerness as another link between Shridharani and his readers.

In highlighting the heterogeneous *queernesses* of Farmer, Rustin, Murray, and Shridharani – and, as I will explain, the political queerness of their generation of colored cosmopolitans – I follow scholars who use “queer” not simply as a synonym for “homosexual,” but as an analytic category encompassing a range of gendered and sexualized identities, practices, presentations, and ways of being that have been positioned as non-normative and have been variously ridiculed, rebuked, stigmatized, ostracized, closeted and/or criminalized. Cathy Cohen (1997), rejecting a “simple dichotomy between those deemed queer and those deemed heterosexual,” suggests “examining the concept of ‘queer’ in order to think about how we might construct a new political identity ... inclusive of all those who stand on the outside of the dominant

³⁵³ Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters: Martin Luther King and the Civil Rights Movement, 1954-63* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988), p. 171

constructed norm of state-sanctioned white middle- and upper-class heterosexuality.”³⁵⁴

Turning away from a “monolithic understanding of heterosexuality,” Cohen asks us to consider “some of the ways in which nonnormative heterosexuality has been controlled and regulated through the state and systems of marginalization” – i.e., the ways in which certain forms of heterosexuality and heterosexuals have also been framed as queer.³⁵⁵

As Cohen points out, the sexuality of poor women, particularly mothers who need public assistance to help support their children, has been and still is demonized and policed, as are various other forms of “underclass” heterosexuality. She also notes the fact that interracial heterosexual relationships were outlawed in various parts of the U.S. until 1967. When we consider these points, it becomes clear that there are multiples types of heterosexuals and heterosexualities positioned within the categories of gender-queerness and/or sexual queerness. In the words of an activist quoted by Cohen, “Queer means to fuck with gender. There are straight queers, bi queers, tranny queers”³⁵⁶ Here, then, is another interesting connection between Shridharani, Farmer, Rustin, and Murray: all of them, in one way or another, embodied some form of queerness. They transgressed societal norms and rules of masculinity, femininity, sexuality, and/or reproduction. They “fucked with gender” while simultaneously defying and denaturalizing established racial categories and imperial power arrangements.

As an example of how these scholar-activists were simultaneously gender-queer in a way that was always-already racialized, racially queer in a way that was always-

³⁵⁴ Cohen 1997, pp. 440-441

³⁵⁵ Cohen 1997, p. 452

³⁵⁶ Qtd. in Cohen 1997, p. 452

already gendered and sexualized, and *politically queer* in a way that earned them the label of “crazy,” we might examine the young Bayard Rustin’s anti-segregation actions of the early 1930s. Like Krishnalal, who was then at Shantiniketan, the teenaged Bayard was a star student whose intellectual prowess and personal charisma attracted his peers and impressed his elders. Also like Krishnalal, he was artistic: His remarkable singing voice and ability to play the piano and harpsichord led many of his classmates and teachers to predict that he would become a concert artist by profession. In addition, he was a star athlete. But, as Jervis Anderson notes, Bayard’s “academic and athletic excellence [garnered] him no exemption from the segregated embarrassments of West Chester society.”³⁵⁷ By the end of his high school years, Rustin had decided that his way of dealing with the local Jim Crow laws would be to simply behave as if they did not exist.

What prompted the adolescent Rustin to nonviolently and nonchalantly defy West Chester’s segregation laws in the early 1930s? Perhaps he was inspired by some combination of Christian theology, African American history, and the Black press’s coverage of recent events in India ... or perhaps, like Krishnalal marching to the sea to break the imperial salt laws, he simply responded to an inner voice that called for disobedience. In any case, as a high school student he was repeatedly arrested for refusing segregation. In one such incident, as he later recalled:

I went into the little restaurant next to the Warner Theatre and can you believe it there was absolute consternation. That was the first time I knew West Chester had three police cars! They surrounded the place as if we were going to *destroy motherhood*. ... I purposely got arrested. Then I

³⁵⁷ Anderson 1997, p. 27

made an appeal that all the black people, and white people that were decent minded, give ten cents to get me out of jail!³⁵⁸

Impressed by his fearlessness and captivated by his charismatic aura, a number of Bayard's classmates "followed him into restaurants, soda fountains, movie houses, department stores, and the YMCA; they were usually intercepted and thrown out into the street."³⁵⁹ Bayard's actions seemed unprecedented in West Chester. "Not even the local NAACP," writes Anderson, "risked itself in such militant direct action."³⁶⁰ As Charles Porter, one of the "young Rustinites," later recalled, "people called you crazy" for disobeying the town's Jim Crow laws – not radical, but simply crazy.³⁶¹ "In fact," said Porter, "those of us following Bayard did wonder at times whether he wasn't a bit crazy."³⁶²

In the 1920s and '30s, the term "queer" would have been used, with raised eyebrows, to refer to gender non-normative and same-sex-loving individuals, but would also have been just as readily used in a non-sexual sense as a general synonym for "odd" or "strange." If young Bayard's neighbors or classmates knew of his sexual orientation, they might have referred to him as "queer" – probably with raised eyebrows or suggestive laughter. But even without knowing of his homosexuality, people clearly regarded him as "queer." For a young, handsome, artistic Black student from a moderately well-off family to simply walk into white-only spaces as if the rules of segregation meant nothing to him – this was singularly queer behavior. "People called you crazy."

³⁵⁸ Bayard Rustin, interview in *Brother Outsider: The Life of Bayard Rustin*, 2003, at 0:06:20 to 0:07:06.

³⁵⁹ Anderson 1997, p. 28

³⁶⁰ Ibid.

³⁶¹ Ibid.

³⁶² Ibid.

Bayard was thus queer on multiple levels. He was queer both sexually and racially. His use of a distinctly gendered metaphor to describe the white reaction to his transgression of the rules of race – the authorities surrounded him “as if we were going to *destroy motherhood*” – indicates his understanding that the rules of racial segregation were always-already a gendered and sexualized project. In other words, the social miscegenation resulting from a Black youth’s presence in a white restaurant was a threat to the constructions of gender, norms of reproductivity, and (implicitly biological) conceptions of family that the term “motherhood” represented in the sociological space-time of 1930s West Chester, Pennsylvania.

But there’s another layer of queerness here as well: Even the established organizations *opposing* segregation – the local NAACP, for example – regarded young Rustin’s actions as “crazy.” As a political praxis, Rustin’s cultivated habit of ignoring the rules of segregation in the early 1930s meant that he did not fit in with the established strategic and behavioral norms of the organizations he was allied with – i.e., the Quakers, the Fellowship of Reconciliation, the NAACP, etc. Politically, Rustin was outside of all the existing categories; he was not politically “normal.” In this regard, Harper et al.’s conception of “queer theory as a way of reconceiving not just the sexual, but the social in general,” allows for an understanding of Rustin as *politically queer*. His refusal to comply with the constructed binaries of masculine/feminine and white/black was matched by his refusal to confine his actions squarely within the borders of some pre-established political identity.

Like Bayard, Pauli Murray disrupted the rules of race, gender, and sexuality simultaneously. She at once asserted a proud “Negro” identity and openly claimed all of the known components of a racially-miscegenated genealogy that included Black, white, and Cherokee ancestors. She identified as a woman, but was frequently mistaken for a man, and strongly felt that she was “a man trapped in a woman’s body.”³⁶³ As a young person she “experimented with various modes of dress and self-presentation in an attempt to find her place in a world with little room for gender ambiguity, much less for the sexual attraction Murray felt for women.”³⁶⁴ Having a “complicated gender and sexual identity,” in a society defined by rigid gender and sexual norms, at times caused Pauli “severe mental and sometimes physical anguish.”³⁶⁵ At other times, however, Murray was able to turn her gender-ambiguity, and other people’s gendered presumptions, to her own advantage. During the years when Bayard Rustin was transgressing West Chester’s rules of racial segregation, Pauli – having graduated from high school in 1926, at the age of sixteen – was working her way through college in New York. At one point she had to put her studies on hold for a year because the restaurant where she’d been working had closed down. During this time, out of work and suffering from malnutrition, she found herself joining “an estimated 200,000 to 300,000 homeless boys – and a smattering of girls – between the ages of twelve and twenty, products of the Depression,” who “rode the rails” by hiding in or between freight cars, or jumping onto moving trains and climbing on top of freight cars or into open box cars.³⁶⁶ “Crossing the country,” Murray

³⁶³ Mayeri 2013, p. 86

³⁶⁴ Ibid.

³⁶⁵ Ibid.

³⁶⁶ *Pauli Murray: The Autobiography of a Black Activist, Feminist, Lawyer, Priest, and Poet*, pp. 79-80

would later write, “I learned to ride cattle trains, fruit-butter-and-egg trains, ‘hot shots’ (fast express freights), and ‘manifestos’ (nonstop express freight trains).”³⁶⁷ Riding the rails was risky for anyone, regardless of gender: people were crushed to death, died of dehydration after becoming stuck in freight cars, were shot by guards, or had their limbs smashed or severed – but there were additional risks for the “smattering of girls” on the trains. Murray found then that her “boyish appearance was a protection”; with her “scout pants and shirt, knee-length socks, walking shoes, and a short leather jacket,” her “slight figure and bobbed hair,” she was able to pass as “a small teenage boy like thousands of others on the road.”³⁶⁸

James Farmer, too, can be regarded as a queer figure. His 1945 marriage to Lula Peterson, a white woman, was a form of outlawed heterosexuality. The couple and their children received multiple threats from white supremacists over the decades. In addition, particular lines of discourse among some Black nationalists during the 1960s portrayed Farmer as inauthentic or a race-traitor for being married to a white women. In his autobiography, Farmer recalls the “hostile stares” at his interracial family during an era when “[i]nterracial marriages were under open attack by blacks.”³⁶⁹ At one point he was accosted on a street in Harlem by four men who “fingered the handles of the machetes on their belts [while] one of them said, ‘We’re coming downtown after you next, Farmer, because you got that white wife down there.’”³⁷⁰ Farmer’s racial-sexual queerness was also linked with political queerness in relation to what has been imagined as the

³⁶⁷ Ibid.

³⁶⁸ Ibid.

³⁶⁹ *Lay Bare the Heart*, p. 307

³⁷⁰ Ibid.

ideological binary of “Black nationalist” vs. “integrationist.” Farmer did not fit neatly into either of these categories. Farmer believed in integration, of course, but while “integrationists” demonized Black nationalism as a sort of reverse-racism, Farmer chose to – as he put it – “accentuate the positive” aspects of Black pride and identity that the nationalists promoted during this era.³⁷¹ As a result, certain white CORE members attacked Farmer for his refusal to adhere to a politics of “color-blindness.” In operating from an understanding that proud Black racial consciousness and love for his interracial family need not be mutually-exclusive positions, Farmer was ahead of his time.

What about the well-fed Brahmin? Shridharani was heterosexual; nevertheless, his insistence upon remaining single through his teens, through his twenties, and well into his thirties, made him a *queer* figure within the conservative Gujarati Vaishya milieu into which he had been born. His refusal to marry marked him as strange, odd, troublesome, it potentially made the family look bad; his bachelor status was a “problem” that his elders strenuously attempted to correct. Given the property-function of marriage, his refusal even to marry “a millionaire’s daughter” made him very queer indeed. And he not only refused his family’s marriage timeline for *himself*; he vociferously objected to *anyone’s* early betrothal or marriage. With this attitude, he was certainly a threat to the normative framework for reproduction – of population, of property, and of the social order itself.

Of course, once he moved into a U.S. context, the rejection of early marriage would have seemed quite normal – but Americans regarded Shridharani as queer for

³⁷¹ *Lay Bare the Heart*, p. 308

other (racialized and gendered) reasons. His self-presentation conformed neither to normative U.S. conceptions of masculinity nor to American preconceptions of the “Indian” or “Oriental.” In his dress, his speech, his manner, his tastes and his behavior, he flouted all expectations, embodying multiple layers of queerness. On one level, as an Indian male he was always-already gender-queer within the context of anglonormative U.S. society, given that – as Rotter (1994) notes – “The Western representation of India as female conferred effeminacy on most Indian men.”³⁷² At the same time, Shridharani confounded whitestream America’s expectations around racialized gender because his particular manner and self-presentation did not fit any of the pre-existing *categories* of feminized Indian-ness available to the popular U.S. imagination. That is to say, he was neither a dhoti-clad ascetic, nor an a Katherine Mayo-esque specimen of abjection, nor a snake-charming, palm-reading purveyor of exotica.

Dapper, witty, loquacious, Shridharani was that queer figure that Miller (2009) identifies as the “racialized dandy.”³⁷³ Arriving in New York in 1934, sponsored by a scholarship from the Maharaja of Bhavnagar, Shridharani quickly transformed himself from the khaadi-clad student of the Rishtriya Vidyapith and Shantiniketan into a splashy man-about-town whose sartorial style reflected both the royal provenance of his funding and the glossy extravagance of the “high society” aesthetic he encountered in Manhattan. Sporting the latest in high-end men’s fashion – Brooks Brothers suits, Homburg hats, Chesterfield overcoat, silk shirts in unusual colors or stripes – with a diamond ring on one

³⁷² Rotter 1994, p. 523

³⁷³ Miller 2009, p. 11 (Note that Miller’s analysis overall focuses on the figure of the black dandy; however, some of her general points, as indicated by her passage on the “racialized dandy,” apply to the idea of the dandy of color more generally – hence my application of her work to the figure of Shridharani.)

hand and a ruby on the other, and often with a Cuban cigar clasped jauntily in one corner of his mouth, Shridharani attracted attention wherever he went. He was known for having – as the *Milwaukee Journal* put it in a recap of a radio-broadcast debate between the Indian anticolonialist and Sir Wilmot Lewis of the London Times – a “natural comedy style.”³⁷⁴ Whether conferring with leftist and colored cosmopolitan associates, conversing with white society-ladies who sought to add his presence their salon gatherings for a taste of the exotic, responding to strangers who accosted him with questions about palm-reading and rope tricks, debating imperial interlocutors who aimed to discredit his anticolonial message, or performing for mainstream journalists eager to cover the spectacle, Shridharani continuously deployed what Miller refers to as “the dandy’s signature method: a pointed redeployment of clothing, gesture, and wit.”³⁷⁵ The flamboyance of both his personality and his attire attracted ogling commentary, not just from individuals interested in his work, but also from people and publications with little to no awareness of – or sympathy for – his cause. A photo of the young writer, stylishly coiffed and suited, cigarette drooping from lips, was printed in the September 1, 1942 issue of *Vogue*, along with a short article noting that this fashionable figure was “living in New York” and “advocating the dangerous policy of immediate Indian independence.”³⁷⁶ The piece was printed directly beneath an item informing *Vogue*’s readers that black silk satin day dresses were still the biggest-selling dresses in New York City.

³⁷⁴ “This Comes of Listening to the Radio.” *The Milwaukee Journal*, March 28, 1942.

³⁷⁵ Monica Miller *Slaves to Fashion: Black Dandyism and the Styling of Black Diasporic Identity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), p. 5

³⁷⁶ “People and Ideas: And What’s More...” *Vogue* 100.5 (Sept. 1, 1942), p. 94

Shridharani's queerness was not merely a function of his dandyism; it was a product of multiple categorical constructions – of race, nation, and ethnicity, as well as gender – all of which were scrambled, shattered and then reassembled, in the person of Shridharani. As Miller incisively notes,

A racialized dandy is at once a threat to supposed natural aristocracy, he is (hyper) masculine *and* feminine, aggressively heterosexual yet not quite a real man, a vision of an upstanding citizen and an outsider broadcasting his alien status by clothing his dark body in a good suit. In that dandies of any color disrupt and destabilize conceptions of masculinity and heterosexuality, they are queer subjects who deconstruct limiting binaries in the service of transforming how one conceives of identity formation.³⁷⁷

The figure of the “East Indian” within the mainstream white imagination of 1930s America was composed of various orientalist tropes: the snake-charmer, the fortune-teller, the levitating mystic. Shridharani's Brooks Brothers suits and Homburg hats flew in the face of these tropes. Even sympathizers of the Indian independence movement – including white Leftists, as well as African American readers who kept up with the movement through its coverage in the Black press – found him startling; readers of *War Without Violence* often assumed that its author would be, as James Farmer put it, “a Gandhiesque figure – ascetic, bony, waiflike.”³⁷⁸ As an Indian anticolonial activist-dandy, Shridharani – to borrow again from Miller – “signifie[d] in multiple areas at once.” That is to say, in his dress, speech, and demeanor, he disrupted categorical norms of race, nation, gender and sexuality simultaneously. Furthermore, he knew that his presence caused a stir, and he strategically took advantage of this fact to draw attention to the cause of India's independence.

³⁷⁷ Miller 2009, p. 11

³⁷⁸ *Lay Bare the Heart*, p. 112

The queerness of “crazy” scholar-activists like Shridharani and his readers brings to mind José Esteban Muñoz’s conception of queerness as a utopian ideal. For Muñoz, queerness represents “a structuring and educated mode of desiring that allows us to see and feel beyond the quagmire of the present.” This type of queerness “is a longing that propels us onward”; it is “the thing that lets us feel that this world is not enough, that indeed something is missing.” Farmer, Rustin and Murray, like Shridharani, were queer in the sense that “Queerness is essentially about the rejection of a here and now and an insistence on potentiality or concrete possibility for another world.”³⁷⁹ So these young people were politically and affectively queer: having hopes and ideals that the mainstream society viewed as strange and even obscene. They were obscenely hopeful in the direction of what Muñoz calls “concrete utopias.”

Many of the colored cosmopolitans of this generation embodied, enacted, and embraced various forms of queerness. The prevalence of different types of queerness among the colored cosmopolitans of Shridharani’s generation can perhaps be understood in relation to the fact that colored cosmopolitanism was itself a queer political formation. The alliances of colored cosmopolitanism transgressed the naturalized categories of race and nation. Perhaps young people like Farmer, Rustin, Murray, and Shridharani, having been educated from childhood into this queer political orientation, were therefore more likely than the previous generation to boldly and openly transcend other types of social and political categories – i.e., to exhibit multiple forms of queerness.

³⁷⁹ José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), p. 1

... *But what was in the book? Moving to an analysis of War Without Violence*

In contrast to studies that position African American scholar-activists' interest in *War Without Violence* as part of an "American tradition" of civil disobedience, or as attributable to white-dominated organizations like the Fellowship of Reconciliation, I have argued in this chapter that the relationships between Shridharani and his readers can be more accurately understood with reference to the genealogies of colored cosmopolitanism. I have shown how Shridharani and his readers were educated into the transnational solidarities of colored cosmopolitanism during the early stages of their lives. I have also highlighted the ways in which they all embodied and enacted various forms of queerness – gendered and sexualized queerness, racialized queerness, and political queerness – thus making them, as I have put it here, queer colored cosmopolitans. Given these multiple links between Shridharani, Farmer, Rustin, and Murray, it is not surprising that the perspectives set forth in Shridharani's book were particularly resonant to readers like Farmer, Rustin, and Murray.

But this discussion does not address the question: What was actually *in the text* of *War Without Violence*? If the appeal of *War Without Violence* was due to certain key insights shared between Shridharani and his readers, what exactly were those insights? The next chapter addresses that question.

Chapter III – Echolocation: Juxtapositions and Text-Life Resonances

Having examined the educational and life trajectories of Krishnalal Shridharani, James Farmer, Bayard Rustin, and Pauli Murray, focusing on the ways in which these four scholar-activists were shaped by the transnational connections of colored cosmopolitanism, I turn in the present chapter to an analysis of the text of *War Without Violence*. Chapter II pointed out that given the compelling series of discourses, institutions, events, and persons through which Shridharani and his readers were connected even before *War Without Violence* was written, it is not surprising that Shridharani's writing was ultimately of interest to Farmer, Rustin, and Murray. But the question remains: What *did* Shridharani actually write? What factors within the text made Shridharani's book so much more memorable than, for example, Richard Gregg's (1934) *The Power of Nonviolence* or Haridas Muzumdar's (1932) *Gandhi Versus the Empire*? What was it in *War Without Violence* that made this book – to quote Bayard Rustin again – “our gospel, our bible,” for this group of African American scholar-activists and their interracial allies in the 1940s?

The present chapter highlights several of Shridharani's specific theoretical contributions in *War Without Violence* that, as I argue, would have been of particular import to Farmer, Rustin, and Murray. My argument unfolds through a close reading – informed by historical and biographical context – of *War Without Violence*, as I seek to speculatively apprehend how and why this particular book “spoke” to these particular

readers. My analysis highlights the intellectual counterpoint produced through a juxtaposition of passages from *War Without Violence* with episodes from the personal and political lives and writings of Farmer, Rustin, and Murray. Ultimately I argue that, while these readers certainly used *War Without Violence* as a guidebook, the specific *type* of wayfinding produced through the interactions between readers and text in this case was less like map-reading and more like a type of echolocation. In other words, Shridharani's work allowed these readers to perceive and navigate a particular political terrain, not by telling them things they didn't know, but by "echoing" back to them things they already *did* know. In other words, Shridharani's book codified a set of insights that Farmer, Rustin, and Murray were already developing through their own intellectual and political explorations.

Chronologically speaking, some of the experiences and activities I discuss from the lives of Farmer, Rustin, and Murray took place before the publication of *War Without Violence*, while others took places after they had read the book. In all cases, however, my juxtaposition of these incidents from the lives of the readers with passages from *War Without Violence* is intended to illustrate a transnational *confluence* of interests, values, and experiences between Shridharani and his readers, such that Shridharani's writing resonated with Farmer, Rustin, and Murray within the context of their *unfolding* ideas and practices. To be absolutely clear, then: I do not intend to suggest any sort of *causal* relationship between Shridharani's writing and his readers' actions, except in cases where the readers themselves identify Shridharani's book as having shaped their activities. Rather, I highlight the dynamic nature of a set of concepts and praxes evolving through multiple intertextual and interpersonal circulations that included Shridharani, his readers,

and others of their generation – a shared social world of queer colored cosmopolitans. Rather than a “diffusion” model that posits ideas as originating with a single individual and then being disseminated to others, I write from an understanding that all of these queer colored cosmopolitans influenced each other and developed their ideas simultaneously and collectively. It would be a false and futile exercise to attempt to identify causality or pinpoint which individual came up with an idea “first.” This reality becomes particularly evident when we consider, for example, James Farmer’s recollection, in an interview with John Britton, of how and when he met Shridharani. In response to a question from Britton about how “the Gandhian philosophy” had influenced the early activities of CORE, Farmer turns the conversation to “one of Gandhi’s disciples by the name of Krishnalal Shridharani.” As Farmer recalls,

... Shridharani when we met him, was working on his Ph.D. at Columbia University in New York ... and his dissertation was an analysis of Gandhi’s program which subsequently was published under the title War Without Violence. So, I became very close to Shridharani and we discussed greatly in length, the Gandhian techniques of nonviolence, and it was this philosophy as you say, which served as a foundation for CORE’s action in the early years.³⁸⁰

In this excerpt, Farmer’s presentation of his relationship with Shridharani suggests that the two men met and discussed their ideas *before* the publication of *War Without Violence*. This suggestion creates an opening for the question of whether the lengthy discussions referenced by Farmer might in fact have influenced Shridharani’s development of his dissertation – the work that eventually became *War Without Violence*.

³⁸⁰ “Transcript of a Tape-Recorded Interview with James Farmer.” James Farmer Papers, Box 2R635, Folder titled “Literary Productions: James Farmer: Transcripts of Interviews.”

My point here is that the archives do not allow for a causal narrative of how Shridharani influenced Farmer or how Farmer influenced Shridharani; rather, they enable a richer set of inquiries rooted in an understanding of a confluence of ideas among a generation of queer colored cosmopolitans. That is why I argue that *War Without Violence*, for readers like Farmer, Rustin, and Murray, was part of a process of political pathfinding via echolocation. Shridharani's writing allowed these readers to "hear" their own voices echoing back to them, as it articulated a set of insights they were producing and experiencing in their own political lives.

In what follows, I first situate my argument by explaining how it differs from previous scholarly attempts to explain the appeal of *War Without Violence*. I then discuss a series of specific insights from Shridharani's book that would have particularly resonated with Farmer, Rustin, and Murray. I juxtapose each of these insights from the book with an episode from the life/work of one or more of the readers. In this way, I show how Shridharani, as a queer colored cosmopolitan writer, appealed to his queer colored cosmopolitan readers precisely because his perspectives, struggles, and observations reflected their own ongoing intellectual and political pathfindings.

Beyond the "steps": War Without Violence as theory

As in the previous chapter, my argument diverges from previous historical work dealing with *War Without Violence*. My perspective differs, for example, from that of Richard Perry, who seems baffled and somewhat annoyed by the presence of Shridharani and *War Without Violence* at the center of so many events and conversations around civil

rights during the 1940s. Recalling how he stumbled upon Shridharani's book while researching his *Civil Disobedience: An American Tradition*, Perry writes:

I confess that I was unfamiliar with it [*War Without Violence*] until Homer Jack, whom I met on a research trip, informed me that *this* was the book, rather than [Richard] Gregg's [*The Power of Nonviolence*], that he and other founders of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) studied systematically in the early 1940s as they worked out a nonviolent strategy for confronting segregation.³⁸¹

Perry's surprise at learning of the role of *War Without Violence* leads him to ask an important question: "What, besides the experienced and flamboyant voice of the narrator, drew civil rights protesters to Shridharani's work? What held their attention?"³⁸² But Perry does not spend much time searching for an answer to this question. Though acknowledging activist Mary King's recollection of how "dog-eared copies" of Shridharani's book were "passed from hand to hand" by civil rights proponents who "absorbed his riveting descriptions of Gandhi's campaigns,"³⁸³ Perry opines as follows: "Riveting' ... is not [a word] I would choose to describe the book. Too often, especially in early chapters, it blends a kind of elevated dissertationese with left-sectarian persiflage."³⁸⁴ Perry's main guess as to "what most engaged the CORE founders" is that Shridharani's opening chapter provided a series of concrete *steps* for putting satyagraha into practice.³⁸⁵

³⁸¹ Richard Perry, *Civil Disobedience: An American Tradition* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2013), p. 192

³⁸² Perry 2013, p. 194

³⁸³ Mary King, *Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr.: The Power of Nonviolent Action* (Paris: UNESCO Publishing, 1999), p. 507

³⁸⁴ Perry 2013, p. 192

³⁸⁵ Perry 2013, p. 194

Most historians who discuss the influence of *War Without Violence* agree that the “steps” were an important factor in the book’s popularity – and, indeed, several accounts from the 1940s describe how activists adopted and adapted the specific “steps” or “stages” of satyagraha outlined in the volume. The process of satyagraha, as described by Shridharani, begins with negotiation and arbitration, followed by agitation, then “demonstrations and the ultimatum,” and “self-purification,” followed by various forms of direct action.³⁸⁶ Shridharani suggests that these first few steps (negotiation, etc.) be taken in order, after which activists can choose from a range of additional steps or “instruments,” employing them simultaneously and/or recursively, depending upon the situation and the desired outcome: “strike and general strike,” picketing, *dhurna* (sit-down strike), economic boycott, non-payment of taxes, *hizrat* (mass migration as a form of resistance), non-co-operation, ostracism, civil disobedience, “assertive satyagraha,” and parallel government.³⁸⁷ Each of these steps is described in detail, with episodes from the Indian independence movement serving as substantive examples of how such actions might unfold. Shridharani makes it clear that the adaptation of satyagraha to new contexts will require creative modifications of and additions to the process; and, as Sean Scalmer (2011) notes, “the students of Shridharani often came away with slightly different versions of the satyagraha recipe,”³⁸⁸ depending upon how they chose to interpret and modify these various stages – or, as Shridharani also called them, “instruments.” James Farmer articulated four steps of satyagraha that were essential for

³⁸⁶ *War Without Violence*, pp. 5-14

³⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 14-42

³⁸⁸ Scalmer 2011, p. 123

CORE actions: investigation, negotiation, publicity, and then demonstration.³⁸⁹ The members of Ahimsa Farm – a residential activist collective modeled on the anticolonial ashrams of the Indian independence movement – suggested six steps: negotiation, arbitration, demonstration, ultimatum, self-purification, and an “aggressive” phase of “non-violent direct action.”³⁹⁰ Bayard Rustin, in a series of workshops under the banner of the Institute on Race Relations and Non-violent Solution, described “five steps that led to direct action”: investigation, negotiation and arbitration, education (or agitation), demonstration and ultimatum, and self-examination.³⁹¹ Some of the distinctions between these various lists of steps are simply the result of activists using different keywords to describe similar activities, but some of the distinctions do reflect diverging visions of how a movement should proceed. For example, Farmer and the CORE activists felt that the idea of “self-purification” – a period of prayer, and possibly fasting, immediately preceding direct action – was not relevant to their U.S. socio-cultural context.³⁹² The members of Ahimsa Farm, by contrast, chose to keep self-purification as a step. Rustin’s conceptual morphing of “self-purification” into “self-examination” suggests a strategic secularization of this phase, perhaps meant to keep reflection and introspection as part of the process by recasting them within a psychological-sociological frame rather than a spiritual-religious one.

³⁸⁹ Scalmer 2011, p. 124

³⁹⁰ Ibid.

³⁹¹ Scalmer 2011, pp. 129-130

³⁹² August Meier and Elliot Rudwick, *CORE: A Study in the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 12

The many scholarly references to Shridharani’s “steps,” however, do not really explain civil rights activists’ intense interest in *War Without Violence*. Only one of the eleven chapters of *War Without Violence* – the first chapter, titled “How Is It Done?” – is devoted to these steps or instruments. Readers like Farmer, Rustin, and Murray did not merely read the first chapter; they read and re-read the entire 300-page book, discussing and debating each chapter. To understand the connections these readers were making with Shridharani’s book, we need to read further. My contention is that readers were not merely using *War Without Violence* as a list of instructions; they were making connections with the book’s original theoretical content. As I will demonstrate here, the significance of that theoretical content can be understood by juxtaposing passages from the book with “passages” from the readers’ lives. I therefore turn now to a series of theoretical insights set forth in particular passages from *War Without Violence*, and discuss how each of these insights would have resonated with the experiences of readers like Farmer, Rustin, and Murray.

Insight 1: A movement spreads beyond its matrix

Perhaps the most fundamental difference between *War Without Violence* and the other publications on satyagraha available to U.S. readers at the time is expressed in the book’s introduction, when Shridharani points out that “a movement always spreads far beyond its matrix, and is greater than any one individual, even its originator.”³⁹³ The books on satyagraha that had been promoted previously in the U.S. – those by Richard

³⁹³ *War Without Violence*, p. xxxi

Gregg, C.F. Andrews, and Haridas Muzumdar – not only centered Gandhi as hero and saint, but also made satyagraha absolutely synonymous with “Gandhism.” Shridharani, like the other authors, paints Gandhi as a heroic and saintly figure; nevertheless, while acknowledging Gandhi as the “principal source of information” for his scholarly study of satyagraha, and noting that *War Without Violence* relies heavily on Gandhi’s “writings, his utterances, his actions, and his significant silences,” Shridharani also emphasizes the *collective* nature of satyagraha’s propagation within the context of a *mass movement*, and points to the tactical and ideological variations among the masses of satyagrahis in India.³⁹⁴ “The reader should be prepared, therefore,” Shridharani writes in his introduction, “for two appraisals of Satyagraha – Gandhi’s Satyagraha and Satyagraha in the light of recent events in India. Anyone at all versed in Indian affairs knows that the two have conflicted more than once, and that Gandhi would not uphold everything the present writer has to say.”³⁹⁵

Shridharani’s framing of his study in terms of mass movement politics and strategy – and his emphasis on the fact that participants in mass social movements cannot be expected to unquestioningly obey their “leaders” at all times – must have been particularly relevant for young African American activists like Farmer, Rustin, and Murray. These readers were already involved in various complicated and internally-diverse political movements; like Shridharani himself, they had worked with some of the most well-known, even revered, left-political leaders of their time – and had found themselves in disagreement with those leaders regarding matters of strategy. As an

³⁹⁴ *War Without Violence*, pp. xxx-xxxii

³⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. xxxii

example, we might consider their relationships with Du Bois and the NAACP. As the “premier architect of the [twentieth century] civil rights movement,”³⁹⁶ Du Bois was held in great esteem by Farmer, Rustin, and Murray; these three readers were in part products of a Du Boisian intellectual genealogy and NAACP leadership, just as Shridharani was in part a product of a Gandhian genealogy and Indian National Congress leadership. Nevertheless, just as Shridharani was not afraid to challenge the icon that Gandhi had become, young African American intellectuals like Farmer, Rustin, and Murray were not afraid to disagree with the established NAACP leadership, and even to engage in political actions that Du Bois lambasted as insane.

Du Bois, despite his fervent enthusiasm for satyagraha within the context of the Indian independence movement, insisted during the 1930s and 1940s that the technique would never work in the United States. In 1943 – the same year Farmer convened the first national CORE convention – Du Bois wrote in the *New York Amsterdam News* that any attempt to build a nonviolent direct action movement in the U.S. “would be regarded as a joke or a bit of insanity.”³⁹⁷ This harsh assessment from the very dean of the African American left could not have been taken lightly by young people like Farmer and the others; nevertheless, they persisted in their own views and continued pursuing their own strategies. Importantly, this determination was not a *result* of reading *War Without Violence*; rather, Shridharani’s discussion of the Indian independence movement resonated with experiences and ideas that were already present in the lives of these

³⁹⁶ David Levering Lewis, *W.E.B. Du Bois: A Biography* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2009), p. 4

³⁹⁷ Qtd. in Sean Chabot, *Transnational Roots of the Civil Rights Movement: African American Explorations of the Gandhian Repertoire* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2012), p. 77

readers. Bayard Rustin, for example, had been engaging in nonviolent direct action against Jim Crow ever since his teenage years in West Chester – long before *War Without Violence* (or any of the other U.S.-available books on satyagraha) had been written. Rustin certainly saw his actions as part of a larger movement, but he also implicitly understood that – as he would later read in Shridharani’s book – “a movement always spreads far beyond its matrix”; that is to say, he could be a small part of a larger movement and, through his own creative actions, push the movement in new directions, transcending the bounds of possibility imagined by the movement’s originators.

The impulse to experiment with satyagraha in the U.S. came from African American activists themselves; it was not initiated or directed by Shridharani or anyone else. Shridharani’s writings and lectures, however, reaffirmed these activists’ growing understandings of how a mass movement can be creatively extended into new areas of action, stretching “far beyond its matrix.” In all of his speeches and publications (including *War Without Violence*), Shridharani made a point of acknowledging that he did not possess expertise in social movements outside of the Indian anticolonial movement, and that he would not attempt to prescribe any particular course of action for people whose historical and sociological context was separate from his own realm of experience. When African American activists specifically asked him for feedback on *their own* ideas about adapting satyagraha to the battle against Jim Crow, however, he supported these activists’ efforts. When Farmer and the CORE activists, for example, presented Shridharani with their completed activities and future plans for nonviolent direct action, “He told us that we were on the right track, and that the essential Gandhian method would work in the American scene. But it could not be lifted bodily from his

country; for America was not India.... On those themes, he elaborated at length in scholarly fashion.”³⁹⁸

But Shridharani’s point about a movement spreading far beyond its matrix would have been important to readers like Farmer, Rustin, and Murray, for reasons that went beyond their interest in satyagraha. That is to say, these activists were pushing the U.S. civil rights movement “beyond its matrix” in multiple ways, not only by experimenting with nonviolent direct action. Pauli Murray, for example, had long been advocating for new legal strategies in the fight against Jim Crow – strategies disapproved of by many elder NAACP officials and other established leaders. In 1938, Murray applied to a graduate program at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and was rejected due to the fact that – as Dean W.W. Pearson wrote in response to her application – “members of your race are not admitted to the University.” When Murray sought to challenge this decision in court, she had to confront the disapproval of James E. Shepard, president of the North Carolina College for Negroes (NCCN). Dr. Shepard, a longtime friend of Murray’s family, worried that Murray’s attempts to enter UNC-CH would result in decreased funding for all-Black institutions of higher education in North Carolina. Later, as a law student at Howard, Murray was ridiculed by other law students, professors, and NAACP attorneys when she argued for a legal strategy focused on dismantling *Plessy v. Ferguson* rather than simply seeking to enforce the “equal” in “separate but equal.” Ultimately, however – years after Murray’s graduation – some of those same professors and attorneys used some of Murray’s arguments (which she had

³⁹⁸ *Lay Bare the Heart*, p. 112-113

elaborated upon in one of her final papers) to help shape their own argument against school segregation in the landmark case *Brown v. Board of Education*. Thus, Murray successfully pushed the antisegregation movement “beyond its matrix,” not only by experimenting with satyagraha, but also through her legal scholarship.

Pushing a movement beyond its matrix, of course, often involves disobeying the movement’s established leaders even while remaining within the movement itself. Selected and strategic disobedience was important for all of the figures discussed in this chapter, as I will explain in the next section.

Insight 2: Dhurna as disobedience

War Without Violence mentions *dhurna* as an example of a tactic deployed by satyagrahis but disapproved of by their leader. Shridharani translates “dhurna” as “sit-down strike”³⁹⁹; the practice of *dhurna* involves using one’s body as a physical obstacle to the activity one is trying to prevent, just as workers in a sit-down strike physically sit down in front of their machines in order to prevent bosses from hiring replacement workers during labor conflicts. *Dhurna* is, as Shridharani notes, “an ancient institution of India,” historically used by a variety of actors and for a range of purposes.⁴⁰⁰ “Modern” examples of *dhurna* mentioned by Shridharani include “sit-down strikes in the textile mills of the Punjab and the jute mills of Bengal.”⁴⁰¹ (The reference to labor would certainly have been of interest to Farmer, Rustin, and Murray, all of whom had, or would have, experience working with labor unions.) “The success of the sit-down,” writes

³⁹⁹ *War Without Violence*, pp. 19-20

⁴⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰¹ *War Without Violence*, p. 20

Shridharani, “is due to the fact that no industry which sells its products directly to the public can afford to alienate public opinion.”⁴⁰² Shridharani optimistically adds that the “general public is always opposed to violence and bloodshed in suppressing strikes,” and suggests that, since “unless these [violent] methods are utilized, it is almost impossible to break a sit-down strike,” dhurna becomes a “dramatic way of influencing public opinion both when the effort is successful and when it is crushed.”⁴⁰³

“Sitting *Dhurna*,” Shridharani continues, “has assumed peculiar forms in India’s Satyagraha operations.”⁴⁰⁴ He goes on to describe a 1922 demonstration in which nationalist students sat down in front of the gates of Calcutta University and effectively blocked people from entering. “The Satyagrahis implored the conforming students [i.e. those trying to enter the university] not to hesitate to step on their bodies if the latter felt justified in entering that way. They also assured the non-striking students that they would not raise a finger in retaliation”⁴⁰⁵ Shridharani also mentions demonstrators’ deployment of this tactic against “Indian government servants who continued to serve on administrative posts in defiance of the call for non-cooperation,” with scenes of “people stretching themselves flat on the ground and inviting the official to tread on their bodies in order to go to his work.”⁴⁰⁶

As Shridharani notes, Gandhi had strongly condemned the use of *dhurna*, which he regarded as “barbaric,” during the non-cooperation movement, but that didn’t prevent

⁴⁰² Ibid.

⁴⁰³ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁵ *War Without Violence*, p. 21

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid.

satyagrahis from continuing to use it.⁴⁰⁷ During a 1930 boycott of foreign cloth in Bombay, when a single “big firm dealing in foreign cloth ... proved unbending” in its determination to continue selling the boycotted material, “a young Satyagrahi named Babu Ganu laid himself in the driveway of the store one afternoon, and asked the lorryman to drive his truck over his body on the latter’s errand of delivering foreign cloth. The truckdriver, an Englishman specially hired for the purpose, drove his lorry over the prostrate man.”⁴⁰⁸ Babu Ganu’s death aroused “the indignation of the whole Bombay Presidency,” helping to “make the boycott a great success”⁴⁰⁹ – thus demonstrating the potential of *dhurna* to impact public opinion even when the practitioner is literally “crushed.” Shridharani notes that subsequently the “dealer in foreign cloth himself, according to newspaper reports, joined the movement.”⁴¹⁰

“In spite of the numerous successes of the instrument of *Dhurna*,” Shridharani writes at the conclusion of his section on the subject, “Gandhi has declared himself against the ‘barbaric’ practice.”⁴¹¹ Time and again he has exhorted his followers to ‘refrain from sitting *Dhurna*.’⁴¹² As Shridharani notes, the fact that satyagrahis (including the writer himself) endorse and participate in *dhurna* despite Gandhi’s objections “seems to signify that the movement in this respect has gone beyond the men who originated it.”⁴¹³

⁴⁰⁷ *War Without Violence*, p. 22

⁴⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 21

⁴⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 22

⁴¹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹¹ *Ibid.*

⁴¹² Qtd. in *War Without Violence*, p. 22

⁴¹³ *War Without Violence*, p. 23

For readers like Farmer, Rustin, and Murray, the primary significance of Shridharani's discussion of *dhurna* might not have been the technique itself, but Shridharani's highlighting of the role of disobedience in pushing a mass movement "beyond the men who originated it." All three of these readers were pushing at the boundaries of the various movements in which they were involved, pushing group strategy beyond the comfort zones delineated by the originators of the NAACP, the FOR, etc. In this respect, it must have been uniquely meaningful for them to read, in the writing of an intellectual peer from the other side of the world, an account of how a mass movement has exceeded the vision of its primary architects.

Farmer, Rustin, and Murray exercised disobedience not only in relation to their elders in the NAACP and other civil rights organizations, but also in relation to famous leaders within multiple left organizational arenas. Pauli Murray's relationship with Eleanor Roosevelt exemplifies this point. In fact, Shridharani's portrayal of his own relationship with Gandhi has several elements in common with Murray's later writings on her relationship with Eleanor Roosevelt. Such a comparison may seem incongruous, but in many ways it makes sense. Both Gandhi and Mrs. Roosevelt were known throughout the world; both were iconic figures within Left movements of their era; and both were astute politicians, though neither ran for elected office. Murray and Shridharani belonged to a younger generation; both were relatively unknown when they began working in these movements and forming relationships with the iconic leaders; and both would disagree with and openly defy the iconic leaders, while simultaneously continuing to work with them and even lionize them. Murray would write of her relationship with Mrs. Roosevelt: "I suspect that I was one of the rarely privileged people to do battle toe-to-toe

with her in the earlier stages of our friendship and to emerge with a bond so deep that it had a psychic and mystical quality.”⁴¹⁴

A brief examination of this relationship may be useful here in helping to illuminate some of the parallels between Shridharani’s timely book and Murray’s own intellectual and political life-path. Murray’s relationship with Eleanor Roosevelt in fact began with a public act of disobedience. In the early 1930s, Murray was living at Camp Tera, a women’s work-project camp modeled after the all-male Civilian Conservation Corps camps of the New Deal. One day Eleanor Roosevelt, who had founded Camp Tera, paid a visit. While Murray “loved” almost “everything” about Camp Tera, she objected to the Roosevelt administration’s support of segregationists within the Democratic Party.⁴¹⁵ She had “come to believe ... that the New Deal was temporizing in the face of an economic catastrophe, while depending for its political power on the Jim Crow South.”⁴¹⁶ As a mild form of protest, Murray refused to stand up as expected when Mrs. Roosevelt walked by: she “washed up and put on a fresh shirt ... then sat, reading a newspaper, when the First Lady walked through the social hall.”⁴¹⁷ This silent and unobtrusive protest earned Murray an irate rebuke from the camp’s director.

Despite this unpropitious start, Murray soon developed a close working relationship with Mrs. Roosevelt. In 1940, when Murray served as executive secretary for that year’s National Sharecroppers Week – an annual event designed to raise

⁴¹⁴ Qtd. in Anne Firor Scott (Ed.), *Pauli Murray and Caroline Ware: Forty Years of Letters in Black and White* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), p. 20

⁴¹⁵ Rosalind Rosenberg, *Jane Crow: The Life of Pauli Murray* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 49

⁴¹⁶ Ibid.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid.

awareness around the plight of southern sharecroppers – she was able to prevail upon Mrs. Roosevelt to speak at the event’s concluding celebration. When Murray was hospitalized later that year, Mrs. Roosevelt sent her flowers – something she would continue to do at other moments, such as upon Murray’s graduation from Howard Law School. Over the ensuing years and decades, the two women would work together closely on a number of initiatives, particularly in relation to labor and women’s rights. As an activist, educator, and attorney, Murray was involved with numerous organizations founded or chaired by “Mrs. R.” In her autobiography, Murray writes that Mrs. Roosevelt’s “indomitable courage ... shone as a great beacon of light to women like me ...”⁴¹⁸ And yet, as Eleanor Holmes Norton notes, despite the “deep and mutual affection” between the two women, and despite the fact that Eleanor Roosevelt was the “best-known woman in the world,” Murray “never hesitated to cajole and strenuously criticize” Mrs. Roosevelt “on national issues, especially race.”⁴¹⁹ Murray was not afraid to do the direct opposite of what Mrs. Roosevelt requested or demanded. The wife of the 32nd U.S. president may have been the most famous woman in the world – and an icon of the U.S. Left – but that did not stop Pauli Murray from exercising her own judgement and acting in accordance with her ethical priorities.

Murray declined to fall in line with the First Lady’s wishes, for example, in September of 1942, when the International Student Assembly convened in Washington, D.C. Attending the assembly as a delegate from Howard Law School, Murray was part

⁴¹⁸ Pauli Murray, *Song in a Weary Throat* (New York: Harper & Row, 1987), p. 293

⁴¹⁹ Eleanor Holmes Norton, Introduction. *Song in a Weary Throat*, by Pauli Murray (New York: Harper & Row, 1987), pp. ix-xii

of a group of students who “were deeply concerned with issues of human rights – British colonialism under which Gandhi, Nehru, and other Indian nationalist leaders were imprisoned, and Soviet imperialism in the Baltic states.”⁴²⁰ She quickly became “involved in an effort to get the Assembly to adopt resolutions calling for the release of the Indian leaders and condemning the Russian occupation of Lithuania.”⁴²¹ She also joined the other “Negro members of the United States delegation” in drafting and circulating “a statement calling for the destruction of the doctrine of race supremacy and urging the United States to demonstrate its moral leadership by taking the initiative toward the complete elimination of discriminatory racial distinction in the democratic nations.”⁴²²

Eleanor Roosevelt, as a member of the executive committee of the International Student Service, was also in attendance at the Assembly. As Murray would later recall, Mrs. Roosevelt “was aware of our efforts and focused on me both as a ringleader of the radical students and as someone who was less easy to control than some of the others. She was prepared to use her tremendous prestige to keep me in line.”⁴²³ Mrs. Roosevelt attempted to persuade Murray not to push for the resolutions on India and Lithuania, warning that if the resolutions were passed, the British and Russian delegates might walk out. Mrs. Roosevelt “carefully explained that the objective of the conference was to express unity of purpose and mutual confidence among the countries allied to combat

⁴²⁰ Pauli Murray, *Pauli Murray: The Autobiography of a Black Activist, Feminist, Lawyer, Priest, and Poet* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1987), p. 194

⁴²¹ Ibid.

⁴²² Ibid.

⁴²³ Ibid.

Axis powers” – an objective that would be frustrated by any offense caused to America’s allies.⁴²⁴ As Murray later wrote, “Mrs. Roosevelt could be stern at times ... and this was one of those times.”⁴²⁵ Murray found it “difficult to refuse” Eleanor Roosevelt’s insistent request, but she also “felt more and more the need to draw a line between official United States policy and the voice of independent private citizens speaking out on behalf of human rights.”⁴²⁶ In the end, Murray “went back into the afternoon session and fought for the two resolutions our caucus supported.”⁴²⁷ She helped pass the resolution on India, which urged that “negotiations be reopened at once between Great Britain and the Indian people toward the granting of political freedom to mobilize the Indian people for an all-out war effort along side of the United Nations.”⁴²⁸ It also supported “the principle of independence for colonials and equal rights and opportunities for national, religious and racial minorities” and called for “the abolition of all discrimination based solely on race, color, creed, or national origin.”⁴²⁹

In a 1982 speech called “Challenging Mrs. R.,” delivered at Hunter College as part of Hunter’s Conference on First Ladies, Pauli Murray said, “For many of the twenty-two years that I knew Mrs. Roosevelt, my role was that of a youthful challenger and critic, and my feelings about her were often ambivalent”⁴³⁰ Murray’s speech highlights Mrs. Roosevelt’s blind spots with regard to race; she recalls how the older

⁴²⁴ Ibid.

⁴²⁵ *Pauli Murray: The Autobiography of a Black Activist, Feminist, Lawyer, Priest, and Poet*, p. 195

⁴²⁶ Ibid.

⁴²⁷ Ibid.

⁴²⁸ Ibid.

⁴²⁹ Ibid.

⁴³⁰ Pauli Murray, “Challenging Mrs. R.” (Text of a speech delivered at Hunter College.) Printed in *The Hunter Magazine*, September 1983.

white woman's thinking had to be continually pushed and prodded on racial issues, leading to many sharp exchanges. At the same time, Murray describes Mrs. R. as having been "a mother figure to me," and ends her speech with the words, "Hopefully, we have picked up the candle, or perhaps fragments of the candle, that she lighted in the darkness and we are trying to carry it forward to the close of our own lives."⁴³¹

The tenor of Murray's relationship with Mrs. Roosevelt bears much in common with the relationship of Shridharani (and other young satyagrahis) to Gandhi, an elder whom they revered yet did not hesitate to push back against and critique. As a "youthful challenger and critic" of a world-renowned political elder, Murray would have identified with the disobedience Shridharani describes with regards to many satyagrahis' relationships with Gandhi. Farmer and Rustin would also have identified with this point. Disobedience – as I discuss further in the next section – was a hallmark of their generation of colored cosmopolitans.

Insight 3: The role of youth

The idea of disobedience, along with the concept of a movement spreading "beyond its matrix," comes up again in Shridharani's discussion of the role of youth in the Indian independence movement. In describing the dramatic expansion of the movement for Indian independence in the late 1920s, Shridharani writes:

About this time, a new element was gaining in importance in the Indian political mosaic. The youth of India was demanding a hearing. Their organizations spread like wildfire, and by 1928, there was hardly a town of any size in India without its unit of politically-minded young men [*sic*].

⁴³¹ Ibid.

These societies were sincerely radical. Their guiding spirits were nationalists with overtones of Socialism. They advocated that either Gandhi launch the nation once more in direct action or give up his leadership.⁴³²

Shridharani does two important things in passages like this one. First, he once again debunks the image of Gandhi as a sort of religious saint with endless masses of unquestioning followers. For readers like Farmer, Rustin, and Murray – whose aspirations and plans were rapidly expanding beyond what was considered acceptable by the established leaders of the various movements in which they were involved – it must have been empowering to read this affirmation that even an iconic leader like Gandhi was actually pushed in a definite direction by his followers. Secondly, Shridharani makes a point about youth and rebellion. While hegemonic narratives of the U.S. civil rights movement and of U.S. cultural history in general portray the “sixties” generation as one that “rebelled,” and therefore position the generation of Rustin/Farmer/Murray as the one that was rebelled against, the fact is that Rustin, Farmer and Murray were rebels in their own rite. Not afraid to cause a scene or go to jail, these young people defied their era’s politics of respectability. Indeed, as Pauli Murray later wrote of her 1940 arrest in Petersburg, Virginia, for refusing to move to the back of a bus: “Unlike the 1950s and the 1960s, when the Supreme Court had outlawed segregation, and going to jail in the civil rights struggle was commonplace, in 1940 it was somehow horrifying for ‘respectable’ people.”⁴³³ The idea of “respectability” has meant different things in different generations. In the 1940s, Black people who went to jail – no matter how well-dressed they were or how many academic degrees they had – were not regarded as respectable;

⁴³² *War Without Violence*, pp. 132-133

⁴³³ *Pauli Murray: The Autobiography of a Black Activist, Feminist, Lawyer, Priest, and Poet*, p. 147

even committed civil rights advocates tended to view nonviolent direct action, civil disobedience and jail-going as, in the words of Thurgood Marshall, “insane.”⁴³⁴ Murray, with her stiff middle-class upbringing, was acutely aware of the fact that “respectable” people, both Black and white, were likely to look askance at her actions. “One hates the ordeal,” she admitted in her prison diary, reflecting upon her public court hearing, “of being a fly under a glass tube.”⁴³⁵

Shridharani’s description of youth activists “demanding a hearing” in a Gandhi-led Indian nationalist movement calls to mind Raymond Arsenault’s (2005) discussion of the “restlessness” of some NAACP activists during the forties.⁴³⁶ While the national leaders of the NAACP during the forties were “committed to a patient struggle based on the belief that American constitutional law provided the only viable means of achieving civil rights and racial equality,”⁴³⁷ some young NAACP activists had other ideas:

Within the NAACP, some local activists – especially in the Youth Councils – felt constrained by this narrow, legalistic approach. But their restlessness had little impact on the organization’s national leaders, who maintained tight control over all NAACP activities. Alternative strategies such as economic boycotts, protest marches, and

⁴³⁴ When Bayard Rustin undertook the Journey of Reconciliation, for example, Thurgood Marshall told him, “[Y]ou are insane to try this, just dumb.” See John D’Emilio, *Lost Prophet: The Life and Times of Bayard Rustin* (New York: Free Press, 2003), p. 134

⁴³⁵ Pauli Murray, “City Court House, 3/27.” (Handwritten notes.) Pauli Murray Papers, Box 4, Folder 86, MC 412.

⁴³⁶ Raymond Arsenault, “CORE and the 1947 Journey of Reconciliation.” In Glenn Feldman (Ed.), *Before Brown: Civil Rights and White Backlash in the Modern South* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2004), p. 32

⁴³⁷ Ibid.

picketing were anathema in the national office, which saw itself as the guardian of the organization's respectability.⁴³⁸

The Howard chapter of the NAACP was one of the groups experimenting with the types of “[a]lternative strategies” mentioned by Arsenault. In 1943-44, the chapter launched a series of restaurant sit-ins and pickets opposing Jim Crow in Washington, D.C. Pauli Murray, who was studying law at Howard during these years, took a leading role in these activities. She was on the chapter's executive committee and served as its legal advisor. The sit-ins worried Howard President Mordecai Johnson, who feared that the university's reputation would be harmed and its funding jeopardized. He ordered students not to demonstrate under the banner of any Howard student organization. The students, writes Murray, were “stunned by what seemed to us a high-handed and even hypocritical action on the part of the university administration,” but the administration “feared that the university's public relations would be impaired through identification of the student actions with ... ‘crackpot’ movements. The university saw itself as having parental responsibility for student activities originating on the campus.”⁴³⁹ Howard's administration would have been remiss in its “parental responsibility” had it been seen as facilitating students' participation in “crackpot” activities like sit-ins.⁴⁴⁰ Professor Ransom, the faculty advisor to the Howard NAACP chapter, officially requested that the students desist from their direct action program. The students responded with a letter, on official Howard NAACP letterhead, informing Professor Ransom that “In a full

⁴³⁸ Ibid.

⁴³⁹ *Pauli Murray: The Autobiography of a Black Activist, Feminist, Lawyer, Priest, and Poet*, pp. 225-226

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 226

membership meeting of the Howard Chapter, it was unanimously decided that we are unwilling to discontinue our campaign as it is now outlined.”⁴⁴¹ The students showed respect for their professors and for Moradecai Johnson, but nonetheless continued with the sit-ins. To help prepare participants for the direct-action activities, Murray and other Howard NAACP chapter leaders put together a “Lesson Plan on Non-Violent Action.”⁴⁴² One of the major resources they used to prepare the “lesson plan” was *War Without Violence*.⁴⁴³

Young African American scholar-activists of the 1940s were – to use Shridharani’s words – “demanding a hearing,” not just from the NAACP, but from the multiple organizations of which they were a part. James Farmer, for example, was at the helm of an interracial group of young antiracist activists within the Fellowship of Reconciliation who struggled to make the organization’s (nearly all-white) leadership understand the urgency of directly confronting U.S. racial apartheid. Farmer later referred to this cadre of assertive antiracist activists within the FOR as the “young Turks” of the organization, since their insistent advocacy of satyagrahic action against white supremacy – “direct action a la Gandhi,” as Farmer put it – riled the white-dominated FOR establishment and ultimately overturned many of the organization’s settled expectations regarding race relations and the meaning of nonviolence.⁴⁴⁴

⁴⁴¹ Letter from Howard NAACP Chapter to Professor Ransom (May 2, 1944). Pauli Murray Papers, Box 18, Folder 396, MC 412.

⁴⁴² “Lesson Plan On Non-Violent Action.” Pauli Murray Papers, Box 18, Folder 397, MC 412.

⁴⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁴ Interview with James Farmer. In James Leonard, Jr. and Lula Peterson Farmer papers, Box 2R635, Folder titled “Literary Productions: James Farmer: Transcripts of Interviews.”

A brief discussion of how Farmer and the “young Turks” were – to use Shridharani’s words – “demanding a hearing” from the older FOR leadership in the early 1940s helps to illustrate how Shridharani’s description of the role of youth would have appealed to readers like Farmer. While cursory civil rights histories sometimes describe CORE as an offshoot of the FOR, or give the FOR credit for cultivating CORE, the full story of CORE’s founding is actually more complicated. Though the FOR was officially opposed to both European imperialism and American Jim Crow, the majority-white membership was more interested in anti-war activism than in anti-racist activism – indeed, much of the FOR leadership even expressed opposition to direct action against Jim Crow, arguing that activities such as protests and sit-ins were “violent” in that they sought to “coerce” whites into accepting the presence of Black people.

The initial CORE activities were therefore organized by Farmer independently; while many of the young participants in these activities were FOR members, their actions were carried out without the knowledge or authorization of the FOR leadership. This small, initial CORE group, with Farmer in the lead, formed an interracial living cooperative called “Boys’ House” in defiance of segregationist housing policies. The group carried out a campaign that combined picketing, distribution of educational pamphlets, and legal action in cooperation with NAACP activists in an attempt to desegregate a local skating rink. They successfully desegregated the Jack Sprat Coffee Shop via a nonviolent direct action campaign. After spending several months engaged in these activities, four or five members of the group then attended a FOR meeting to report on their accomplishment and request that the FOR officially recognize and fund the new anti-racist group, under the auspices of FOR’s (supposed) existing commitment to

opposing racism. Farmer, who had been working for the FOR as a “race-relations coordinator,” presented the case for CORE. “What I am proposing,” he explained, “is that the FOR, because of its thorough-going commitment to nonviolence and brotherhood, take the lead in setting up a vehicle through which ... non-cooperation with [the] evil [of U.S. racial apartheid] can be forged into a national movement.”⁴⁴⁵

The response from prominent FOR members was not enthusiastic. One individual, described by Farmer as a “portly, gray-haired council member” of the FOR, reacted with:

Do you really think that you changed the hearts of the White City [segregated roller rink] management? Did you persuade them that what they were doing was wrong? Or did you merely *force* them – back them into a corner and *coerce* them into changing their policy? Now I grant you, coercion is better than hitting them over the head, but is it non-violence? I think not. I think it is violence.⁴⁴⁶

The council member’s logic was inconsistent with the FOR’s support of Gandhian tactics in the Indian independence movement, but consistent with the negative manner in which many white FOR members tended to respond to the suggestion that nonviolent direct action be deployed to combat white supremacy in the U.S. (This apparent double-standard was indicative of the latent anti-Black racism within the FOR, despite the organization’s official stance against white supremacy.) As Farmer recalled in an interview several decades later, “Direct action [against Jim Crow] among the pacifists was a minority point of view. The majority point of view and the fellowship of

⁴⁴⁵ *Lay Bare the Heart*, p. 102

⁴⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

reconciliation [sic] was non-resistance. ... Their position was – don't stir up opposition. And the main thing is to convert the enemy rather than to change his practices.”⁴⁴⁷

A contentious two-hour debate ensued. At one point, as Farmer recalls in the notes to his autobiography, a member earnestly blurted out, “But, James ... your program causes *conflict*. We don't want *conflict*. We want *peace*. And *tranquility*.”⁴⁴⁸ Finally, the gathering agreed upon a compromise: the FOR would not officially sponsor CORE, but would allow Jim Farmer – whose title within the organization, after all, was “Race Relations Secretary” – to use part of his paid time to do CORE work.

A few weeks later, however, after conferring with the other CORE activists, Farmer changed his mind about the arrangement. If the FOR didn't want to officially endorse CORE or sponsor it beyond allowing one employee to devote a few hours a week to it, why not just form an independent CORE, an organization devoted entirely to using nonviolent direct action to combat white supremacy, free from the oversight of the FOR establishment?

But Muste, who had been supportive of Farmer's organizing CORE under the auspices of the FOR, turned hostile when Farmer indicated his intention to make CORE independent. In his autobiography, *Lay Bare the Heart* (1985), Farmer describes how he attempted to explain his plans for CORE during a one-on-one meeting with Muste. The

⁴⁴⁷ Interview with James Farmer. In James Leonard, Jr. and Lula Peterson Farmer papers Box 2R635, Folder titled “Literary Productions: James Farmer: Transcripts of Interviews.”

⁴⁴⁸ Qtd. in James Farmer's draft manuscript for *Lay Bare the Heart*. In James Leonard, Jr. and Lula Peterson Farmer papers, Box 2R630, Folder titled “Literary Productions: James Farmer: LAY BARE THE HEART, Manuscript, Chapters 8-9.”

meeting, Farmer recalls, was “cool and unfriendly, employer to employee.”⁴⁴⁹ In the scenario described by Farmer, Muste – his “eyes narrow slits and his brows joined in the middle” – interrogates Farmer as to why he wishes to start a national CORE and how he intends to fund the organization.⁴⁵⁰ When Farmer replies that he might try direct-mail fund raising, Muste replies: “You may *not* engage in any direct-mail fund raising for CORE. That would interfere with FOR fund raising.”⁴⁵¹ The meeting ends with a cold handshake.

Although Muste did eventually come around to supporting the independent CORE, the oft-repeated narrative of the FOR somehow giving birth to CORE elides the actual process whereby Farmer had to battle the FOR establishment – including Muste, his boss – in order to establish CORE. Such battles required a substantial amount of political courage on the part of the twenty-three-year-old Farmer, not only because he was a FOR employee, but also because Muste was a well-known figure on the U.S. political left. Farmer shared many key values – the Christian Social Gospel, pacifism, anticolonialism, left labor politics – with FOR members, and he continued to work with the FOR and its members, particularly Muste, as he built CORE. Farmer’s struggle thus represents, not a split from the FOR, but a bold decision to proceed with his own activist agenda despite FOR opposition to aspects of it, while remaining a part of the FOR organization itself. Ultimately, then, CORE flourished thanks to the determination of the “young Turks,” who persisted in “demanding a hearing” – from the FOR, from the U.S.

⁴⁴⁹ *Lay Bare the Heart*, p. 110

⁴⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 111

⁴⁵¹ *Ibid.*

left more generally, and from society at large. The story of CORE thus resonates strongly with Shridharani's description of how the "youth of India" demanded that Gandhi authorize a direct-action movement in the 1930s.

Bayard Rustin's involvement in the March on Washington Movement (MOWM), and his relationship to MOWM leader A. Philip Randolph, represents another example of radical youth challenging the powerful elders within a movement. Rustin was part of a group of MOWM youth organizers who repeatedly clashed with Randolph, viewing him as too willing to compromise with the Roosevelt administration. In 1941, when President Roosevelt, terrified at the prospect of a mass march on Washington, offered to create the Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC) if Randolph would call off the march, Randolph accepted the deal. In response, "the radical youth organizers not only denounced Randolph's cancellation of the march ... but also conspired to keep their activities alive until Randolph rescheduled the march on which they had set their hearts."⁴⁵² In reaction to this insubordination, Randolph "issued a public statement reprimanding the young renegades."⁴⁵³ In this case, Rustin subsequently acknowledged that Randolph's strategic decision to accept a deal with Roosevelt for the creation of the FEPC had probably been the best course of action; nevertheless, he and the other "young renegades" would continue to needle Randolph over the next several years.

Although Randolph had cancelled the scheduled march in 1941, he continued the MOWM as an organization, and the youth organizers continued to be an important force.

⁴⁵² Anderson 1997, p. 60

⁴⁵³ Ibid.

After World War II came to an end, Randolph employed his MOWM organizing capacity to form the League for Non-Violent Civil Disobedience Against Military Segregation – and, of course, Rustin and the other youth organizers were part of this effort. The League succeeded in pressuring President Truman to sign Executive Order 9981, which banned segregation in the armed forces. Rustin and the youth organizers wanted to continue with the civil disobedience movement and press for greater structural change, but Randolph issued an announcement that he was satisfied with the “substantial gain” of 9981, and that he was disbanding his organization and withdrawing from the field of civil disobedience.⁴⁵⁴ Willard Townsend, the well-known African American journalist and labor organizer, greeted Randolph’s announcement with an editorial in the *Chicago Defender* headlined “RANDOLPH DUMPS THE KIDS.”⁴⁵⁵ Waxing philosophical, Townsend remarked that “In every struggle and in every failure there are casualties,” and that the casualties in this case were “the morally conscious young Negro and white boys” who had “enthusiastically joined in ... to make the civil disobedience a living reality.”⁴⁵⁶ Townsend noted that “the young men” had “announced that the movement would continue” despite Randolph’s withdrawal; and, though unsure as to whether their strategies would succeed, he wished them the best.⁴⁵⁷ The movement, wrote Townsend, “should be kept youthful and placed on a high moral and spiritual level. It should not be cluttered up with archaic leadership or leaders who have special prestige axes to

⁴⁵⁴ Townsend, Willard. “The Other Side: Randolph Dumps the Kids.” *The Chicago Defender (National edition)*, Sept. 11, 1948, p. 15

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid.

grind.”⁴⁵⁸ He declared that there was “enough room for the young people ... to develop their own organizations and out of their own collective and youthful experiences to pursue actions” designed to achieve racial justice.⁴⁵⁹ “It will be their world tomorrow,” Townsend concluded, “let them experiment with today.”⁴⁶⁰

The experiences of young activists like Farmer, Rustin, and Murray in “demanding a hearing” from well-known leaders like Randolph, Du Bois, Muste, and Eleanor Roosevelt certainly resonate with Shridharani’s discussion of the role of youth in the Indian independence movement. But there are many other points in *War Without Violence* that would have been important for these readers. In the next section I discuss the relevance, for readers like Farmer, Rustin, and Murray, of Shridharani’s emphasis on the economic dimensions of the Indian independence movement.

Insight 4: The economic sword

Farmer, Rustin, and Murray were deeply invested in labor and economic issues, and understood the connections between racial justice and economic justice. They would have been particularly interested, therefore, in Shridharani’s discussion of the economic aspects of the Indian independence movement.

As an example of how Shridharani’s attention to economic structures and economic activities resonated with antiracist activists of the 1940s, we might examine the early years of CORE. Although CORE today is remembered primarily for things like sit-

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid.

ins, the CORE founders of the 1940s were also interested in using labor power and consumer power to promote racial justice. As Farmer recalls in his 1965 *Freedom When?*, the CORE founders were attracted by “utopian” notions of economic solidarity:

Gandhi’s program to revitalize rural handicrafts in order to make Indian villages economically self-sufficient suggested to us an analogous program for America. Rural Negroes carve quite amazing objects out of gourds and wood, and the women sew and knit beautifully. These skills, which have been passed down from generation to generation, are among the few possessions of some of the poorest people in the country. Why not turn some of them to profit? Why not, in fact, form an economic base for our movement by establishing a network of co-operatives – housing co-operatives, producers’ and farmers’ co-operatives – extending throughout the country, North and South?⁴⁶¹

Farmer’s thinking here was probably influenced by Shridharani’s discussion of the *swadeshi* movement, “a program of patronizing indigenous industries and of reviving cottage crafts.”⁴⁶² Shridharani describes the *swadeshi* movement as creating sources of income “for thousands upon thousands of the country’s semi-starved villagers.”⁴⁶³ He also points out that the mass cultivation of skills such as spinning and weaving has been instrumental in facilitating specific boycotts of British goods, notably cloth. Shridharani provides extensive information about the All-India Spinners’ Association and the All-India Cottage Industry Association – two major pillars of the *swadeshi* effort. In discussing student life at the various nationalist ashramas and vidyapiths that had been organized as part of the anticolonial education movement, Shridharani writes that these students “go out on field work which often covers hundreds of near-by villages,” and that

⁴⁶¹ James Farmer, *Freedom When?* (New York: Random House, 1965), pp. 57-58

⁴⁶² *War Without Violence*, p. 23

⁴⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 159

their mission includes “supplement[ing] the work of the All-India Spinners’ Association by popularizing hand spinning and weaving; they also teach other cottage industries and sing the praises of handmade goods.”⁴⁶⁴ In the same vein, the students help to “organize and advise co-operative societies” and “organize educational and agricultural exhibits for those who cannot read.”⁴⁶⁵ Farmer perhaps envisioned himself and his friends leading a similar sort of cooperative movement, recruiting students to help support the economic self-help activities of skilled but impoverished rural Black populations.

In 1946 Farmer wrote an article for *The Crisis*, “Unsheathing the Consumer Sword,” promoting the idea of “co-operative production” as a means of Black self-help in the face of white economic tyranny.⁴⁶⁶ The “sword” metaphor in the title emphasizes the potential of collective economic activity as a weapon to be wielded in the battle against white supremacy, and recalls Shridharani’s assertion that the All-India Spinners’ Association “strikes a telling blow at the commercial interests of Great Britain.”⁴⁶⁷ Farmer begins his article by asserting that “Negroes can be kept groveling in the southern dust only as long as, and to the extent, that they believe the fiction that their ability to consume rests of necessity upon the white man.”⁴⁶⁸ The fear of physical violence, Farmer declares, is less potent than the terror of economic strangulation: “Bodily harm, or violent death is bad; but seeing one’s family starve is a living torture worse than death.”⁴⁶⁹ Thus, when Negroes can produce their own goods, buy from and sell to each

⁴⁶⁴ *War Without Violence*, p. 161

⁴⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 161-162

⁴⁶⁶ James Farmer, “Unsheathing the Consumer Sword.” *The Crisis*, Vol. 53 (December 1946), pp. 362-364

⁴⁶⁷ *War Without Violence*, p. 159

⁴⁶⁸ Farmer 1946, p. 362

⁴⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

other, employ each other – in short, have an economic life that does not depend upon white managers, brokers, or customers – they will be emboldened to engage in greater civil and political resistance.

If the first part of Farmer’s argument recalls Booker T. Washington’s emphasis on self-help through agricultural and commercial activity by the rural masses, the second part departs dramatically from Washington’s policy of accommodating white supremacy in the social and political realms. The larger value of economic self-help and economic solidarity, for Farmer, is that it leads to and enables political solidarity and political action. (Farmer also does not suggest that political action should be placed on hold until economic goals have been met; he clearly wants immediate political action.) If, as Slate (2012) suggests, Gandhi’s emphasis on collective economic self-help and the dignity of crafts and agricultural labor was largely influenced by his admiration for Booker T. Washington, while his political demands were shaped in conversation with Du Boisian philosophy, and if Farmer’s thinking in “Unsheathing the Consumer Sword” was inspired by Gandhi’s student Shridharani, then Farmer’s article represents a fusion of two major currents of African American thought – the Washingtonian and Du Boisian legacies – filtered through the moving gears of South Asian social and political life back to African American readers via *The Crisis*.

In addition to advocating for the formation of farming cooperatives in rural Negro communities, Farmer suggests that “City folk could aid in production by spinning and weaving, producing fabric, clothing and other utilitarian and craft objects.”⁴⁷⁰ City-

⁴⁷⁰ Farmer 1946, p. 363

dwellers would also be “of invaluable aid in distribution” of the products generated by the rural Negro cooperatives.⁴⁷¹ Eventually, Farmer continues ambitiously, “factories could be built, owned by the people.”⁴⁷² The influence of Shridharani’s discussion of the All-India Spinners’ Association and All-India Cottage Association is evident here, as is Farmer’s interest in socialist ideals (an interest he also shared with Shridharani).

As we can see from the archives, readers like Farmer, Rustin, and Murray were interested in *War Without Violence* for reasons that went far beyond the list of “steps” for satyagraha. These readers connected with Shridharani’s observations about the nature of mass movements, the relationships between iconic leaders and disobedient followers, the role of youth, and the potential of economic solidarity. They also, as I discuss in the next section, probably connected with Shridharani’s critical interrogation of the nature of democracy.

Insight 5: Direct action and the limits of democracy

Readers like Farmer, Rustin, and Murray probably would have been particularly interested in Shridharani’s chapter on “Direct Action in Democracy.” In this chapter, Shridharani is interested in “the validity of non-violent direct action in a democracy and the place of Satyagraha, which is at times extra-legal, in American culture.”⁴⁷³ The importance of this chapter, for African American scholar-activists interested in satyagraha, would have been twofold, as Shridharani here handily dismantles and does

⁴⁷¹ Ibid.

⁴⁷² Ibid.

⁴⁷³ *War Without Violence*, p. 295

away with two of the era's most widely accepted arguments against the use of satyagraha to combat white supremacy in the United States: the argument that satyagraha is a unique feature of an essential Hindu/Indian/Oriental nature, and the argument that satyagraha is inappropriate or unnecessary within the context of American "democracy."

At several points in *War Without Violence*, Shridharani specifically rejects orientalist tropes that position satyagraha as some sort of inborn "Eastern" trait. While not specifically arguing that satyagraha *should* be employed in the U.S., he firmly dismisses the idea that satyagraha is inherently suited to Indians and unsuitable for Americans. "The writer is not so unmindful of his limitations as a non-American as to attempt with confidence to point the significance of Satyagraha as an instrument of action in present-day America," Shridharani acknowledges in his introduction to this chapter.⁴⁷⁴ "But he has lived continuously in the United States for the past five years. ... As a professional man returning to India, he has naturally embraced every opportunity during these years to appraise the quality of American culture and its central thrusts. Particularly, he has asked himself, over and over: Are there essential differences between my people and Americans?"⁴⁷⁵ If – as many Americans, both Black and white, claimed at the time – satyagraha represented a unique manifestation of a distinct Indian or "Eastern" nature, then the strategy could not be effectively applied in the U.S. But Shridharani's conclusion – after having "traveled across the great continent ... touched practically all of the forty-eight states ... [met] all sorts of Americans, [and] mixed freely

⁴⁷⁴ *War Without Violence*, pp. 295-296

⁴⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 296

with all classes of people”⁴⁷⁶ – is that no such essential differences exist. Rejecting orientalist tropes of satyagraha as inhering in some sort of mystical Indian national character, Shridharani reiterates a point to which he has alluded throughout the book: that satyagraha “is a technique just as war is, and can be just as universally applied.”⁴⁷⁷

This argument would have been important to readers like Farmer, Rustin, and Murray, as admonitions against the use of satyagraha to combat U.S. racism were being put forth not only by whites and accommodationists, but also by many established civil rights activists. Du Bois, for example – despite his effusive admiration for Gandhi and his vocal support of the Indian independence movement – had argued for years that satyagraha was not an appropriate technique for African American movements. Reiterating his position in the *New York Amsterdam News* in 1943, Du Bois argued that the power of satyagraha in India was due to the fact that “Fasting, prayer, sacrifice, and self-torture have been bred into the very bone of India for more than three thousand years.”⁴⁷⁸ While regarding satyagraha in India as a phenomenon that, “despite every effort to counteract it, is setting four hundred millions of men aquiver and may yet rock the world,” Du Bois maintained that “a similar occurrence in England or in America would be regarded as a joke or a bit of insanity.”⁴⁷⁹ The “culture patterns in East and West,” Du Bois asserted, “differ so vastly, that what is sense in one world may be

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁷ *War Without Violence*, p. 218

⁴⁷⁸ W.E.B. Du Bois, “As the Crow Flies.” *New York Amsterdam News*, March 13, 1943.

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid.

nonsense in the other. We cannot then blindly copy methods without thought and consideration.”⁴⁸⁰

War Without Violence calls into question this notion of an inherent and unbridgeable distinction between the “culture patterns in East and West”:

Are Indians so different from Americans or Englishmen or Frenchmen as to make a successful Indian practice in India hopelessly inapplicable in the West? The superficial differences among cultures are, no doubt, great. In the writer’s judgement, however, the point of reference lies below the externals of cultural patterning – one should ferret out, to use Pareto’s concepts, ‘residues’ from under ‘derivations.’

The carriers of every culture are human beings. And ... in basic *human* mechanisms people the world over are largely similar.⁴⁸¹

While Shridharani’s text thus countered notions of a “bred into the bone” divide between East and West, Shridharani himself, in his conversations with African American activists, also acknowledged what Du Bois’ 1943 article ignored: that these activists were not try to “blindly copy” the methods of the Indian independence movement, but to creatively adapt them to a U.S. context.

Even more important that his rejection of orientalist tropes, perhaps, was Shridharani’s critical interruption of the trope of “democracy” as a panacea for every kind of oppression. As a starting point for this critique, Shridharani examines the assertion by Chief Justice Charles Evans Hughes that, in a democracy, “What the people really want, they usually get. With the ultimate power of change through amendment in their hands, they are always able to obtain whatever a preponderant and abiding

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁸¹ *War Without Violence*, pp. 301-302

sentiment strongly demands.”⁴⁸² Countering the implication that democracy is its own solution to everything, Shridharani points out that the “mere existence of a democratic form of government does not solve” issues of inter-group conflict – more specifically, it does not inherently protect minoritized groups from systematic oppression by a privileged majority.⁴⁸³ He goes on to note: “Perhaps people generally get what they ‘really want’ in a democracy. But even Chief Justice Hughes admits that we can obtain in a democracy only what ‘a preponderant and abiding sentiment strongly demands.’”⁴⁸⁴ In other words, *which* people “get what they really want” via the rule of law in a democracy? Shridharani elaborates:

Experience and observation alike have shown that demands can be crushed and have been crushed in a democracy before a ‘preponderant and abiding sentiment’ could be rallied behind them. To be satisfactorily fulfilled, demands have to be made either by the preponderant majority of the people or by groups which can secure the support of a majority of the legislators through lobbying and pressure politics. But all the crucial causes and all oppressed groups in a democracy cannot muster such support, and hence the inadequacy of mere parliamentary procedures at times.⁴⁸⁵

Passages like this one bear directly upon some of the major dilemmas faced by activists like Farmer, Rustin, and Murray during this era. Powerful voices during the 1940s sought to silence African American protest by essentially telling African Americans they should be grateful to be living in a “democracy” rather than living in under Hitler. Shridharani speaks to the frustration experienced by African Americans at being

⁴⁸² Qtd. in *War Without Violence*, p. 295

⁴⁸³ *War Without Violence*, p. 298

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid.

constantly told that they were living under the greatest and most perfect form of government in the world. American “democracy” had never protected Black communities from white terror, and showed no signs of doing so in the near future.

Shridharani’s critique goes beyond the obvious impulse to point out that the U.S. was *not*, in fact, a democracy – or, at any rate, that not all of the purported citizens were allowed to participate in the democracy. The antiracist activists of the 1940s frequently made use of signs with slogans like “Take the MOCK” out of “Democracy,” in order to prompt members of the U.S. public to question whether they were really living in a democracy at all.⁴⁸⁶ Shridharani’s analysis, however, bypasses this question, cutting directly to an even more fundamental point: that the system of governance known as “democracy” does not inherently do anything to protect minoritized peoples from oppression.

Farmer, Rustin, and Murray favored democracy over any other system of governance, as did Shridharani. At the same time, these readers’ experiences reflected the point that Shridharani makes in this chapter: that a system of “democracy” – that is, a system of rule (*kratia*) by the majority of the people (*demos*) is not inherently an answer to the problem of systematic injustice. (Indeed, this point becomes particularly salient in light of the fact that the very term “democracy” is linguistically derived from an ancient Greek society based upon slave labor.) The “preponderant majority of the people” in the U.S. settler state had elected to preserve various forms of white supremacy throughout

⁴⁸⁶ As an example, see “Mixed Group Attacked by 5 Men in Car.” *The Baltimore Afro-American*, Sept. 12, 1942, p. 1. In this journalistic account of an interracial pilgrimage (which was attacked by five white men), the marchers were carrying signs saying “Take the ‘Mock’ out of Democracy” and similar slogans.

U.S. history. This “preponderant majority” of people did indeed “get what they want[ed]” in terms of racial organization, but this was not the equivalent of justice.

As an example of how Shridharani’s chapter on “Direct Action in Democracy” would have resonated with African American scholar-activists’ experiences, it is instructive to return here to Pauli Murray’s relationship with Eleanor Roosevelt, as the correspondence between the two women illustrates the inadequacy of democracy for addressing U.S. racial oppression. In the summer of 1942 Murray wrote a letter to FDR, and sent a copy to Eleanor, criticizing the president’s “seeming lack of moral outrage over the continued brutal treatment of Negroes in the South.” She also added that, given the attempt to rationalize Japanese internment via the claim that Japanese Americans were being “evacuated” from their homes for their own “protection,” perhaps FDR would find it equally within his power to protect Negro citizens by evacuating them from the “lynching areas” of the South. Mrs. Roosevelt responded by calling Murray’s letter “thoughtless,” asserting that the creation of the Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC) “in itself indicates where the President stands,” and adding that “we cannot move faster than the people wish to move” on race equality. (Of the Japanese internment, she wrote that “[W]e are at war with Japan and they [Japanese Americans] have only been citizens for a very short time.”)

With Eleanor Roosevelt’s admonition to Murray that “we cannot move faster than the people wish to move” in terms of African American human rights, it is clear that “the people,” for Eleanor, obviously meant *white people*. And, thanks to white-supremacist U.S. immigration law, white people did in fact constitute the vast majority of “the

people” in the United States. “Democracy” was no help here at all. What were African Americans to do when a “preponderant majority of the people” in the white-supremacist United States did NOT acknowledge the basic human rights of African-descended peoples?

This letter from Eleanor was just one of many correspondences in which the First Lady demonstrated an inability to understand the urgent nature of the ongoing struggle for racial justice. In 1939, after FDR made a speech hailing the all-white University of North Carolina – the institution from which Murray had recently been barred on the basis of race – as a “liberal” institution that was “thinking and acting in terms of today and tomorrow, and not in the tradition of yesterday,” an institution that typified “American liberal thought and American tradition,” Murray was struck by the fact that the President had “spoke[n] as if the local Negro population did not exist. The ‘liberal’ university that he had embraced so warmly had never admitted a Negro student.”⁴⁸⁷ Murray wrote to the President, with a copy to Eleanor:

12,000,000 of your citizens have to endure insults, injustices, and such degradation of the spirit that you would believe impossible.... We are as much political refugees from the South as any of the Jews in Germany. ...

Yesterday, you placed your approval on the University of North Carolina as an institution of liberal thought. ... You called on Americans to support a liberal philosophy *based on democracy*. *What does this mean for Negro Americans?* ... Does it mean that the University of North Carolina is ready to open its doors to Negro students ...? ...

Or does it mean that everything you said *has no meaning for us as Negroes*, that again we are to be set aside and passed over for more important problems?⁴⁸⁸

⁴⁸⁷ Pauli Murray: *The Autobiography of a Black Activist, Feminist, Lawyer, Priest, and Poet*, pp. 110-111

⁴⁸⁸ Qtd. in Pauli Murray: *The Autobiography of a Black Activist, Feminist, Lawyer, Priest, and Poet*, pp. 111-112 (emphasis added)

Mrs. Roosevelt's response to this letter made an attempt at showing sympathy, but ultimately offered nothing meaningful with regards to the actual issues Murray had raised. While Murray's letter had addressed several specific policy issues – such as Roosevelt's refusal to sign anti-lynching legislation – Eleanor ignored the substantive discussion of policy and instead delivered a cliché-laden homily. “The South is changing,” the First Lady wrote to her young interlocutor, “but don't push too hard.”⁴⁸⁹

The rhetoric coming from the White House (from both FDR and Eleanor) was representative of the era's “liberal” discourse with regards to race. African Americans were continually reminded of the supposed virtues of American democracy, and were simultaneously told not to “push too hard” for American society to recognize their humanity, or for the federal government to protect them from being murdered. Intellectuals like Murray knew that simply seeking greater participation in the democratic process was not enough to secure racial justice; indeed, African Americans had in the past *had* greater access to participation in activities like voting – particularly during the early years of Reconstruction – and this had not prevented the rise of post-Reconstruction lynching and Jim Crow laws. Again: Democracy did not automatically protect oppressed minorities from the mob instincts of a violent majority.

In another exchange, when Murray contacted Eleanor from Petersburg, Virginia, after having been arrested for refusing to “move back” to a broken seat in the rear of a bus, the First Lady sent a response through her secretary, repeating the Virginia

⁴⁸⁹ Qtd. in *Pauli Murray: The Autobiography of a Black Activist, Feminist, Lawyer, Priest, and Poet*, pp. 112-113

governor's statement that "Miss Murray was unwise not to comply with the law," and adding that "As long as these laws exist, it does no one much good to violate them."⁴⁹⁰

This is another example of how democracy in general, and American democracy in particular, was (often explicitly, but here implicitly) held up as a reason for not engaging in civil disobedience against Jim Crow laws. In other words, Eleanor Roosevelt certainly would not have objected to citizens of Italy violating Italian law in the course of resisting Mussolini. But African Americans were told that because they were living in a "democracy" they should not break the law.

This point raises the complex issue of the relationship between antiracist activism and the idea of "the law" during the 1940s. African American activists like Murray during this era condemned Jim Crow laws and racist legal systems, while simultaneously turning to "the law" as an important medium through which to seek justice. In other words, "the law" and its representatives represented a source of violence, but also sometimes represented a potential source of protection against violence. Civil disobedience, of course, entails opening disobeying the law. Shridharani's writing in this regard resonates with the necessary dual-relationship that activists like Murray had with the idea of the law. Shridharani acknowledges that the notion of "taking the law into one's own hands" in the U.S. context "may occasionally result in redressing a wrong when the sheriff and the judge are corrupt," but more often resulted in "the lynching of helpless scapegoats."⁴⁹¹ At the same time, he notes that "This fact constitutes a warning;

⁴⁹⁰ Letter from Malvina C. Thompson, Secretary to Mrs. Roosevelt (April 10, 1940). Pauli Murray Papers, Box 4, Folder 87, MC 412.

⁴⁹¹ *War Without Violence*, p. 299

but it does not obliterate the power and utility of certain kinds of more direct procedures when these are appropriate.”⁴⁹² Readers like Farmer, Rustin, and Murray would have appreciated this articulation of what they had already come to understand regarding the law and their relationship to it. They also would have appreciated Shridharani’s acknowledgement that “Fabian gradualism” was inadequate to such “large and urgent problems America faces”⁴⁹³ – an acknowledgement that stood in contrast to admonitions of “Don’t push too hard.”

As with most of the other insights from *War Without Violence* that I’ve discussed, Shridharani’s chapter on “Direct Action in Democracy” does not present ideas that would have been new to readers like Farmer, Rustin, and Murray; rather, it articulates a set of understandings that these readers were already developing in their own anti-racist work. As such, Shridharani’s critical interventions around the idea of democracy would have functioned, not as a source of new ideas, but as a means of echolocation. The same can be said about the point I discuss in the next section, which deals with Shridharani’s disentangling of satyagraha from notions of moral obligation.

Insight 6: Not a sermon, but a strategy

Perhaps one of the most important aspects of *War Without Violence* is the fact that Shridharani does not prescribe satyagraha as a moral imperative; rather, he suggests it as a *technique*, a praxis whose value lies in its efficacy rather than in a claim to moral superiority. “As a form of mass action directed toward the attainment of desired social

⁴⁹² Ibid.

⁴⁹³ *War Without Violence*, p. 307

ends,” Shridharani writes towards the end of the book, “satyagraha is just another technique which mankind can use at will. According to the present writer’s judgment, it has no claim to moral superiority over other methods of solving group disputes [I]t is useless to prescribe Satyagraha on the grounds of moral superiority, notwithstanding the efforts of Gandhi and his ardent disciples.” Instead, satyagraha should be assessed with respect to its potential efficacy within a given situation. “Satyagraha is not Aladdin’s Lamp. It cannot win victories by itself. Like war, it is only a technique.... No social end is gained by simply waving the magic wand of either Satyagraha or war. It rests upon the men [*sic*] who have to fight, violently or nonviolently.”⁴⁹⁴

This point matched James Farmer’s thinking with regards to CORE’s use of nonviolent direct action. One of Muste’s objections to Farmer’s organization of CORE was that he would not be able to “maintain a pacifist emphasis” outside of the FOR.⁴⁹⁵ But Farmer did not seek to “maintain a pacifist emphasis”; as he explained to Muste, “CORE should not be a pacifist organization, but rather, it should bring pacifists and nonpacifists together under a commitment to nonviolence as a tactic, a device for fighting racism.”⁴⁹⁶ Muste’s response was not only discouraging, but hostile.

Farmer’s description of “nonviolence as a tactic” clearly resonates with Shridharani’s assertion that “Satyagraha is just another technique,” indicating another confluence of thought among their generation of colored cosmopolitans. This shared

⁴⁹⁴ *War Without Violence*, p. 320, p. 322

⁴⁹⁵ *Lay Bare the Heart*, p. 111

⁴⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

orientation in particular would remain etched in Farmer's memories of Shridharani.

More than two decades later, Farmer wrote in *Freedom When?*:

Gandhi's disciple Krishnalal Shridharani, whose *War Without Violence* became our rule book and Bible, remarked that "most American pacifists were less interested than militant liberals in my work. This was as it should have been, as Gandhi's *satyagraha* has more in common with war than with pacifism."

In point of fact, most of us were American pacifists, accustomed to understanding non-violence largely in Tolstoyan terms.... But we were also militant pacifists, anxious to change the world, or at least our corner of it. Gandhi, whose assumptions about the power of love and righteousness resembled those of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, had nevertheless superimposed upon them a specific and viable program of action. This was what appealed to us...⁴⁹⁷

Shridharani's positioning of *satyagraha* as a technique, rather than a moral duty, was thus another aspect of *War Without Violence* that appealed to readers such as Farmer.

Shridharani's book, then, offered a series of perspectives and insights that resonated strongly with the experiences and priorities of Farmer, Rustin, and Murray. From his observations about mass movement politics, disobedience, and the role of youth, to his focus on economic issues, to his critical interrogation of democracy and his understanding of *satyagraha* as a technique rather than a moral absolute, Shridharani's insights allowed readers to engage in a process of intellectual and political pathfinding via conceptual echolocation.

Conclusion: Restless searching, creative praxis, and "our gospel, our bible"

⁴⁹⁷ *Freedom When?*, p. 55

I was a young socialist at that time. Not very much of an active organizational socialist. I just thought that there was no place for me to go other than [socialist presidential candidate] Norman Thomas. ... My Christian faith always took precedence over any ideological principle, and it was out of my Christian faith that I was a creative, nonviolent activist and had begun reading Gandhi as early as 1938 or 1939, not so much Gandhi, but one of his young followers, Krishna Shridharani And please don't call me a pacifist, because a pacifist, it has the connotation of being passive, and that was not me. It was carrying on a struggle through nonviolent, creative action.

- Pauli Murray, interview with Thomas S. Soapes⁴⁹⁸

When Pauli Murray first encountered *War Without Violence*, she was a busy activist and writer with a full calendar of activities and obligations. She belonged to multiple organizations and had a growing reputation as a highly-effective organizer and speaker. At the same time, however, this period in her life was one of uncertainty, of searching. She was searching – among other things – for new and creative ways to combat Jim Crow. Murray's interviews, speeches, and writings about this stage of her life consistently convey this sense of searching, and also – as in the excerpt above – make frequent use of the word *creative*.

In fact, Farmer, Rustin and Murray all frequently invoked the idea of creativity, both during their 1940s-era activism and in their later recollections of this period and its events. “Creative solidarity,” Farmer declared in *The Crisis* in 1946, “is the assassin of fear, the parent of courage.”⁴⁹⁹ He later wrote of the “role of creative conflict and tension in non-violent struggle.”⁵⁰⁰ Bayard Rustin famously declared, “I believe in social

⁴⁹⁸ Pauli Murray, Interview with Thomas Soapes, 1978. Pauli Murray Papers, Box 1, Folder 10, MC 412

⁴⁹⁹ James Farmer, “Unsheathing the Consumer Sword.” *The Crisis*, Vol. 53 (December 1946)

⁵⁰⁰ James Farmer, *Freedom When?*, pp. 73, 82

dislocation and creative trouble.”⁵⁰¹ Pauli Murray wrote that her experiments with satyagraha during the Petersburg bus incident had confirmed her belief “that creative nonviolent resistance could be a powerful weapon in the struggle for human dignity.”⁵⁰²

Farmer, Rustin and Murry, like Shridharani himself, were creative people in many senses. Murray was a writer and a poet, Farmer too was an avid writer, and Rustin was a singer, a composer and a multi-faceted performer. *War Without Violence* entered all of these innovative scholar-activists’ lives at a key moment of searching, of wondering how to create new strategies for combatting white supremacy. Although most historians who mention *War Without Violence* portray these young people as following Shridharani’s “instructions” or “steps” for satyagraha – and, indeed, the early CORE group did at first very consciously make use of the discreet steps outlined by Shridharani in the first section of his book – a closer examination of these scholar-activists’ unfolding praxes during the 1940s suggests that Shridharani’s text ultimately functioned not as a simple set of instructions to be followed, but as a catalyst for the *creative* construction of bold new approaches to the problem of white-supremacy in U.S. contexts. James Farmer, Bayard Rustin and Pauli Murray were not simply following a series of steps from *War Without Violence*; rather, they were in continuous *conversation* with the text (and its author) as they designed and tested their own creative, original activist repertoires. And that collective conversation with the text, as I have argued here, was useful not because it presented unknown information, but because it allowed for a process of intellectual and

⁵⁰¹ “Bayard Rustin, Civil Rights Pioneer, Aide to Martin Luther King.” *Chicago Tribune*, August 25, 1987. Accessed on 3/20/2016 at http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1987-08-25/news/8703040684_1_bayard-rustin-civil-rights-rights-pioneer

⁵⁰² *Pauli Murray: The Autobiography of a Black Activist, Feminist, Lawyer, Priest, and Poet*, p. 149

political echolocation; that is to say, Shridharani's writing echoed a set of insights that these readers were already developing through their own experiences, studies, and creative experiments.

In concluding this chapter's argument that readers like Farmer, Rustin, and Murray were interested in *War Without Violence* not just because of the "steps," but because of the book's theoretical content and its resonance with the readers' own emerging insights, I would like to reflect briefly upon the frequent use of the "bible" metaphor to describe these readers' relationships to this text. It is curious that both Farmer and Rustin use the notion of a "bible" to refer to the way in which they viewed Shridharani's book during the 1940s. Clearly they did not intend for this "bible" expression to have some literal religious meaning with regards to *War Without Violence*. At the same time, we can perhaps understand what they meant if we attend to their relationships with the actual Bible. Rustin was a Quaker. Farmer was a student of Howard Thurman – one of the era's most renowned exponents of Black liberation theology, and a vigorous opponent of religious dogmatism, chauvinism, and colonialist missionary evangelism. Pauli Murray, who would later become the first African American woman to be ordained as an Episcopal priest, noted that it was "it was out of my Christian faith that I was a creative, nonviolent activist and had begun reading Gandhi [or not so much Gandhi but Shridharani]" in the late 1930s. Given the religious orientations of these readers, and particularly their focus on liberation hermeneutics, it is obvious that they did not see the Bible as a cut-and-dried list of instructions; rather, Biblical study for them was a process of close textual examination and creative interpretation, with an eye to what they understood as a prophetic message of comfort for

the afflicted and justice for the oppressed. Obviously, Shridharani's book was not a spiritual guide and did not offer a prophetic message on a religious level, but the idea of *War Without Violence* as "our gospel, our bible" makes sense if we understand this expression as indexing, not the book's status or content, but the readers' *process* or practice: the practice of gathering around a text in order to collectively and creatively interpret its content within the context of a struggle for liberation.

Switching focus: From activist movements to the nation-state

I began my analysis in this dissertation by examining the ways in which African American educational thought influenced the Indian independence movement. I then traced the path of one of the students educated in the Indian movement's anticolonial schools, Krishnalal Shridharani, and highlighted some of the connections between Shridharani's educational path and the educational paths of his African American peers – specifically, James Farmer, Bayard Rustin, and Pauli Murray. In the present chapter, I have explored some of the ways in which Shridharani's writing resonated with the political and life experiences of Farmer, Rustin, and Murray.

In the next and final chapter of this dissertation, I switch my focus from activist movements to the state. After India's formal separation from Britain in 1947, the U.S. empire-state sought to bring the newly "independent" nation of India into Cold War alignment. As I argue in my final chapter, race and education, which had been centrally imbricated in the transnational political and intellectual project of colored cosmopolitanism, were also centrally imbricated in the U.S. project of *displacing* colored

cosmopolitanism and *replacing* it with a state-to-state relationship between a postcolonial Indian state and a rising U.S. empire-state.

Chapter IV – The “sisterhood arrangement”: Cold War contestation, the international politics of race, and U.S. involvement in the Indian Institute of Technology at Kharagpur

When Ralph C. Hay, a middle-aged professor of agricultural engineering from the University of Illinois, disembarked from a train in the town of Kharagpur, in the Indian state of West Bengal, he was greeted by a most unexpected sight. The year was 1954, and Professor Hay had accepted a two-year assignment to head the recently-created department of agricultural engineering at the Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur (IIT-KGP) – the first national engineering college to be opened in a newly independent India. Arriving at the Kharagpur railway station, Hay and his wife Vera found themselves receiving – as Hay later wrote to a colleague back in Illinois – “a royal welcome that exceeded anything one would ever expect back home. The entire group of 50 ag. engineering students and the two staff members were at the train to meet us, with a big bouquet for Vera and another for me to wear around my neck, they took photos, gave cheers, and escorted us to our new home in Bungalow A-7, right across from Prof. Malenowski.”⁵⁰³

Hay’s teaching assignment in India had been facilitated through what was referred to as the “sisterhood arrangement” or “sisterhood relationship” between IIT-KGP and the University of Illinois (UI). This international partnership, coordinated by the U.S. State

⁵⁰³ Letter from Ralph Hay to Professor Carter (March 25, 1954). Indian Institute of Technology Project File, 1953-1966, Record Series 24/2/12, Box #7, University of Illinois Archives.

Department, would have far-reaching effects within the nexus of education, technology, and Indo-U.S. relations. But the arrival in Kharagpur of American engineering professors like Hay was not the only thing that made 1954 a key year in terms of the role of education in the evolving relationship between the postcolonial Indian state and the U.S. empire-state.

Equally important was the U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, issued that same year, declaring racial segregation in U.S. public schooling to be unconstitutional. While segregation and inequality remained the *de facto* reality of U.S. schooling despite the decision, the State Department worked hard to obscure this reality and to use the Court's official ruling to improve America's image abroad – particularly among the new postcolonial nations in Africa and Asia, where politicians and publics, wary of U.S. racism, had largely resisted post-WWII diplomatic efforts to align these new nations with the Anglo powers in the Cold War. As numerous scholars have pointed out, racial image-management was a key component of U.S. Cold War strategy⁵⁰⁴; indeed, legal historians like Derrick Bell (1980) and Mary Dudziak (2000, 2004) importantly demonstrate that the decision in *Brown* was itself largely a product of U.S. Cold War considerations, rather than a sign of improvement in U.S. racial politics. The State Department circulated instructions to embassies around the world as to how to make maximum use of the Supreme Court's education decision for propaganda purposes, and news-reading Indian publics were regarded as particularly high-value targets for this racial-educational messaging. As George V. Allen, the U.S. Ambassador

⁵⁰⁴ Dudziak 2000; Kendi 2016, Chapter 28 (“Freedom Brand”); Lentz & Grower 2010; Borstelmann 2001

to India and Nepal, wrote to his colleagues regarding *Brown*, “You may imagine what good use we are making of the decision here in India.”⁵⁰⁵

This chapter brings the archives of the “sisterhood relationship” and other IIT-Kharagpur documents into conversation with historical scholarship demonstrating the importance of racial image-management within the U.S. project of aligning India in the Cold War. In doing so, my analysis spotlights the imbrications of race and education within the crosscutting ideological and material projects of Indian postcolonial nation-building and U.S. Cold War empire-building as they clashed and converged in the 1950s. I illuminate the interconnected operations of new educational projects and old racial systems at this key historical juncture of U.S. and Indian political trajectories by: (1) demonstrating the central role of international education partnerships, such as the UI/IIT-KGP sisterhood relationship, within U.S. strategic plans for aligning the Third World in the Cold War; (2) revealing the presence of racial image-management activities embedded *within* the UI/IIT-KGP sisterhood relationship; and (3) discussing the role of racialized gender in structuring the daily operations of the sisterhood relationship.

In order to clarify this three-pronged argument, let me turn again to 1954 – the year of the U.S. Supreme Court’s globally-publicized ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education*, and the year of Ralph Hay’s celebrated arrival at IIT-Kharagpur, the postcolonial Indian state’s new elite engineering college. Although Black students in the United States – who were discursively portrayed as triumphant beneficiaries of the ruling

⁵⁰⁵ Qtd. in Miller, Erin (2010). The Global Impact of *Brown v. Board of Education*. SCOTUSblog. Retrieved 2/19/2017 at <http://www.scotusblog.com/2010/02/the-global-impact-of-brown-v-board-of-education/>

in *Brown*, but who in fact continued to face systematic racial discrimination, harassment, and violence, both in and outside of schools – were geographically half a world away from the Indian students who greeted Professor and Mrs. Hay with cheers and flowers at the train station in Kharagpur, both groups of students were linked via their interpolation into the State Department’s strategy for bringing India (and, by extension, the rest of the Third World) into Cold War alignment. While the State Department portrayed African American students as grateful recipients of U.S. educational democracy (via the ruling in *Brown*), it positioned Indian students as grateful recipients of U.S. educational largesse (via arrangements such as the sisterhood relationship). To put it a slightly different way: In order to gain the trust of Indian politicians and publics during this period, U.S. officials sought both to *make invisible* the continued educational injustices against African American students, and to *make America hypervisible* as a benevolent source of educational assistance for Indian students.

This racialized project of selling U.S. exceptionalism via education was fundamentally sustained by a set of interpersonal relationships, logistical arrangements, and forms of labor anchored in materio-ideological structures of racialized gender. For example, State Department officials went out of their way to acknowledge the crucial role played by the *wives* of U.S. faculty members in promoting U.S. interests through international education partnerships; at the same time, an equally important but unacknowledged role was filled by Indian workers who carried out the feminized and devalued domestic tasks that materially underpinned the ideological promotion of U.S. exceptionalism in Kharagpur. In other words, an examination of the “sisterhood relationship” shows how the Cold War strategy of marketing U.S. exceptionalism (and its

corollary, U.S. global leadership) through international education partnerships, which necessarily included as a central feature the goal of improving the U.S. racial image abroad, itself depended upon established ideologies and structures of race and gender in order to function on an everyday level.

My argument centers three textual sources: a lengthy 1956 State Department policy briefing for U.S. university personnel involved in international education projects; the archived correspondence of UI professors teaching at IIT-KGP during the fifties; and the memoirs of Kailas Sahu, an early IIT-KGP graduate, whose writing provides a rare first-person account of student life at the institution during its first few years of operation. By juxtaposing these very different types of texts, this chapter performs a historical cultural studies analysis that relies upon *juxtaposition-as-method*. Borrowing from Kalindi Vora (2015), I understand the method of juxtaposition as involving “an intentional mismatching” of different “genres of documentation or other modes of archiving,” arranging different types of materials (policy documents together with creative or personal texts, for example) to create combinations that “may seem nonintuitive at first, but ... do important work in drawing attention to the otherwise unnoticed ground that makes their juxtaposition possible and productive.”⁵⁰⁶

Bringing together these various materials related to the early years of IIT-Kharagpur, with a focus on U.S. involvement in that institution, allows for an examination of an under-explored history with implications for postcolonial studies of

⁵⁰⁶ Vora 2015, pp. 21-22. Vora’s discussion of juxtaposition is framed with reference to Foucault’s *The Order of Things* (New York, Vintage Books, 1994), p. xvii.

India, analyses of international education, and critical studies of U.S. racial politics and Cold War strategy during the 1950s. In the immediate post-WWII period, the creation of a national education system for the newly “independent” Indian state was framed by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and other Indian leaders as an anticolonial project of national liberation, wherein a particular focus on science- and technology-related curricula would prepare Indian university graduates to design a set of infrastructures for promoting the material uplift of the nation’s suffering masses.⁵⁰⁷ Within this context, Nehru embraced the recommendation – first articulated by Sir Ardeshir Dalal, and then reiterated in the 1949 Sarkar Committee Report – that the new government establish a national network of engineering colleges, beginning with four initial campuses to be located in the North, South, East, and West of the country.⁵⁰⁸ These elite, publically-funded institutions would come to be known as the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs).

IIT-Kharagpur, the first of the IIT campuses, was established by the Government of India in 1951 with support from UNESCO.⁵⁰⁹ Focusing a historical lens on this first IIT campus allows for an exploration of the earliest years of the IIT system, when the IIT concept was still very new – almost as new as the postcolonial Indian state itself. Further, an exploration of the UI/IIT-KGP sisterhood relationship facilitates an examination of Indo-U.S. educational cooperation at a historical moment when U.S. officials and publics were still becoming accustomed to the reality of an India that was no

⁵⁰⁷ Prashad 2000, p. 75; Francis 2011, pp. 300-301

⁵⁰⁸ Francis 2011, pp. 297-298 and pp. 301-302

⁵⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 314

longer the “jewel in the crown” of the British Empire, but a formally independent state with the ability to make its own decisions regarding domestic priorities and policies, international relations, and trade. By putting this examination of the sisterhood relationship into conversation with scholarly understandings of the connections between U.S. domestic racial politics and international relations, this chapter brings forth new insights with regards to race and education within a transnational frame.

In what follows, I first set the stage by presenting relevant historical information on IIT-KGP, with special reference to Kailas Sahu’s memoirs, which give a strong sense of the *affective atmosphere* (Stephens 2015) associated with this new cutting-edge public engineering college within the context of a newly independent India. The political and affective importance of “education” generally, and technological education specifically, within the postcolonial Indian state of the 1950s, led to an environment of heightened sentiment and a strong sense of collective calling around this special college at Kharagpur, such that U.S. participation in the development of IIT-KGP became a particularly effective way of cultivating positive feelings (or, at least, mitigating negative feelings) about the United States among the educated Indian middle and political classes. After laying out this historical context, I turn to an examination of the transcript of a State Department briefing for university officials involved in international education partnerships (a briefing attended by the University of Illinois program coordinator for the UI/IIT-KGP sisterhood relationship), as a means of illustrating the central role of international education within U.S. Cold War strategy, particularly with regards to India. I also specifically highlight the imbrications of international education and racial image-management within this transcript. Finally, I examine the correspondence of UI

professors teaching at IIT-KGP – along with some of the correspondence of these professors’ wives, who were also positioned as important actors within the State Department’s overall project in India – and point to the ways in which the activities of these individuals were aligned with the State Department’s vision. Overall, this discussion shows how education and the politics of race coalesced to form a central axis of Indo-U.S. relations during the post-WWII phase of the Cold War.

Foundations: A campus at Hijli

... to see this India in the larger context of the world to-day, in the larger context of history...it seems to me that at the present moment there is no more exciting place to live in than India. Mind you, I use the word exciting. I did not use the word comfortable or any other soothing word, because India is going to be a hard place to live in.

... Here I stand at this place and my mind inevitably goes back to that infamous institution, for which this place became famous, not now but twenty or thirty years ago-the Hijli Detention Camp. Here in the place of that Hijli Detention Camp stands this fine monument of India to-day representing India’s urges, India’s future in the making.

- Jawaharlal Nehru, First IIT-Kharagpur Convocation Address, 1956⁵¹⁰

In order to understand the unique resonance of IIT-Kharagpur as a site for (hyper)visible intervention by U.S. actors, one must attend to the elevated political and affective stakes of this new engineering college within what we might broadly refer to as the postcolonial Indian imaginary. In other words, by involving itself in the IIT-KGP project via the creation of a “sisterhood relationship” with an American university, the

⁵¹⁰ Reproduced on August 20, 2011 in *The Scholars’ Avenue: The Campus Newspaper of IIT-Kharagpur*. Accessed on 2/19/2017 at <http://www.scholarsavenue.org/news/convocation-address-by-shri-jawaharlal-nehru-at-the-first-annual-convocation-held-on-21st-april-1956/>

United States could insinuate itself into a particular *idea*, an idea made up of an evocative series of historical images and public discourses arising from India's recent struggle for independence. To provide a sense of this *idea of IIT*, I turn in this section to a discussion of IIT-KGP's prehistory and origins.

Prior to India's separation from Britain, the area of Kharagpur was best known as the site of the infamous Hijli Detention Camp, a "base for British counterinsurgency" and – for Indians – a place of "imprisonment, torture, and death."⁵¹¹ In particular, a 1931 incident known as the "Hijli firing," in which guards opened fire on the (obviously unarmed) detainees, killing two of them, provoked widespread outrage. The two slain young men, Tarakeswar Sengupta and Santosh Kumar Mitra, are now remembered as the "Hijli Martyrs." In 1942 all of the prisoners were transferred to other jails, after which the site was used by the U.S. Air Force as a base for various bombing missions over what American officials referred to as the "China-Burma-India Theater." In 1951, the leaders of a newly "independent" India came up with a new function for the massive Hijli structure: Eager to establish the first Indian Institute of Technology but lacking any facilities for such an institute, they decided to use the former prison as a campus.

Into the erstwhile death site came an initial student body of 210 undergraduates and 14 graduate students, along with 42 instructors (both Indian and international) and an administrative staff headed by Dr. J.C. Ghosh, the institute's first director. As Kailas Sahu, a student during those early years, recalled in his memoirs many decades later, "all

⁵¹¹ Susan D. Pennybacker, *From Scottsboro to Munich: Race and Political Culture in 1930s Britain* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009) , p. 289

of the departments, teachers' offices, the library and all classrooms [were] shoehorned into the historic Martyrs' [building]. ... Laboratory classes for physics and chemistry were also there – in covered hallways, nooks, and corners.”⁵¹² Teachers and students were undeterred by the cramped set-up or the location's grim history. “Everyone,” Sahu remembers, “was energetic, enthusiastic, and exuberant” to be a part of this path-breaking new institution: “So what if it was still a ramshackle campus, isolated in the middle of a snake-infested, wildly overgrown, place of vast nothingness? In a strange way, these deprivations, by contrast, reinforced the image of our IIT's greatness.”⁵¹³

The heightened affective character of Sahu's memoir reflects a sense of the new IIT-KGP's crucial double-role within the project of Indian postcolonial nation-building. The new nation's premier engineering college had not only to train technical experts so that – as Dr. Tara Chand of the Board of Governors put it – “the spread of technical knowledge might be a basic factor in our fight against poverty”⁵¹⁴; it also was called upon to performatively enact (on a small but crucial scale) what politicians generally referred to as the “national integration,” or what Nehru more acutely called the “*emotional integration*,” of India.⁵¹⁵ The advent of India's formal independence had altered the stakes of a question that had been hovering over the Subcontinent for several decades: What, besides a desire to free themselves from the yoke of white-supremacist British colonial imperialism, did the innumerable distinct peoples of the region actually have in

⁵¹² Kailas C. Sahu (2012). *Made in IIT*. NP: Story Place Publishing. ISBN 978-1492877561 p. 57

⁵¹³ Sahu 2012, pp. 57, 73

⁵¹⁴ Dr. Tara Chand, Board of Governors, IIT-Kharagpur, speech at IIT-Kharagpur Foundation Day ceremony (1952). Qtd. in Sahu 2012, *Made in IIT*, p. 31

⁵¹⁵ Jawaharlal Nehru, speech at IIT-KGP, 1956. Qtd. in Sahu 2012, pp. 103-104

common with each other? In other words, what would be the basis for India's identity as a "nation"? In the early years of the postcolonial Indian state, this question of national identity became a pressing concern in terms of the viability of the new state's capacity to govern. The devastating violence of partition had left a lasting fear of further trauma – a fear that was not at all unfounded, as communal resentments in many areas of the country constantly threatened to boil over into bloodshed. The survival of independent India thus hinged on the project of uniting all of the new nation's different populations around the idea of a singular political entity, the postcolonial Indian state, in which all were presumed to have a stake. Within this context, the IIT-KGP founders stressed that one of the "enduring principles" of the institution had to be the "All-India character of its students and teachers"⁵¹⁶ – meaning that students and faculty should come from all of the different regions of India, to work together, to learn about each other, and to be drawn into a *national* structure of feeling, such that they would understand themselves as representing different parts of a vast, diverse yet deeply unified nation. The IITs, in other words, were intended to be nation-building projects in two distinct senses: not only were the students learning to build the physical infrastructure of the nation; they were also supposed to *become* a part of the *ideological* infrastructure of postcolonial Indian nationalism, to embody and project the structures of feeling that would (the founders hoped) maintain the imagined unity of India's countless distinct populations, with all of their incommensurate histories, competing religious traditions, separate languages, and heterogeneous ethnic and regional values and lifeways.

⁵¹⁶ Qtd. in Sahu 2012, p. 33

This conception of the Indian “nation” fostered within IIT-KGP reflected the vision of “India” popularized during the independence movement by figures like Rabindranath Tagore. Nobel laureate, philosopher, poet, playwright, composer, educator, author of India’s national anthem, Tagore (1861-1941) had strongly rejected the violent drive-to-homogeneity of the European conception of nationalism, invoking by contrast an idea of Indian-ness revolving around a poetically-constructed imaginary of unity-in-diversity; he also warned that nationalism must ultimately be subsumed under the larger value of *visva bodh*, or “world consciousness.” The name of the famous university founded by Tagore in 1921, *Visva Bharati*, is generally translated as something like “Communion of the World with India”; during Tagore’s lifetime his university was regarded as a dramatic educational rejection not only of colonialism, but also of monolithic conceptions of Indian nationalism. (Interestingly, IIT-KGP was actually connected to Visva Bharati via at least one administrator who had worked in both places. The physicist Pramathanath Sengupta, before coming to IIT-KGP, had worked at Tagore’s school for a number of years, and had collaborated with Tagore on the compilation of a popular Bengali-language science book.) Kailas Sahu’s memoirs of his time at IIT-KGP invoke the notions of “India” and “World” in ways that distinctly recall this Tagorean type of discourse, as in the following:

As the days went on, I met and became friends with students from all corners of India: from Nagaland to Rajasthan; from Kashmir to Kanya Kumari. [T]he spirit on campus was that of a family. I was made aware of this from [my] very first drawing class – in the spontaneous encouragement and support for a latecomer [to campus], given by a teacher and classmates I did not yet know. ... And I rejoiced at the

realization that, from [my home state of] “Orissa,” I had reached “India” and the World.⁵¹⁷

This notion of a diverse-and-united “India” reaching outwards towards the “World” pervades Sahu’s memoir. “Living in the mind-expanding [mixture] that was our halls and our classes,” he says, “we physically, intellectually, and emotionally rediscovered the rich cultural mosaic called India and had no problem extending our vision and imagination to [embrace] the entire world.”⁵¹⁸ These types of sensibilities, far from being a product of Sahu’s individual imagination, were assiduously cultivated by Director Ghosh and others at IIT-KGP, as per the explicitly-stated wishes of Nehru, the members of the Sarkar Committee, and the other state-planners involved in the establishment of the college. India’s premier engineering college, Ghosh declared, must also be a broadly-inclusive “home of students and teachers drawn from all parts of India, from all her classes and communities,” coming together to help form a “composite nation” that would be like a beautiful “mosaic,” with all of its unique pieces held together by the “cementing forces of tolerance, love and brotherhood.”⁵¹⁹

The two-week industrial tours undertaken by third- and fourth-year students in those early years of IIT-KGP provide an interesting snapshot of the intertwined material and ideological infrastructure-building imperatives of the institution. In their third year, students visited industrial sites in eastern India, and in the fourth year they visited sites in the southern and western regions of the country. The students and teachers traveled together in reserved third-class railway coaches which were parked on the railway station

⁵¹⁷ Sahu 2012, *Made in IIT*, p. 56

⁵¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 63

⁵¹⁹ J.C. Ghosh, speech at IIT-KGP Foundation Day ceremony (1952). Qtd. in Sahu 2012, *Made in IIT*, p. 27

siding during their overnight stays in different places, thereby serving as both transportation and accommodations. Sahu recalls how the students, “crowded onto makeshift wooden planks, which also served for beds,” were impressed when their teachers “gave up their right to travel in first class compartments in order to share our deprivations in the cramped, third-class coach.”⁵²⁰ Visiting various mines, factories, and other industrial sites throughout the country, the students not only gained valuable insights related to their fields of study, but also had the chance to see, as Sahu effusively recalls, “many facets of our big, beautiful, and busy India” and to “realize, first hand, the unity in the huge, diverse family that is India.”⁵²¹ Far from a mere afterthought, the inculcation of this idea of “India” was a major priority for the new IIT-KGP.

By becoming involved in an international education partnership that supported the development of the postcolonial Indian state’s new elite engineering college – a project that turned a British-era prison into a public educational institution for a new generation of Indian students, an institution that Nehru passionately described as “a fine monument of India, representing India’s urges, India’s future in the making”⁵²² – the U.S. benefitted from an association with an *idea* that had sparked the imagination of the educated Indian middle classes and political classes, which is to say, precisely those portions of the Indian population that the State Department most hoped to influence. The UI/IIT-KGP “sisterhood relationship” also opened an opportunity for U.S. citizens (specifically, white

⁵²⁰ Sahu 2012, p. 108

⁵²¹ Ibid., pp. 108-109

⁵²² Jawaharlal Nehru, convocation speech at IIT-KGP (1956). Reproduced on August 20, 2011 in *The Scholars’ Avenue: The Campus Newspaper of IIT-Kharagpur*. Accessed on 2/19/2017 at <http://www.scholarsavenue.org/news/convocation-address-by-shri-jawaharlal-nehru-at-the-first-annual-convocation-held-on-21st-april-1956/>

engineering professors from the American Midwest) to exert an influence through person-to-person contact with students, colleagues, and administrators. The importance of these opportunities offered by international education projects, particularly in India, was clearly outlined by State Department officials at a day-long classified briefing for university officials in 1956. I turn now to the transcript of that briefing.

Justifications: The U.S. Presence in Kharagpur

... But if I can just throw out another example of the kind of thing that I was talking about a while ago: I noticed a wire the other day – and, again, this is classified – to the effect that hundreds of Indians, literally hundreds of Indians were getting ready to go to the Soviet Union to learn how to work in the steel mills – not a dozen or 50, but literally hundreds of them. Now that is a threat which has very direct implications for us, and unless we meet it, both there and here, we will certainly have difficulty holding the line in this cold war in which we are engaged.

– Francis O. Wilcox, U.S. Secretary of State for International Organizations, 1956

The “sisterhood relationship” between IIT-KGP and the University of Illinois was arranged through the International Cooperation Administration (ICA), which was – in the words of President Dwight D. Eisenhower – a “semi-autonomous unit in the State Department.”⁵²³ (The ICA would change names over the next several years and would eventually morph into the US Agency for International Development, or USAID.) The ideological and geopolitical factors motivating U.S. involvement in this type of international educational activity were outlined at a classified 1956 policy briefing for

⁵²³ Qtd. in U.S. Foreign Policy Briefing for University Officials Participating in Technical Assistance Program (April 18, 1956). Indian Institute of Technology Project File, 1953-1966, Record Series 24/2/12, Box #1, University of Illinois Archives.

select university administrators, including the UI campus coordinator for the IIT-KGP sisterhood arrangement. Featured speakers at the day-long briefing included Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, ICA Director John B. Hollister, and Assistant Secretary of State for International Organizations Francis O. Wilcox. In addition, attendees heard from two U.S. officials covering specific geopolitical regions of concern: Howard P. Jones, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Far Eastern Affairs; and George V. Allen, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs. The transcript of this conference provides a window into the overall mentality and discourse of U.S. officials with regards to international education partnerships during this era – both in relation to the emerging Third World generally, and in India specifically.

Secretary of State Dulles introduces his remarks by emphasizing “the important role which education plays in international affairs,” particularly in light of the threat posed by the “increase of education within the USSR” and extensive Soviet participation in international education partnerships. The Soviet Union, Dulles reminds his audience, “has concentrated upon developing technicians of various kinds and sorts”; thus, although “[t]hey do not have many surpluses” in terms of food or other products, “they do have trained technicians in sufficient number to be sent abroad” – and, to make matters worse, “these people [the aforementioned technicians] are in the main sufficiently indoctrinated in Communist tactics and sufficiently believers in the Communist Creed that in a sense they wear two hats. They are not only technicians but many of them are political agents also.”

Compounding this Soviet educational threat, says Dulles, is the fact that there is not “the same urge on the part of our young people to go abroad and spread the American gospel as used to be the case.” In a language that imbricates and conflates American exceptionalism, Christian missionary rhetoric, and the idea of education, the Secretary of State (a self-described “Christian lawyer”) informs his listeners that:

In the 19th century Americans were very enthusiastic about what our country stood for. ... Our religious belief had more fervor and had in it more of the missionary spirit. As a result there was in proportion to our numbers a vast outgoing of our best youth, men and women, to carry the gospel, political, religious, and educational. ... Because of this, the United States in that period exerted an influence in the world of a degree and of a quality which I am afraid that we do not possess today, even though we have become since then a far greater power in terms of our material strength.

In referencing the supposedly lost “missionary spirit” of nineteenth-century America, Dulles may have been thinking of his grandfather, John Welsh Dulles, who had been a Presbyterian missionary in India from 1848 to 1853. Both John Foster Dulles and his brother Allen Welsh Dulles (the CIA director responsible for, among other things, overseeing the 1953 and 1954 CIA-led coups against democratically-elected leaders in Iran and Guatemala, and installing military dictatorships in their places) had inherited from their grandfather and father a strong belief that it was the moral and religious duty and right of the United States to use its “immense power” to “not only topple governments but guide the course of history.”⁵²⁴ According to biographer Stephen Kizner, the Dulles brothers’ aggressive platform of U.S. exceptionalism centrally included two particular convictions that had been “bred into them over the years”: The

⁵²⁴ Stephen Kinzer, *The Brothers: John Foster Dulles, Allen Dulles, and their Secret World War* (New York: Time Books, Henry Holt and Company, 2013), p. 3

first of these was the missionary belief that Western Protestant Christians possessed a unique understanding of “eternal truths” and thus had “an obligation to convert the unenlightened”; and the second was “the presumption that protecting the right of large American corporations to operate freely in the world is good for everyone.”⁵²⁵ While Allen pursued U.S. geopolitical and corporate interests in Latin America and the Middle East through violent CIA interventions, “Foster” pursued those interests in India through education. The sisterhood relationship thus represented a uniquely consequential moment of interest-convergence between John Foster Dulles, whose aim was to fortify U.S. imperial power, and Jawaharlal Nehru, the anticolonial techno-scientific nationalist whom Foster in fact “detested.”⁵²⁶

Dulles’ speech to the assembled university officials goes on to say that the way to “meet this situation” (of insufficient missionary spirit on the part of young Americans) is in part “by the education which you gentlemen and your colleagues are carrying on.” Here Dulles seamlessly shifts from discussing international educational partnerships to making prescriptions regarding the education of U.S. university students, telling his listeners that U.S. higher education “should, a little more than it does, make people realize the great values which exist in our form of society and in the spiritual beliefs from which it derives.” University education should give American students “the kind of missionary zeal to spread these beliefs about.”

⁵²⁵ Ibid.

⁵²⁶ Kinzer 2013, p. 199

The next speaker is ICA Director John B. Hollister. As Hollister is being introduced by one of the conference hosts, we learn that upon his (Hollister's) appointment as director of the ICA, "one of the briefing groups said to him semi-facetiously, 'You may not realize it, sir, but you are today becoming the President of one of the most complicated post graduate schools in the world.'" Hollister takes the stage and, after a few jokes, goes on to talk about his job of overseeing the many ICA missions operating in more than fifty countries across the globe. (Sites of ICA projects and partnerships are referred to as *missions*; hence the word "mission" appears repeatedly in Hollister's speech. Echoing Dulles' sentiments, Hollister also calls for "missionary zeal and spirit" on the part of Americans participating in international education partnerships.) Like Secretary Dulles, Hollister advises the university officials that "the great educational institutions of this country should be more interested in spreading our ideals and spreading what this country stands for around the world than any other group of people." He also reminds his listeners that "we want to have this program [the ICA] operate just as well as it possibly can for the good of the United States. The only reason we are in this world-wide [educational] activity at all is because we think it's for the good of the United States to carry on such a program."

Hollister makes particular reference to the wives of U.S. participants in overseas educational activities, declaring approvingly that "the women," despite everything they had to "put up with" in "some of the wild parts of the world we go to," still carried out their roles "with such cheerfulness and render[ed] such help to their husbands and [were] such a wonderful influence on the women" of these wild places. Likewise, in his thoughts on how to prepare U.S. participants to make a good impression in person-to-

person interactions abroad, he does not omit to mention these gendered help-meets of the travelling American professors. “It would be wonderful,” he says, “if we could have a long indoctrination course for everybody who goes out in the field so that not [just] every man, but his wife also, would be the type that would get along with the country they are sent to.”

During the Q&A session after Hollister’s speech, a representative from Texas A&M asks the ICA director to “comment briefly on progress that you think is being made [with regards to U.S. aims] in India, as compared with the Soviet progress and influence.” Hollister agrees that “the Indian problem” is “one of the most difficult ones we have because you find ... two entirely conflicting views.” He continues:

You have one group of people who say that India, with its 350 plus million people, is the most important place in the world in which to strive against foreign ideologies – and that, therefore, there ought to be practically no limit to the amount of money we put in. ... There is the other school which says why should we give those blankety-blank Indians a cent, all they do is kick us in the face everywhere. Krishna Menon [India’s chief delegate to the United Nations] is the biggest disturber in the world and if Nehru has the slightest love for us it is certainly like the old saying, ‘It’s all very [well] to dissemble your love but why did you kick me downstairs?’

After this rather strange recourse to “the old saying” – actually a line from the eighteenth century Irish playwright Isaac John Bickerstaffe – Hollister notes that the two conflicting U.S. views on India “come right head on into our programming.” The result is a sort of compromise in terms of budgetary allocations; the U.S. program for India over the past year has come to \$50 million, plus another \$10 million of technical assistance. “But,” he concludes, “to compare what we are doing, with the effect of the steel mill that the Soviets are putting in, I think is impossible to say.”

As the second half of the conference opens (after a lunch following Hollister's speech), one of the organizers announces, "I will repeat that I will appreciate your not attributing what you are hearing here today to any specific source. If there are any press in the room, we hope they will forgive us if we ask them to leave." Such reminders about secrecy and confidentiality are scattered through the conference proceedings. It is not entirely clear what makes these proceedings so confidential, aside from the fact that U.S. officials express very frankly their opinions and motivations regarding international educational cooperation.

The first talk following the lunch-break is given by Francis O. Wilcox, who announces that he will direct his remarks "to the changed Soviet tactics," particularly "within the United Nations," and to examining the challenges posed by these changed tactics. The new Soviet strategy, says Wilcox, includes seeking "political cooperation ... with Left Wing Socialists in various countries which were formerly the target of Soviet abuse, and great stress is being placed on trade and economic assistance." In addition, the Soviet representatives at the UN have been more interpersonally likeable: "You got the impression [at the UN General Assembly] that the tone was more moderate, the smile was broader. They were willing to meet you in the bar and have a drink...." This new attitude, Wilcox goes on, was also on display at a recent meeting of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, as reported by Mrs. Hahn, the U.S. representative to that commission. For Wilcox, an important part of what makes the Soviet representatives to the UN more likeable recently is that they seem to be toning down their critiques of U.S. racism:

[Mrs. Hahn] also pointed out that they leaned over backwards to avoid any cold war implications at all in connection with their discussion in the human rights field; that they had – at one stage when racial problems were being discussed – been almost forced to throw into the discussion the Lucy case. But then the Soviet delegate came around later and practically apologized to us that it seemed necessary at that time, and she did not want to get into any cold war recriminations. Imagine the Soviet Union apologizing to us for this kind of thing!

The “Lucy case,” of course, was the case of Autherine Lucy, the African American woman whose 1952 acceptance to the University of Alabama had been rescinded when university officials realized she was not white. After a three-year legal battle, NAACP attorneys secured a court order stating that Lucy’s acceptance could not be rescinded on the basis of race, with the result that Lucy was in the end accepted on a segregated basis: allowed to take courses, but barred from all residence and dining halls. When Lucy attempted to attend her courses, however, riots broke out and the car in which she was riding to class was pelted with stones by a mob of more than one thousand white men. In response, the university suspended Lucy, claiming that the suspension was necessary for Lucy’s own safety. For U.S. officials, situations such as the “Lucy case” were not human rights problems to be critically examined and urgently remedied, but – in Wilcox’s words – “cold war” issues; discussion of such situations had to be suppressed lest the U.S. image suffer. In Wilcox’s above assessment of the recent meeting of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, it is the Soviet delegates’ willingness to make less noise than they habitually did about U.S. racism (and to actually apologize for even mentioning it at all) that makes them seem more likeable than in the past.

Like Dulles and Hollister before him, Wilcox talks at length about the important role of U.S. universities, not only in advancing U.S. interests through institutional

participation in international educational partnerships, but also in cultivating in American students the will and the capacity to promote the U.S. image and agenda through personal interactions with people abroad. “[I]t does seem to me that whoever wins the cold war and the struggle for men’s minds should have men and women who can get our ideas across to the masses of the people. . . . We need people who can go down in the streets and talk to men and women who know that the current thinking is in that particular country.”

The Q&A following Wilcox’s speech once again includes specific reference to India, as Wilcox responds to a question about the quality (vs. quantity) of Soviet engineers and scientists by making reference to classified information about the ominous scenario of “hundreds of Indians, literally hundreds of Indians” getting ready to go to the Soviet Union for training related to steel mill work: “Now that is a threat which has very direct implications for us, and unless we meet it, both there and here, we will certainly have difficulty holding the line in this cold war in which we are engaged.”

Howard P. Jones begins his speech with yet another reminder that “in the conduct of our foreign affairs these days abroad it would be difficult to overemphasize the importance of the university contract program.” Jones suggests that educational partnerships represent an especially important tool for advancing U.S. aims – particularly in Asia, as “the pupil-teacher relationship in Asia is second only to the father-son relationship. It is very close. It is much closer than it is in America.” This orientation “carries over into the Alma Mater relationship”; hence, the building of a “cultural bridge between the [educational] institutions of these underdeveloped countries and our own”

will be of enormous benefit to U.S. interests. Jones also invokes the Soviet threat, using Burma as an example of the danger posed by the Russians. The USSR, he points out, has recently signed a contract agreeing to purchase 400,000 tons of rice a year, for the next four years, from Burma. “In other words,” Jones explains, “Russia is buying Burma’s surplus rice and the posture that it puts the United States in vis-à-vis Russia is really tough because here we are putting surplus rice into Asia while Russia goes to Burma and says, ‘We will take all the surplus you have.’” In exchange for the rice, Burma is receiving “capital goods and with capital goods go Russian technicians. You establish a Russian machine in a factory and your spare parts come from Russia. That whole trail is one we don’t like and we are doing our utmost to develop countermeasures.”

The final speaker on the transcript is George V. Allen, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs. Allen’s title is a bit misleading; he is actually in charge of a much larger area of concern than the phrase “Near Eastern Affairs” might suggest, as he notes at the beginning of his speech: “I am always glad to talk about the part of the world with which I am concerned, i.e. the Near East, Africa and South Asia from Casablanca to Calcutta, and from Athens to Capetown.” Allen’s remarks pay specific attention to India. Many Americans, according to Allen, “say that India is more inclined towards Russia than the West; that it is more than halfway behind the iron curtain.” But Allen cautions his audience to remember that there are “about 3,000 Indian students in Great Britain [and] more than 2,000 Indian students in the United States today.” In addition to emphasizing the Cold War significance of the presence of these Indian students in the Anglo world, Allen reiterates the importance of international education partnerships in building a “cultural affinity” that should be useful to U.S. interests. His comments in this

regard sound much like Allen's remarks on the foreign relations advantage to be gained by building upon the "pupil-teacher relationship" and the "Alma Mater relationship."

The policy briefing overall demonstrates the centrality of international education projects to the State Department's strategy for aligning the Third World within a global framework forcibly structured by the Cold War. The U.S. obsession with bringing the Third World nations into proper Cold War alignment certainly must have been felt with particular urgency by State Department officials on the day of this policy briefing, April 18, 1956 – i.e., exactly one year after the Bandung Afro-Asian Conference, which had begun on April 18, 1955. When representatives of twenty-nine newly independent African and Asian nation-states had gathered in Bandung, Indonesia, for a week-long conference to discuss their own mutual interests and concerns as separate from those of the Cold War powers, U.S. officials had been incensed. John Foster Dulles had publicly expressed his scorn for the conference, and declared Third World unity and nonalignment "an obsolete ...immoral and short-signed conception."⁵²⁷ Dulles' scorn was of no concern to the numerous Third World representatives at Bandung, whose perspective was aptly summarized in the words of Prime Minister John Kotelawala of Ceylon: "Moscow and Washington must realize that there are others, too, in the world and that the main concern of these others is peace."⁵²⁸ The ten-point declaration adopted by the conference reflected the ethic of decolonization, antiracism and peace embodied in Indonesian President Ahmad Sukarno's opening remarks: "We are united by a common detestation

⁵²⁷ Qtd. in Robert K. Schaeffer, *Social Movements and Global Social Change: The Rising Tide* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), p. 77

⁵²⁸ Qtd. in Von Eschen 1997, p. 168

of colonialism in whatever form it appears. We are united by a common detestation of racialism. And we are united by a common determination to preserve and stabilize peace in the world.”⁵²⁹ As Vijay Prashad (2007) writes, “These would be the elements for the Third World’s unity.”⁵³⁰

For the State Department, India was both an arresting metonym for the threatening specter of a decolonized Third World uncontained by U.S. hegemonic rule, and one of the most significant individual states within that actually emerging Third World formation. India’s paramountcy, in the eyes of U.S. strategists, resulted from a convergence of factors. First there was the geographic location of the Subcontinent, which was seen as a crucial area for the U.S. to control as a buffer zone not only against the Soviets, but also against China. India’s huge population was another factor: as Ambassador Chester Bowles pointed out, “Between them India and Japan have one-fifth of the world’s population,” including “millions of skilled and potentially skilled workers”; to this point Bowles added the fact that “India has vast natural resources.”⁵³¹ Those resources had long been under the control of Britain, and although India had recently gained formal independence, U.S. strategists still perceived the former “jewel in the crown” as rightfully belonging to the Anglo world; they spoke not in terms of trying to *gain* an alliance with India, but in terms of the danger of “losing” India. In other words, for U.S. policymakers, “India” represented both an enormous promise (the

⁵²⁹ Qtd. in Laura Bier, “Feminism, Solidarity, and Identity in the Age of Bandung” (In *Making a World after Empire: The Bandung Moment and its Political Afterlives*, edited by Christopher J. Lee. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2010, pp. 143-172), p. 145

⁵³⁰ Prashad 2007, p. 56

⁵³¹ Chester Bowles, “Memo: On Our Policy in Asia.” *New York Times*, April 10, 1955.

promise of controlling a key geopolitical location, a vast population and valuable natural resources) and an enormous threat (the threat of “losing” control of India to the Communist sphere or to an emerging nonaligned bloc of decolonized nations).

Phenomena like the Bandung Conference were discomfiting reminders of the threat posed by Third World independence in general and by India in particular, as Nehru and other Indian representatives played a leading role in shaping and promoting Third World unity and nonalignment. As Andrew Rotter (2000) notes, “Nehru often appealed successfully to public opinion in Asia and Africa, frustrating American attempts to warn nationalists on those continents” of the necessity to line up behind U.S. efforts to defeat the menace of communism.⁵³² Within India itself, intellectuals and newsreading publics were largely skeptical of U.S. intentions with respect to South Asia and often critical of America’s post-WWII militarism. The suspicions voiced by Indians regarding new forms of colonialism, their vocal critiques of U.S. racism, and the international efforts of Indian leaders on behalf of the nonaligned movement, all contributed to the emergence of South Asia as – to borrow from Robert McMahon – “an environment that would repeatedly wreak havoc with even the most carefully formulated American policy initiatives.”⁵³³ Within this context, international educational projects such as the UI’s sisterhood relationship with IIT-KGP were not simply about the exchange of technical knowledge; they were high-stakes geopolitical ventures aimed at shaping the Cold War map.

⁵³² Rotter 2000, p. xxv

⁵³³ Robert J. McMahon, *The Cold War on the Periphery: The United States, India, and Pakistan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p. 9

Francis Wilcox's allusion to the "Lucy case" gives a sense of the importance of race in this educational world-mapping project, while Hollister's paean to "the women" indicates the function of racialized gender in supporting the international mobility of the gospel of U.S. exceptionalism. These two interrelated factors – U.S. racial image-management and the operation of racialized and gendered roles and relationships in supporting the U.S. image and its accompanying ideologies – can be clearly tracked through the archives of the UI/IIT-KGP sisterhood relationship. I conduct this type of tracking in the next section.

Constructions: Gendered labors and racial displays

To introduce this final section, I return to the correspondence of Ralph C. Hay, whom we initially met at the outset of this chapter as he was arriving at the train station in Kharagpur to the cheers of the assembled IIT-KGP agricultural engineering students and staff. Hay was well qualified to fill the post to which he had been assigned in Kharagpur; the International Cooperation Administration's file on him makes clear his formidable level of expertise in agricultural engineering and his wealth of experience as an educator, both at UI and in agricultural extension programs throughout the state of Illinois. But Professor Hay's ICA file is not just about Professor Hay: In keeping with the importance afforded to "the women" by ICA officials like John Hollister, Hay's ICA file also contains a page of information about his wife. This page informs the interested reader that "Mrs. Ralph C. Hay" has studied "primary teaching and home economics," that she has six years of experience teaching primary school, and that she "has also been

active in Girl Scouts, Cub Scouts, Sunday School teaching, is President of the Ladies Aid of our church, an officer of PTA, and active in Women's Interchurch Council."⁵³⁴

Based on Professor Hay's correspondence, it would appear that Mrs. Hay thoroughly fulfilled the State Department's vision (as articulated by Hollister) of the ideal wife of the U.S. professor abroad – i.e., she was a help-meet to her husband and worked to present a positive image of the United States. Shortly after taking up residence in Kharagpur, Professor Hay wrote to UI program coordinator D. B. Carter that Mrs. Hay had “taken over management of our household servants and all in a manner to be a big relief to me and to make me quite proud of her. She has a cook-bearer and a sweeper on the job and they are really performing for her. We haven't eaten any better in any of the best hotels, than since Babulal came on the job.”⁵³⁵ In a letter to H. H. Jordan, dean of the College of Engineering at UI, Hay enclosed “some clippings from 5 Calcutta newspapers with a story USIS [United States Information Service] helped us get to the press,” and added that “Most of the credit for this goes to Mrs. Hay.”⁵³⁶ A major USIS strategy for improving America's image abroad was to feed stories to local (in this case Indian) news media so that positive coverage of the U.S. and its activities would appear to come from local sources; Mrs. Hay's labor in this regard epitomized Hollister's vision of how “the women” could serve the cause of U.S. influence while their husbands were serving as paid employees under international education contracts.

⁵³⁴ “Personal Record of Ralph C. Hay” (Oct. 15, 1953). Indian Institute of Technology Project File, 1953-1966, Record Series 24/2/12, University of Illinois Archives.

⁵³⁵ Letter from Ralph Hay to Professor Carter (March 25, 1954). Indian Institute of Technology Project File, 1953-1966, Record Series 24/2/12, University of Illinois Archives.

⁵³⁶ Letter from Ralph Hay to Dean H.H. Jordan (March 14, 1955). Indian Institute of Technology Project File, 1953-1966, Record Series 24/2/12, University of Illinois Archives.

The correspondence of (or, in Mrs. Hay’s case, correspondence about) individual U.S. faculty-wives at IIT-KGP, makes clear the fact that racialized gender and domesticity – specifically as embodied by white U.S. women who were, in Hollister’s words, “such [a] help to their husbands” – played a crucial role with regards to the U.S. mission in Kharagpur. Indeed, many of these women clearly embodied the type of “missionary zeal and spirit” called for by Hollister and Dulles at the State Department briefing. In particular, the letters of one Dorothy Dunkelberg, wife of Professor George Dunkelberg, reveal a detailed picture of how U.S. faculty wives at IIT-KGP were active and important participants in the State Department’s Cold War mission. These letters are also illustrative of the fact that the “sisterhood relationship” was always-already a racialized project. It is worth examining Mrs. Dunkelberg’s correspondence in some detail, for what this correspondence tells us about race, gender, and their intersections within the everyday life of the sisterhood arrangement.

Though her presence in Kharagpur is purely a factor of her status *as wife*, Mrs. Dunkelberg clearly understands herself as playing a *pedagogical* role there, as expressed in passages like this one:

[W]e hope they [Indians] have received indirectly a better impression of our way of life, and how it must be in the U.S. ... that capitalism is not an ogre but a rather efficient means to more luxuries for the least among us. ... [W]e feel keenly our responsibility as representatives of our government and of the American people.⁵³⁷

⁵³⁷ Letter from Dorothy Dunkelberg to Mr. Carter (March 29, 1958). Indian Institute of Technology Project File, 1953-1966, Record Series 24/2/12, Box #7, University of Illinois Archives.

The language of Mrs. Dunkelberg's letters distinctly resonates with the discourse of State Department officials like Dulles and Hollister. In one letter she writes of having come to India "with quite a missionary type spirit," since the United States had "need of being understood by India for her role in this part of the world will make a great difference to freedom"; it was in this spirit that she and her family had "endured India" (as she put it) for so many months.⁵³⁸ Mrs. Dunkelberg's discursive positioning of herself as having been sent to India to carry out an educational mission, despite the fact that she was obviously not a faculty member at IIT-KGP, speaks to the role of white domesticity within the State Department's project in India. The Dorothy Dunkelberg letters, like Hollister's laudatory comments about "the women" (everything they "put up with" ... "wild places" ... "render such help to their husbands" ... "such a wonderful influence on the [Other] women" ...), recall the nineteenth century cult of domesticity, which had assigned to white women two major roles: first, the white woman was to be a help-meet to her husband, and second, she was to provide a living example for less-enlightened peoples – i.e. racialized, colonized, and impoverished classes – of the proper way to live (or, to use Mrs. Dunkelberg's expression, of "our way of life").

Writing about the historical connections between the nineteenth-century cult of domesticity and the U.S. expansionist ideology of manifest destiny, Amy Kaplan (2002) coins the term *manifest domesticity* to describe these material and discursive links between gendered domesticity and racialized empire. Mrs. Dunkelberg's letters illustrate a mid-twentieth-century Cold War iteration of manifest domesticity, as she regards her

⁵³⁸ Letter from Dorothy Dunkelberg to Mr. Carter (October 31, 1957). Indian Institute of Technology Project File, 1953-1966, Record Series 24/2/12, Box #7, University of Illinois Archives.

wifely role as contributing to U.S. global hegemony via a pedagogical project of displaying “our way of life,” demonstrating the virtues of capitalism to “the Indians,” etc. Even Mrs. Dunkelberg’s lexical and grammatical choices – “*We* keenly feel *our* responsibility ... *We* came here with quite a missionary spirit ...” – clearly convey her sense that her own role of *U.S. wife* is just as important as Mr. Dunkelberg’s role of *U.S. professor*. Mrs. Dunkelberg’s exalted sense of herself in this regard was not just a product of her personal ego; it was – as indicated in the transcript of the U.S. policy briefing for university officials – a very real component of the State Department’s vision for how international education projects such as the UI/IIT-KGP sisterhood relationship should work. Interestingly, at one point Mrs. Dunkelberg monetarily quantifies the value of her labor on behalf of the U.S. mission in Kharagpur; writing to Carter with a complaint that her husband is overworked and that his salary is, in her estimate, insufficient for the needs of their family (which includes two teenaged sons and a younger daughter, all in various private schools) Mrs. Dunkelberg asserts: “The work I, too, have put in on this job would amount to about \$500 worth of salary ...”⁵³⁹

While pointing to the monetary value of her own contribution to the U.S. project in Kharagpur, Mrs. Dunkelberg makes the case for an increase in her husband’s salary, not primarily on the basis of labor, but on the basis of family size. “Consider,” she writes to the UI project coordinator, “that our plain cost of living, for our family of five here ... is three times that of the Hay family, four times that of the Price family, over six times that of the Anners or Pearces by a simple matter of economic figuring...”⁵⁴⁰ This appeal

⁵³⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid.

for pay based on family size might initially seem to diverge from Mrs. Dunkelberg's enthusiasm for "capitalism"; however, it can also be seen to accurately reflect the special position of the white heteropatriarchal family *within* U.S. capitalism at this particular historical moment. That is to say, within the U.S. capitalist "way of life" of the 1950s, the white family is a central value in itself and must be supported; white men must receive a "family wage," and this naturally means that a larger family merits higher pay. The underlying concept here is not one of providing greater resources based on greater needs, but of upholding the sacred institutions of the white family and white domesticity. It certainly would not have occurred to Mrs. Dunkelberg to suggest that Indian workers – her husband's Indian colleagues at IIT-KGP, for instance – should receive extra pay on the basis of having larger families.

"We were," Mrs. Dunkelberg complains in this same letter, "gravely misinformed about the cost of living here. ... Did you know that the cost of servants has gone up 20% since the Price's [sic] arrived?"⁵⁴¹ The cost of living for families with younger children is not so high, the professor's wife continues, as it only requires "an extra servant," but the Dunkelbergs, with the steep price of education for their teenaged sons, find it much more difficult to manage.⁵⁴² It is necessary to bear the cost of sending the boys to boarding schools nearly 1000 miles away, writes Mrs. Dunkelburg – particularly since, of the closer-range schools that would accept the Dunkelberg sons, "two had purely vegetarian diets and the third did include meats but had all Indian cooking."⁵⁴³ This was

⁵⁴¹ Ibid.

⁵⁴² Ibid.

⁵⁴³ Ibid.

clearly unsuitable: “Our boys are both crowding six feet, with established frames that would be irreparably damaged with such diets, as you can well imagine!”⁵⁴⁴ Food-related worries seem to have occupied a good deal of Mrs. Dunkelberg’s mental energy. “[A]ll foods here are nearly devoid of minerals and vitamins,” she writes at one point, “due to thousands of years of land usage with no putting back There is, of course, nothing of frozen or refrigerated foods here yet, and the few tinned goods are worse than inferior.”⁵⁴⁵ Later she writes of having “sent servants to Calcutta to secure fresh foods.”⁵⁴⁶

Easy references to “servants” are scattered throughout the correspondence of U.S. professors and their wives in Kharagpur. It is instructive to observe the cavalier naturalization of such a term – and the relationships and positionalities it denotes – within the language of people who most certainly did not have employees on hand to clean their homes, cook their meals, do their errands, wash their laundry, etc., when they were at home in Illinois. Some U.S. professors even specifically asked about the availability of good servants in Kharagpur prior to accepting assignments there.⁵⁴⁷ One Illinois professor working at IIT-KGP, in response to a query from a UI colleague considering a two-year IIT-KGP assignment, provides assurances that “Servants are available for almost any task. There are plenty of cooks, bearers, and drivers who have worked for both British and also for American officers, and they seem to understand our western

⁵⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁷ See, for example, Thornton Price letter to Ralph C. Hay (Oct. 24, 1954). Indian Institute of Technology Project File, 1953-1966, Record Series 24/2/12, University of Illinois Archives.

cooking and household needs.”⁵⁴⁸ This U.S. professor and his wife found their Indian servants to be “loyal and willing,” though, as the professor wrote, “They do require patience, understanding, training, and checking.”⁵⁴⁹ The monthly bill for “a cook-bearer, a sweeper, a mali (gardener), dhobi (laundry-man), and half of the drivers [sic] wages” came to just over 240 rupees or \$50, “plus food for their lunch.”⁵⁵⁰

The correspondence of U.S. professors and their wives regarding household matters in Kharagpur both elides and inescapably reveals the role of undercompensated and feminized Indian labor in maintaining the everyday material groundwork upon which U.S. families in Kharagpur constructed their personal and national status and influence. The reproductive labor provided by Indian “servants” – available at an artificially low cost to American professors’ households, thanks to the economic relations produced through centuries of colonialism – freed up time for the professors’ wives to undertake projects intended to enhance the positive visibility of the U.S. in India. When State Department officials like John Hollister expressed their appreciation for the work done by “the women,” these officials were thinking of wives like Mrs. Hay and Mrs. Dunkelberg. The patriotic contributions of such wives – from Mrs. Hay’s work with USIS on getting favorable articles into multiple Calcutta newspapers, to Mrs. Dunkelberg’s pedagogical display of “our way of life” – depended upon an infrastructure of master-servant (or mistress-servant) relationships whereby low-cost Indian workers performed the daily reproductive tasks that would otherwise have occupied the wives’ time.

⁵⁴⁸ Ralph Hay letter to Thornton Price (Sept. 11, 1954). Indian Institute of Technology Project File, 1953-1966, Record Series 24/2/12, University of Illinois Archives.

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁰ Ibid.

The function of racialized gender here – both in the form of white domesticity on display, and in the form of the low-cost feminized Indian labor that provided the material foundation for that display – bears an ironic relevance to the project of racial image-management within the U.S. State Department’s campaign to align India in the Cold War. That is to say, the U.S. public relations program for invisibilizing the ongoing oppression of African Americans was in part dependent upon racialized and gendered Indian labor that was available precisely through the economic relations produced through a long history of white supremacy. This relationship is clear not only in the correspondence of U.S. faculty wives, but also in the extra-curricular activities of the U.S. professors themselves. As an example, we might turn to the activities of Professor George Dunkelberg.

Professor Dunkelberg’s archived correspondence appears less prolific than that of his wife, but he did write to Carter in 1957 of having given a talk on “the race question,” noting that “it was a ticklish subject” but that he felt he was “able to get over a few points which the Indians had not thought of before.”⁵⁵¹ As Dunkelberg optimistically added, “Clint Pearce thought it went over okay.”⁵⁵² In using his leisure time (available thanks to the fact that he did not have to worry about the daily reproductive labor required to sustain his lifestyle) to improve the image of U.S. race relations in the eyes of a news-reading Indian public, Dunkelberg contributed to one of the State Department’s major objectives with regards to India. The “color question,” as the American consul general in

⁵⁵¹ Letter from George Dunkelberg to Deane G. Carter (November 7, 1957). Indian Institute of Technology Project File, 1953-1966, Record Series 24/2/12, Box #7, University of Illinois Archives.

⁵⁵² Ibid.

Bombay put it, was “of intense interest in India.”⁵⁵³ Acute awareness of U.S. racism among Indian politicians and publics constituted a major barrier to U.S. attempts to influence the internal and external policies of the new postcolonial Indian state. Chester Bowles, who served two separate terms as U.S. Ambassador to India and Nepal (first from 1951-1953, and then again from 1963-1969), repeatedly and insistently warned that Indian disapproval of American racism was endangering U.S. objectives in South Asia. Bowles also correctly pointed out that the concerns he had observed in India were metonymic of the larger problem of the U.S. image in the emerging Third World. “A year, a month, or even a week in Asia,” Bowles told an audience at Yale in 1952, “is enough to convince any perceptive American that the colored peoples of Asia and Africa, who total two-thirds of the world’s population, seldom think about the United States without considering the limitations under which our 13 million Negroes are living.”⁵⁵⁴ In 1953, Bowles requested that some “top notch Negro Foreign Service Officers” be assigned to India.⁵⁵⁵ Such assignments, Bowles explained, would be useful because “Indians, particularly those outside official circles in the capital, will open up much more freely to an American Negro than they will to others.”⁵⁵⁶ In addition, appointing African Americans as U.S. representatives in the region would “help us to combat to a certain extent the feeling in India about the Negro problem in the U.S.”⁵⁵⁷

⁵⁵³ Qtd. in Dudziak 2000, p. 33

⁵⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 77

⁵⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 59

⁵⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

Acting on concerns about the U.S. image abroad, the State Department revoked the passports of African Americans who insisted upon critiquing U.S. racism in front of foreign audiences – Paul Robeson and W.E.B. Du Bois, two Black intellectuals with strong ties to India, were among the most prominent figures to have their passports revoked – and simultaneously sponsored speaking tours in India for individuals expected to present a positive picture of U.S. race relations. As the *Indian Institute of Technology Project File* demonstrates, U.S. citizens who went to India for reasons supposedly external to this racial image-management project – e.g., engineering professors like Dunkelberg – in fact also contributed to the State Department’s racial re-branding efforts. The UI/IIT-KGP partnership itself served to create positive visibility for the U.S. in India – thereby counteracting negative perceptions caused by reports of U.S. domestic racism – but even beyond the image-management function of the partnership itself, the archives show that individual professors like Dunkelberg actively sought out opportunities to talk to Indian audiences about “the race question.” UI/IIT-KGP professors such as Dunkelberg, in other words, did not confine themselves to an engineering curriculum; they worked to promote the “big curriculum” (Schubert 2010) of U.S. exceptionalism and hegemonic global leadership.

Dunkelberg’s correspondence does not go into detail about the content of his talk on the “race question,” or specify his “points which the Indians had not thought of before,” but his message likely mirrored the State Department’s overall rhetorical strategy in India, which revolved around strategically admitting to certain well-known historical facts – 19th century chattel slavery, for instance – while forcefully promoting a teleological narrative of continual “improvement” in U.S. “race relations,” tied to the

assertion that the American way of life was naturally and inevitably leading to the elimination of all “prejudice.” This narrative of American progress and American exceptionalism is laid out at length in a 33-page booklet titled *The Negro in American Life*, produced around 1951 and distributed during Chester Bowles’ first tenure as U.S. Ambassador to India. Lecturing to an imagined audience of “foreign” readers, *The Negro in American Life* works to advance the State Department’s Cold War pedagogical project of educating global publics into a particular racio-geopolitical worldview – one in which the United States was positioned as the natural leader of the “Free World,” and racial conflict was assumed to be a minor, mostly regional issue, quickly fading into the past thanks to the moral superiority of American democracy. The first paragraph of the booklet positions anti-lynching activists and other critics of U.S. racism as anti-American: “One who wishes solely to develop anti-American sentiment needs only to touch the propagandist’s Alladin’s lamp of mob violence and race segregation. A lurid picture of a lynching or a Negro slum, to an audience which has no better information, becomes the ‘true’ description of the average Negro’s lot.”⁵⁵⁸ In contrast, the authors of the booklet assert that “What America has given – both good and bad – to its more than 13,000,000 Negro citizens can be judged from many perspectives.”⁵⁵⁹

To promote a focus on the “good” that America has supposedly “given” to its “Negro citizens,” *The Negro in American Life* makes a series of claims that seem dubious at best. The booklet announces, for example, that “Legal tools have helped solve the problem of race discrimination in America, but it remains essentially a question of

⁵⁵⁸ *The Negro in American Life*, p. 2

⁵⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

evolving human relations.”⁵⁶⁰ As this sentence was being written in 1951, racial segregation in K-12 schooling was the official law of the land in many parts of the U.S.; laws against interracial marriage were present in twenty-nine of the states; and Jim Crow policies legally enforced segregation in transportation and public facilities in many areas. Blithely ignoring this legal framework of white supremacy, *The Negro in American Life* portrays racism as an interpersonal and psychological issue (“a question of evolving human relations”), and suggests that both white *and* Black individuals are to blame for their seeming inability to get along. The problem, the booklet suggests, is “the emotional attitude of both races passed on from generation to generation.”⁵⁶¹

Another discursive strategy on display in *The Negro in American Life* is the portrayal of “the Negro” as uneducated. U.S. state-sponsored narratives promoted the idea that the suffering of “the American Negro” was actually a result, not of structural racism, but of the Negro’s lack of *education*, his ignorance and illiteracy; according to these representations, America was doing everything humanly possible to educate the benighted Negro and thereby alleviate his suffering. This message is exemplified in excerpts such as:

As long as he is ignorant and illiterate, the Negro is unqualified for the better jobs; without the improved income which comes from better jobs, he is handicapped in finding better housing; poor housing breeds disease and crime and discouragement. Given education, he is enabled to speak up for his rights; he increases the prestige of his community and his own self-respect and is able thereby to develop friendly face-to-face relations with the white population.⁵⁶²

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁶¹ *The Negro in American Life*, p. 5

⁵⁶² *The Negro in American Life*, p. 6

Note how the discourse of Negro ignorance and “crime” is linked here with the discourse of “face-to-face relations” – the idea, again, that racism is an interpersonal and psychological issue, and that the solution lies in an adjustment of individual attitudes, for which both white and Black populations must be held responsible.

The Negro in American Life takes aim at “certain foreign writers” who – according to the booklet’s narrative – presented U.S. racism as more widespread and significant than it really was. These “foreign writers,” the booklet complains, attempted to “inflate” white supremacy into a “national policy” issue, when really it was nothing more than “provincial chauvinism.” The booklet does not name any of the guilty “foreign writers,” but the reference is perhaps related to the fact that, as Dudziak (2000) notes, “Indian newspapers were particularly attuned to the issue of race discrimination in the United States.”⁵⁶³ Numerous books and memoirs by Indians who had spent time in the U.S. recounted experiences of racism and segregation. State Department propaganda thus had to discredit these many “foreign writers” in order to advance the U.S. narrative of benevolent “democracy.”

Given the extensive circulation, among Indian readers, of information about U.S. racism, it is reasonable to suspect that some of “the Indians” who heard Dunkelberg’s speech on “the race question” might have doubted the credibility of a white engineering professor from Illinois as an interpreter of this subject. Inhabiting a space that had until very recently served as part of a carceral apparatus devoted to maintaining a system of white-supremacist imperial rule in India, the residents of Kharagpur might well have

⁵⁶³ Dudziak 2000, p. 33

been wary of discourses that seemed to downplay or excuse white supremacy in its U.S. forms. Further, the letter in which Dunkelberg mentions this “race question” talk is dated November 7, 1957. His talk, in other words, was probably delivered in October of 1957 – a month or so after the Arkansas National Guard had to be deployed in order to protect nine African American students attempting to enter Little Rock High School in Arkansas. Three years had passed since the U.S. Supreme Court’s globally-publicized desegregation ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education*, and the events at Little Rock High School dramatically displayed the continuation of school segregation despite the ruling. White men formed a mob outside the school; the students were escorted into the building by the Guards, but ended up being sent home early due to the threat of whites rioting inside the school. This was the quintessential difficulty facing the State Department’s project of U.S. image management abroad: the department’s carefully-constructed rhetoric of a noble America protecting universal freedom and equality was constantly contradicted by news stories seeming to demonstrate the opposite. Francis O. Wilcox may have been relieved when the Russians didn’t make much of “the Lucy case” in 1956, but less than a year later there was Little Rock in the news again. No amount of State Department management could prevent the *Times of India* from carrying the September 5, 1957, headline: “ARMED MEN CORDON OFF WHITE SCHOOL: Racial Desegregation in Arkansas Prevented.”⁵⁶⁴

The purpose of the State Department’s racial image-management project – and of Dunkelberg’s participation in it – was, of course, to diminish barriers to U.S. influence in

⁵⁶⁴ *Times of India*, Sept. 5, 1957, p. 1

India, and thereby enable the U.S. to outmaneuver the Soviets in the ongoing Cold War struggle for influence in the region. UI professors' correspondence reflects U.S. resentment of Soviet activities in India. Professor Julian Fellows, for example, complains in a 1960 letter:

The Russians are very much in good grace here and I have been reminded that the U.S. is not the only government that is helping India and IIT. Dr. Sen Gupta told me recently that 7 Russian Professors are coming in January. Communist agitators are roaming freely all through this area. They had a meeting Sunday evening so near our house that we could clearly hear the harranging [sic]. We did not know what it was all about but our servants told us.⁵⁶⁵

Such passages shed further light upon the functioning of race within the UI/IIT-KGP sisterhood relationship, via a return to the role of “servants.” The availability of “servant” labor – made possible thanks to the economic relations produced through histories of racialized colonialism – not only freed up time for U.S. professors and their wives to devote to the State Department’s agenda; “servants” also played the role of interpreters, allowing U.S. professors to keep track of discourses that competed with the U.S. ideological message.

In sum, then, the correspondence of UI professors at IIT-KGP reveals multiple connections between racialized and gendered labor, racial image-management, and the overall State Department interest in postcolonial India’s new elite engineering college. Racial image-management was part and parcel of the U.S. mission in India, the mission underlying the UI/IIT-KGP “sisterhood relationship.” UI professors participated in the

⁵⁶⁵ Letter from Julian Fellows to Ralph Hay (October 26, 1960). Indian Institute of Technology Project File, 1953-1966, Record Series 24/2/12, Box #7, University of Illinois Archives.

State Department's racial and geopolitical mission not only through their role as classroom instructors, but also through their more direct promotion of the "big curriculum" of U.S. exceptionalism. The wives of UI professors, though not involved in technological education, also played a pedagogical role in Kharagpur; their role was to teach the "big curriculum" by embodying and displaying the "American way of life." And all of this activity was underpinned in multiple ways by the racialized and gendered labor of Indian "servants," who provided everything from daily reproductive labor to multilingual interpretation services.

Conclusions: Race, Geopolitics, and International Education

When Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru referred to IIT-Kharagpur as representing "India's urges, India's future in the making," he was both citing and reinforcing an affective atmosphere in which notions of education and technology were entangled with feelings of hope, acts of solidarity, and beliefs about the future of the new postcolonial nation. U.S. State Department officials, too, saw IIT-KGP as representing a future in the making – or rather, several *potential* futures, each constituting a threat to be staved off or an opportunity to be seized. By involving itself in IIT-KGP, the State Department sought to shape the future geopolitical map according to its own priorities. The UI/IIT-KGP sisterhood relationship emerged from an acute understanding of, as John Foster Dulles put it, "the important role which education plays in international affairs." The term *education* carries multiple valences within this context, as we can see from the 1956 State Department policy briefing for U.S. university personnel involved in international education projects. As Howard P. Jones notes in the briefing, the Department saw a

geopolitical advantage to be gained by building a “cultural bridge” between U.S. universities and the educational institutions of “these underdeveloped countries” like India. At the same time, the big curriculum of U.S. exceptionalism was to be promoted not just at the institutional level, but also at the level of the individual, through the targeted activities of individual professors and their wives. One of the major barriers to the extension of U.S. influence in India was the critical stance of Indian publics and politicians with regards to U.S. racism; hence, professors like George Dunkelberg sought to re-educate Indian audiences into a more benign view of U.S. race relations. Meanwhile, faculty wives like Mrs. Dunkelberg carried out – indeed, embodied – ongoing pedagogical displays of the “American way of life” and the virtues of capitalism. And all of these activities – the institutional bridge-building, the racial image-management, the display of gendered domesticity, and even the surveillance of ideological opponents – were underpinned by the racialized and gendered labor of Indian “servants.” The sisterhood relationship between the University of Illinois and the Indian Institute of Technology at Kharagpur – a British colonial prison re-purposed as an Indian postcolonial engineering college – is thus an illuminating prism for an examination of the constitutive entanglements of race and geopolitics within education in a Cold War world.

Conclusion

This dissertation has highlighted the centrality of education within the historical transnational solidarities of colored cosmopolitanism, and within post-World War II U.S. geopolitical strategies aimed at disrupting the alliances of colored cosmopolitanism and replacing them with a state-to-state relationship between the postcolonial Indian state and the rising U.S. empire-state. I have made my argument through an analysis of a range of texts: colored cosmopolitan writings, key figures' life-stories as texts, archived correspondence, and institutional documents, among others. These analyses have examined the ways in which Asian Indian and African American activists and intellectuals exchanged ideas about education during the early decades of the twentieth century; traced the ways in which a generation of young people became educated into the ideas and ideals of colored cosmopolitanism during the 1920s and 1930s; highlighted the ways in which these young people then "queered" colored cosmopolitanism in the 1940s; and finally examined the ways in which international education partnerships were used by the U.S. State Department as a means of disrupting colored cosmopolitanism in the 1950s and '60s.

For scholars of education, this project contributes to an exploration of how education functions as a geopolitical project. The research set forth in this dissertation unearths and examines a web of connections between education and the other elements of the dissertation's subtitle: race, decolonization, and the Cold War. With regards to curriculum in particular, this analysis reminds us that the same types of curricular formations can be and have been used by different political constituencies for entirely different purposes. The idea of "vocational education," for instance, has been used both

to uphold white supremacy and to challenge it. Similarly, the story of Krishnalal Shridharani and his alliances with African American scholar-activists like James Farmer, Bayard Rustin, and Pauli Murray, reminds us of how a curriculum imposed by the powerful can be re-worked by its recipients for their own purposes: India's British rulers instituted a curriculum based on English literary study in order to create a class of loyal imperial clerks, but students like Shridharani used their facility with the English language to make connections with anti-racist and anti-imperial scholar-activists in other parts of the English-speaking world – alliances that ultimately helped to undermine Anglo-Saxon domination in both hemispheres. The story of the “sisterhood relationship” between the University of Illinois and the Indian Institute of Technology at Kharagpur provides an example of how multiple (and conflicting) geopolitical agendas are present in a single educational institution, a single educational partnership. It also reminds us to think about multiple levels, layers, or scales of education occurring simultaneously – e.g. an engineering curriculum intertwined in daily life with the large-scale “big curriculum” of U.S. exceptionalism.

For scholars of ethnic studies, *Learning to Remake the World* sheds new light on how racialized categories of difference were constructed and experienced between around 1915 and 1965, and specifically highlights the central role of education in these processes. In particular, this project spotlights the ways in which Asian Indian and African American activists and intellectuals strategically understood themselves as part of a larger formation of “colored peoples” or “darker peoples of the earth,” and on this basis formed a set of transnational and trans-imperial educational alliances that challenged the established racial-imperial global order of the era. While the first three

chapters show how such transnational organizing can disrupt state and imperial power, the final chapter shows how state/imperial power can also retrench in order to interrupt the alliances that threaten it. In terms of the histories of specific racialized and ethnicized groups, the dissertation has focused attention on some of the significant activities of Asian Indians in the United States during the barred zone era, and called attention to significant transnational histories of African American intellectual and political engagement and influence vis a vis India. Most importantly, this study in race and education exemplifies the ways in which, as Weheliye (2014) puts it,

Relationality provides a productive mode for critical inquiry and political action within the context of black and critical ethnic studies, because it reveals the global and systemic dimensions of racialized, sexualized, and gendered subjugation, while not losing sight of the many ways political violence has given rise to ongoing practices of freedom within various traditions of the oppressed.⁵⁶⁶

Today, as during the decades under analysis in this dissertation, there are many ways of relationally understanding the categories of Asian Indian and African American. On the one hand, members of both of these groups are still subject to white-supremacist violence, sometimes in overlapping ways. For instance, on February 6, 2015, Sureshbhai Patel, an Indian grandfather visiting his son and grandson in Madison, Alabama, was senselessly attacked by police in front of his son's house; his injuries were so severe that doctors had to replace one of his vertebrae with a metal cylinder and plate. The police had initially accosted the elderly Patel after a neighbor had called to report seeing a "skinny black guy" walking around the neighborhood. This incident, of course, took

⁵⁶⁶ Weheliye 2014, p. 13

place within the context of an uncontrolled epidemic of police brutality against African Americans.

But, while in some instances Asian Indian and African American individuals and communities work together to combat the different (and sometimes similar) forms of white supremacy that impact all of us, it is also true that Asian Indians in the U.S. benefit from anti-Black racism, and that “Desis” too often participate in and contribute to anti-Blackness through an investment in a model minority mythology revolving around discourses of “education.” While “positive” stereotypes are no less racist than negative ones, Asian Indians often derive material benefit from the positive educational stereotypes attached to their names and faces, all while ignoring the ways in which these processes are predicated upon and reinforce discourses and structures of anti-Blackness.

This dissertation does not offer a prescription for solving the issues of racial and educational inequality and violence produced through the topos of “education” within “model minority” and “problem minority” discourses. What it does is to *historicize* these educational constructions of “model” and “problem.” This historicization reveals the role of U.S. policy in constructing these categories, but also reaches further back in time to illuminate a set of antiracist, anticolonial educational exchanges, educational solidarities that flourished in the past – and, I am optimistic enough to imagine, can flourish again in the future.

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