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FROM THE Editor

In this second issue of the Interdisciplinary Humanities Graduate Group Magazine, we received contributions from IH graduate students who are doing impressive work across the humanities. This issue includes graduate student reflections that span teaching experiences, grant-funded projects, and narrative nonfiction in the humanities. In addition to these stories, you will find graduate student essays that explore research taking place locally and all around the world.

The IHGG Magazine is a space to highlight the research of IH graduate students and faculty and we appreciate your support in making this second issue possible.

If you are interested in contributing to this semesterly newsletter, email isoto5@ucmerced.edu.

Thank You.





Immigration & Citizenship Legislation 1790-2019

By: Jamin Shih, IH Doctoral Candidate & Michelle Yeung, Sociology Doctoral Candidate

Academics are constantly envisioning praxis through research, however, another important avenue is through the classroom. Working with students to understand how social issues and historical legacies impact their lives, as well as, bridging learning spaces in and out of the classrooms emphasizes the connection between theory and social action and makes clear the applicability of course content outside of the university.

“we tried to brainstorm ideas on how to bring course content out of the classroom and situate it within larger conversations on immigration and citizenship happening today.”

While developing syllabi for our courses (“Topics in Immigration” and “Intro to Asian American Studies”) over the summer, we tried to brainstorm ideas on how to bring course content out of the classroom and situate it within larger conversations on immigration and citizenship happening today. It was important for our students to not only have an understanding of the historical creation of citizenship or the context of immigration, but to be able to identify the political discourses that served as the foundation and justification for these laws, and trace their lasting legal, social, and political impacts. In particular, we wanted our students to see immigration and citizenship categories, quotas, and bans not as natural

“To look at any one of these laws, court cases, or social movements on their own would tell an incomplete story, but by visualizing a broader history of immigration and citizenship legislation in the United States, our students would get a better perspective on the function of these laws and the discourses undergirding them.”

but as intrinsically part of a racialized, gendered, and classed nation-building project. To look at any one of these laws, court cases, or social movements on their own would tell an incomplete story, but by visualizing a broader history of immigration and citizenship legislation in the United States, our students would get a better perspective on the function of these laws and the discourses undergirding them.

The event was modeled after a community organizing activity that one of us had used to politicize personal immigration histories and connect them with a larger visual history of U.S. legislation. Throughout the semester, groups of students from three different classes put together timeline entries that included historical information, artistic visuals, and academic analysis that connected specific legislation or events with their historical precedents and lasting legacies. These were inspired by the format of several contemporary Asian American zines that we brought in to show each class. Zines were a popular tool for story-telling during the 1990s third wave feminism. It was a way for women to raise awareness about issues important to them and frame the issues in a way that most reflects their lived experiences. In addition, zines have historically been a medium Asian Americans have and continue to use to build community, create Asian American art, and foster political engagement. As a class activity, students from each class used the zines as a model to create a visual representing a particular point in U.S. immigration history, along with a description tying in how the event impacts how we view immigrants and immigration today. These included entries on Ozawa and Thind, the Hart-Cellar Act, and the Vietnam War protests and the art pieces spanned mediums from collages to paintings to artistic renderings of poetry.

The project culminated in a full-day display open to the broader campus and community with three invited guest speakers. ICE Out of Merced, a local community organization focused on ending state violence and surveillance, and undocumented immigrant rights, spoke on local immigration legislation and policing. They also invited students to upcoming town halls and rallies as a way for people to get involved locally. Amy Lin from ASPIRE gave a history of Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) undocumented immigrants and explored both the racialization and criminalization of immigrants in the United States. Finally, immigration lawyer Linda Barreto provided legal advice and gave

an overview of different citizenship processes and how to navigate an increasingly complex system. In addition to the visual timeline and guest speakers, we put up an interactive wall for attendees to write what they hoped or wished to see in 2020 for the future of U.S. immigration and citizenship legislation to encourage students to visualize what a just immigration and citizenship might (or might not) look like. Throughout the day, we had about 60 students and faculty attend, share their thoughts, and engage with our guest speakers.

The Immigration & Citizenship Legislation event gave us an opportunity to bring in community organizing techniques and knowledge to the classroom and provide students with interdisciplinary ways to engage in immigration and citizenship discourses. There are endless possibilities in engaging in praxis in the classroom. It is a discussion we, as educators, should continue to have when we ground our courses in social movements and critical race theory.



Images on page 4-5: Timelines, created by undergraduate student groups in CRES 020, SOC 182, and CRES 122. The Immigration & Citizenship Legislation event on Nov. 14, 2019, featured “historical information, artistic visuals, and academic analysis that connected specific legislation or events with their historical precedents and lasting legacies.” (p. 5)

From Noise to Sound Art: Taiwan's Cultural Strategy after 1989

By: Gwen Kuan-ying Kuo, PhD Candidate

How would the underground “noise” performers, in less than a decade, transform themselves to sophisticated digital artists frequently showing in international exhibitions? To understand contemporary Taiwanese art scene, we have to look into the post-1989 Taiwan, an island undergone nearly four decades’ martial law, the longest record in the world before 1987 when it was lifted. My research examines Taiwan’s “noise” subculture emerged from underground to institutions, along with the state’s cultural policy and soft power strategy, and the changing U.S.-China relation constantly plays in affecting Taiwan’s cultural formation.

In a humid afternoon in September 1994, a group of slowly gathering youths started circling under a bridge by Taipei’s Gungguan river band, a vast abandoned field adjacent to the border of this capital city with several colleges nearby. A simple stage casually installed only a few hours ago, barely anything else in the field hinted an art event besides of the crowds and their words of mouth.² A skinny figure hassled around the stage with a hammer in one hand and a cigarette in the other, occasionally greeting with acquaintances in the crowds; this bohemian hobo is Wu Zhong-Wei, a well-respected artist also known as “the father of Taiwan’s underground art fairs.”

This scene opened up the 1994 Taipei Broken Life Festival. Audiences were excited and shouted with the gigs by notorious bands, the LTK Commune and the ZSLO who proudly claimed themselves playing noise. The event went along with various activities not originally scheduled: intuitive theatrical performances, experimental film screening, self-published fanzine exchanging, overnight bon-fire dancing, and people camping on the field. This event has been scandalously reported by local news, and yet the media attention soon shifted to continually social upheavals and protests in Taiwan. Why the influx? The youths needed an outlet, both physically and spiritually; everything

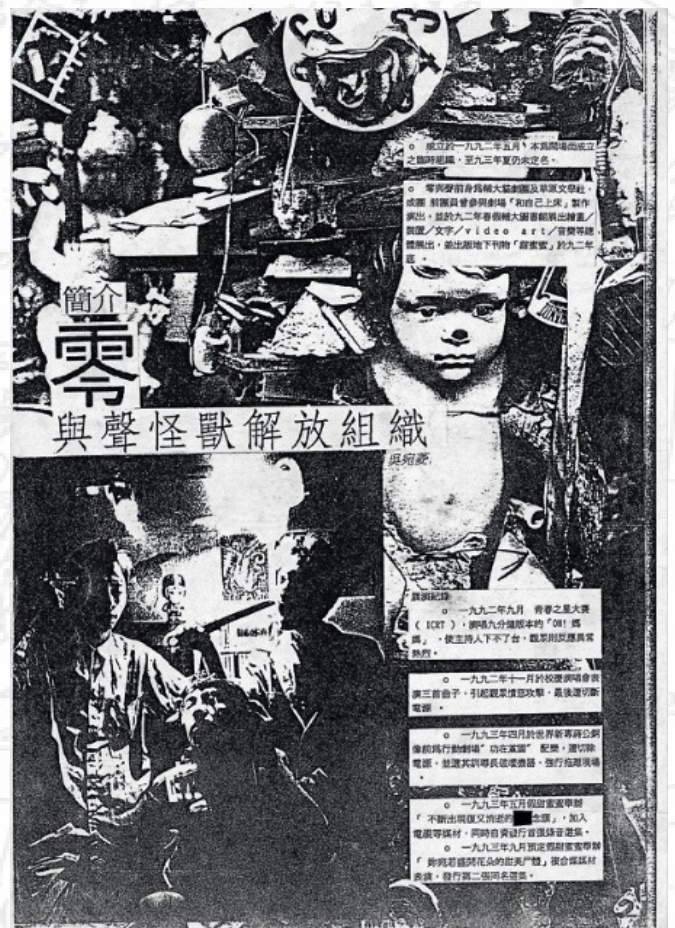


Image: The cover of ZSLO's fanzine. ©Image courtesy of ZSLO.

around them seems to be disordered and disoriented after the 38-year-long martial law abolished. What the law constrained was not only people's body, but the mind, since 1949 when Chiang Kai-shek the Nationalist general defeated by Mao Zedong's communist troops and flee to Taiwan as a dictator.

The lifting of martial law in 1987 brought out populist power, unforeseen street movements, and a series of political reformation. Remarkably, the 1990 student movement assembled nearly 6,000 students taking on the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall square, later renamed "the Liberty Square." With dynamic social movements opened up a space pushing the boundaries, the youths were motivated to "do something," but in such chaotic social circumstances, "what else should we do?"³

"This energetic yet nihilist vibe gave the birth of Taiwan's underground noise scene."

This energetic yet nihilist vibe gave the birth of Taiwan's underground noise scene. A group of National Taiwan University students formed the LTK Commune, a name hinted local identity by pronouncing the longest river in Taiwanese (Lo-tsui-ke river), not in Chinese; another group of four students from Fu-Jen Catholic University formed the ZSLO (short for Zero & Sound Liberation Organization). Both groups shared a strong fan-base, or precisely, "crowdbase" that grew out of Taiwan transitioning from a totalitarian to a democratic state. With seemingly unlimited possibilities and strong do-it-yourself spirit, the crowds wanted something new or provocative; they avidly participated in Wu Zhong-Wei's events.

Initiated by Wu and Lin Chiwei (a ZSLO member), with great efforts by Yeh Huiwen and numerous devoted friends, the 1995 Post-industrial Art Festival took in shape with increasing local and international groups,⁴ and even received governmental sponsorship.⁵ This revolutionary cooperation between underground groups with Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), in fact, was served to empower the newly established DPP, though the outrageous performance frustrated the government staff. To expand the voter-base in Taiwan's intensified bi-party competition, the state has adopted a strategy to include, if not intervene, the emerging cultural activity with some funding to boost the "party's" image [rhyme intended].

After the 1995 Post-industrial Art Festival, however, the "noise" scene appeared quieter without controversial event as previous ones. The performers continued under new buzz words "experimental sound," "electronic sound," "techno-," "digital," and "sound art" on their fliers acutely substituted the transgressive term "noise."⁶ The name-changing not only corre-

sponds to the society gradually stabilized as a pro-democratic system formed, but because Taiwan's cultural policy encourages art production combining digital technology and promotes international events with state-sponsorship. This is Taiwan's soft power strategy⁷ to gain international recognition to confront against China's rising economy and global influence, particularly Taiwan is the only democratic country that the U.S. does not recognize due to China's coercion. Taiwan's vibrant noise scene was flourishing thanks to the loyal participators and the mass movement milieu in the early post-martial law years. The increasing state-sponsored sound art events, patronizing "noise" in the institution of fine art, ironically, are silencing and reducing the original noise spirit. Briefly, artistic genius is socially constructed.

1. Responding to ShiPu Wang's examination of the complex relation between U.S. Cold War cultural diplomacy and Taiwan's postcolonial identity-formation in the post-WWII decades, my research investigates Taiwan's cultural formation in the post-martial law era.
2. I participated in Taiwan's "noise" movement as a co-editor of Noise-Taiwan fanzine and helped releasing handmade tapes, and wrote essays (in Chinese) for Taiwan's noise and sound art scene.
3. See Jeph Lo, "From Student Movements to the Institution: A Brief Review Taiwan's Sound Art." ArtCo Magazine. 2007 March.
4. In addition to the LTK Commune and the ZSLO, Taiwanese local bands joined in the Post-Industrial Art Festival included Dino, XJ Bitch and Dog; the international groups were Ouchi Apt. Fever (Japan), Bassshaham (Japan), C.C.C.C. (Japan), Schimfluch (Switzerland), Con-Dom (U.K.)
5. The Post-Industrial Art Festival was sponsored by Taipei County Cultural Center, which was led by Democratic Progressive Party in 1997.
6. After 2000s, Taiwan's experimental sound events include: Static Riot (2001), Electroacoustic Combat (2002), Taiwan's International Digital Art Forum (2002), Weather in My Brain Sound-Image Festival (2003), Bias Sound Art Festival (2003), Sounding Taipei (2004), the 2nd Weather in My Brain Sound-Image Festival (2004), the 2nd Bias Sound Art Festival (2005), the 3rd Weather in My Brain Sound-Image Festival (2005), to name a few.
7. According to political scientist Joseph Nye, soft power refers to the ability of nation-states to win allies and gain international influence by non-violent means. (Nye, 2011)



Image: The 1994 Taipei Broken Life Festival flier draw by Wu Zhong-Wei. ©Image courtesy of Wu Zhong-Wei.



Storytelling & Research

Starting the writing process with some of the basic building blocks of narration

By: Christopher Caskey, PhD Candidate

A group of graduate students received some insight on storytelling Oct. 28 when Jordan Fisher Smith visited campus. Smith, a non-fiction author who often covers science and the environment for general audiences, ran a workshop largely focused on how to write about your research for general audiences. Telling a story, Smith suggested, is a natural and effective way to communicate research both inside and outside the academy, not only to people unfamiliar with your work but to those unfamiliar to your discipline and subject matter.

“Telling a story, Smith suggested, is a natural and effective way to communicate research both inside and outside the academy,”

Scholars in the humanities are often immersed in stories, whether telling stories themselves or interrogating stories as part of their research. But Smith’s workshop reminds us of the value that

storytelling offers us when we write or talk ABOUT our research as graduate students. We have likely all practiced the explanations and elevator pitches for our research, which we use over and over in seminars, conferences, meetings and other professional, academic and personal settings. This approach to communicating research is always useful, but Smith’s workshop encouraged participants to consider settings and formats in which we can use these kinds of narratives to communicate our work.

The workshop participants considered what makes a good story, with Smith offering story types and storytelling strategies. Some seemed like familiar forms or archetypes: a who-done-it, or a story with an unsolved problem; a story of struggle or persistence through near loss of faith; one of serendipitous discovery; a story that undermines or confirms a widely held notion or an ancient inference built into language; or one that tells the hidden or silenced story. Others suggestions were more instrumental,

offering strategies to consider when building a narrative: employ an overarching metaphor; relate the story to shifting ideas in your field of study; be controversial; consider how your story challenged your own sense of spirituality of your own location within your field. Some of these suggestions are probably the kind of how-to's that can be found on a blog post about the writing process or in a handout assigned in an undergraduate journalism class. But Smith is often noted by readers, peers and critics for his ability to pull compelling stories out of abstract subject matter, so it's noteworthy that he suggests starting the writing process with some of the basic building blocks of narration.

“Such an approach can be especially useful for graduate students, and not just those of us in the midst of our dissertations.”



Image above: Jordan Fisher Smith, holding a copy of his book, *Engineering Eden*, during a workshop held for graduate students on Oct. 28, 2019. The workshop was titled, “Using Storytelling to Sell Your Research.” Previous page image: Ph.D Candidate, Chris Caskey, facilitates a Q&A session with Jordan Fisher Smith after Smith’s public reading and presentation on campus.

Such an approach can be especially useful for graduate students, and not just those of us in the midst of our dissertations. Applications for fellowships, grants and other funding mechanisms regularly demand research statements, personal statements, diversity statements or some combination of these. In my experience as a writing tutor, I have found myself working with students to make such statements read a little less like lists or timelines of accomplishments and a little more like stories organized around a unique narrative or idea. When in such a position, it is with considering what kind of story you want to tell people about yourself or your research. It may not only make the application more compelling, but it might more clearly communicate how your academic career and research subject matter are relevant to the grant and the organization funding it.

Jordan Fisher Smith is not an academic. He’s a narrative nonfiction writer who is particularly adept with stories that represent the complicated relationships between scientific knowledge, public policy, human experience and environmental change. His most recent book, *Engineering Eden*, explores how changes in ecological thinking during the 20th Century impacted land and wildlife management in America’s National Parks, with some tragic results. According to his own publicity materials, Smith “spent 21 years as a park ranger in California, Wyoming, Idaho, and Alaska. His book about a fatal bear attack and the century-long struggle to properly manage animals and ecosystems in national parks, *ENGINEERING EDEN*, won a California Book Award and was longlisted for the PEN/E.O. Wilson Award for Literary Science Writing. The Wall Street Journal called it ‘intensely reported, rousing, readable and ambitiously envisioned.’”

Smith’s workshop and campus visit was part of a grant-funded learning community dedicated to environmental sustainability and social justice. The visit also included a public book reading and open conversation between Smith and attendees.

Ghostly Matters of Gateway to Merced

By: May Kao Xiong, PhD Student

"The goal of this collaborative project is to strengthen the relationship between the university and community partners of Merced's diverse ethnic and geographic communities along with contributing to the cultural and economic development and renaissance of the city in order to offer a variety of artistic experiences."

During the summer and fall of 2019, I worked on the Gateway to Merced project, sponsored by the Beaster-Jones Lab in the Global Arts, Media and Writing Studies Program at the University of California, Merced. The project was funded by UC Merced Committee on Research and it focuses on Merced as a destination rather than a stop along the way to Yosemite. Its name is a play on the city of Merced's tourism slogan, "Gateway to Yosemite," which was adopted around 1908, an earlier time when traveling to Yosemite was not hours, but days. As outlined in the project blurb, "Gateway to Merced aims to create not a focal point for expression, but a gateway to participation for the community."

The emphasis here is on processes of community engagement over product, using old and new media to facilitate multiple narratives or paths and open-ended experiences." The goal of this collaborative project is to strengthen the relationship between the university and community partners of Merced's diverse ethnic and geographic communities along with contributing to the cultural and economic development and renaissance of the city in order to offer a variety of artistic experiences.

The outcome will include an oral history and artistic archival containing forms of new media approaches such as podcasting, blogging, vlogging, etc. that brings together creative and artistic interpretations with ethnographic and oral histories as well as approaches that integrate relational art and community engagement practices. At the same time, the purpose of this broad participation in artistic work is "to improve the livability of our economically-challenged locale by making visible and audible the stories of its diverse and growing populations in the common public spaces of Merced."

Moreover, this project is conjoined with another project, Music Memory Hours (MMH), that aims to connect people through music and memories. MMH is an ongoing project examining music-evoked remembering and mental health, which is a collaboration between the Dr. Jayson Beaster-Jones Lab at the University of California, Merced and Dr. Petr Janata Lab at the Center for Mind and Brain at the University of California, Davis.

As part of the ethnographic work in Gateway to Merced, I interviewed members from the Hmong and Laotian communities about their memories of growing up in and/or living in the city of Merced tied to music. In addition, as part of my own research, we explore, through conversation, their memories and experiences of the relationship between the university and the community.

"As part of the ethnographic work in Gateway to Merced, I interviewed members from the Hmong and Laotian communities about their memories of growing up in and/or living in the city of Merced tied to music."

In my analysis of the interviews, I find Avery Gordon's Ghostly Matters (2008) and her theories about ghostly matters and hauntings useful in understanding the memories and experiences of the communities in Merced. Ghostly matters are the missing gaps, stories, exclusions in history, etc. that are part of our social lives and hauntings are, as Gordon frames it, "an animated state in which a repressed or unresolved social violence is making itself known, sometimes very directly, sometimes more obliquely...when the over-and-done-with comes alive, when what's been in our blind spot comes into view" (xvi). However, she does clarify that "haunting is not the same as



Image: Applegate Park was a place of gathering for many Hmong families especially in the 1980s and 1990s.



Image: Music Memory Hour

being exploited, traumatized, or oppressed, although it usually involves these experiences or is produced by them” (ibid.).

In these interviews, music evoked certain stories or gaps from their memories tied to the members of the Hmong and Laotian community’s arrival in Merced whether as refugees or transplants from another state and to their memories of certain landmarks and/or locations in town. There have also been moments during the interviews with different community members where the ghostly hauntings come alive or come into view for the member and they acknowledge the feelings and emotions tied to it as well as the revelation of closure. In building a stronger relationship between the university and community, some community members express the ghostly hauntings that are felt in the everyday as the university continues to grow, i.e. the promises made, but left unfulfilled.

“Ghostly matters are the missing gaps, stories, exclusions in history...”

Imagining the ghostly matters or apparitions that haunt communities or rather the ghosts, whom communities think about, are very much a part of the living. The idea that we are surrounded by ghosts who are social life that once existed and still exists in the form of a ghost and resurface in hauntings to teach us about: living, what to explore, research, examine, remind us of our connections with the past and/or people, etc. There is something eerie in that sense, belief, feeling, etc., but something that can inspire us to live meaningfully. The Gateway to Merced project allows us to unearth the ghostly matters and hauntings in Merced from the diverse communities who have given shape to and will continue to do so in this city.

Anyone interested in learning more about or working on the Gateway to Merced and/or Music Memory Hours projects, please contact Professor Jayson Beaster-Jones at jbeaster-jones@ucmerced.edu.



Images: (Left) Merced Theater is an iconic landmark where some remember their first employment and the enjoyment of movies. (Right) The Merced County Courthouse Museum is a landmark that some Hmong families remember visiting when they were in school.



Images: The Merced County Library was a memorable spot for many Hmong students after school.

The Question of the Palestinian in Chile

By: Hugo A. López Chavolla, PhD Student



A popular saying in Chile goes: “en todas las ciudades de Chile hay un cura, un carabinero y un Palestino” (in every city of Chile there is a priest, a carabinier and a Palestinian). The priest remains a symbol of the Christian faith imposed by the Spanish empire upon its American colonies and the carabiniers, today’s Chile’s police force, derive their names from one of Spain’s military units during its monarchy and second republic: the carabiniers force of Spain. Hence, it is more than clear that the priest and the carabiner were inherited to Chile by its Spanish colonial past. But the question persists: what is a Palestinian doing in Chile? And more importantly, how has a Palestinian become so embedded in Chile’s culture that it has become a key element of one of Chile’s popular sayings? To begin answering such questions a glance at history might come in handy.

“To begin answering such questions a glance at history might come in handy.”

During the late 19th and early 20th century many people from the region of the Levant – today Lebanon, Syria, Palestine and Israel – opted to leave their homeland in order to escape the Ottoman empire’s forced conscription and avoid being used as cannon fodder. Thus, before Palestine even became an official geopolitical region – first in 1923 by British mandate as a result of the dissolution of the Ottoman empire post-WWI and later reiterated its existence as an independent state in 1988 – many people were already becoming diasporic Palestinians without even knowing it. They would begin the long trip from the port of Jaffa, Palestine, and travel to the ports of Genova, Italy, or Marseille, France, where they



Images above: (Left) Club Deportivo Palestino. (Right) Chilean and Palestinian Flags in Santiago de Chile. Previous page image: Chileans and Palestinians welcoming Palestinian refugees to Chile.

would then proceed to embark in a three-month journey to the Americas. In the case of the Palestinians whose final destination was Chile, they would arrive to the port of Buenos Aires in Argentina and then cross the Andes mountain range to Chile. It still uncertain what initially attracted Palestinians to the region of Chile but what it is clear is that those initial immigrants established a network of migration and planted seeds of solidarity between the two countries that only have grown stronger with time.

“Yet, as of today, Chile hosts the greatest diasporic Palestinian community outside the Middle East with a population of Palestinians estimated to be on the 500,000s.”

In his book *The Question of Palestine* (1979), Edward Said asserted that: “It’s somehow the fate of the Palestinians not to end where they started but somewhere unexpected and far away”. Indeed, 13,000 kilometers – the distance that separates Palestine and Chile – is very far away. Yet, as of today, Chile hosts the greatest diasporic Palestinian community outside the Middle East with a population of Palestinians estimated to be on the 500,000s. It has welcomed more refugees over the past decades than Egypt, Lebanon or any other Middle Eastern country. El Barrio Patronato is known in the capital of Santiago as the Palestinian neighborhood. And the city of La Calera – the first city of Chile declared by the United Nations as the “City of Solidarity” – in the region of Valparaíso, is known as the Palestinian city of Chile. Not only that, Chile is also host to the Club Deportivo Palestino, a Palestinian soccer team whose jerseys have been source of controversy in the past as they display the Palestinian flag and shape of the 1947 Palestinian territorial claims and promote a “Palestina Libre” (Free Palestine). And this is just a fraction of what Palestinians mean to Chile and Chile to Palestinians. So, the short answer to the early questions would be that a Palestinian is in Chile because she lives there and is a key element of a Chilean popular culture’s saying because she is an active element of the structure and substance of that culture. The long answer, well, that is what I am attempting to figure out in my research...

“The long answer, well, that is what I am attempting to figure out in my research...”



Image: George Hart Hall at UC Davis—where the UCHRI MultiCampus Graduate Student Working Group met to discuss project ideas.

Critical Infrastructural Studies

MultiCampus Graduate Student Working Group

By: Shiloh Green, PhD Student

In September 2019, Laura Gomez, Ivan Soto, and I, with graduate students from across the UC-system, were awarded funding for a MultiCampus Graduate Student Working Group from the UC Humanities Research Institute (UCHRI). Headed by a graduate student at UC Davis, our working group's project entitled, "Critical Infrastructural Studies: (Im)mobile Landscapes of Militarism, Race, and Settler Colonialism," places infrastructure as the interlocutor between the physical and social, and ultimately examines the ways in which infrastructure, as an ostensibly apolitical, unremarkable concept, undergirds and rationalizes Western colonial modernity.

"the ways in which infrastructure, as an ostensibly apolitical, unremarkable concept, undergirds and rationalizes Western colonial modernity."

Back in April when I chaired the 6th annual IH Graduate Student Conference, a graduate student from UC Davis emailed me out of the blue saying they had seen my bio on the IH site, and thought I'd be a great fit in their working group proposal to UCHRI. Joined by two IH graduate students, we collaborated on a joint UCHRI proposal. I had no idea planning the conference would have such a long-term effect on not only my professional life, but the professional lives of my UC Merced colleagues. Fast forward to our working group's first meeting in October, we determined we wanted to (1) contribute a special issue to an academic journal, and (2) host a conference where we'd each present our individual projects as part of the greater working group, as well as invite other scholars to present on the larger umbrella concept of critical infrastructural studies. This opportunity also allowed me to become a co-organizer for the conference, as well as a member of the editorial team. As only a third year, my knowledge of the academic world is growing each and every day, and I'm thankful for opportunities like this that enable me to gain skills that will become useful as I work toward a career in higher education.



UCHRI

CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURAL STUDIES CONFERENCE

DEPTHS OF VIOLENCE, SURFACES OF EMPIRE:

OPAQUE FORMATIONS OF RACIAL, SETTLER COLONIAL, AND MILITARIZED INFRASTRUCTURE

Unnoticed, unremarkable material configurations pervade and enable the quotidian operation of empire. Often disguised as naturalized processes of ecology or as indispensable logistical technologies, the spatial interventions defined by the broad rubric of 'infrastructure' serve a dual purpose to smooth and make seamless the violent processes of war-making and occupation, and simultaneously justify these operations as inevitable and unstoppable (Anand, Gupta, and Appel 2018). While scholarship associated with the 'infrastructural turn' has incisively dissected the material implications of infrastructural imagination as 'substrate' of the state (Carse 2016), few scholars have turned their attention to the interplay between technical, physical reconfiguration of the (built) environment and the social infrastructures which undergirds and rationalizes Western colonial modernity (Nemser, 2017).

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This conference emerges as part of the UCHRI Multicampus Graduate Student Working Group "Critical Infrastructural Studies: (Im)mobile Landscapes of Militarism, Race, and Settler Colonialism."

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Community Engagement and Military Power:

What is Promoted and What is Not

By: Andrew A. Sanchez Garcia, PhD Student



Image: Castle Air Force Base, Main Gate. 1950.

Military service has provided various opportunities for veterans, including financial assistance, employment, and social mobility. The United States' military, since its formal inception, has been called upon multiple times to defend the country and its citizens during times of war. Additionally, delineating how the military factors into people's lives, families, and communities is important and an addition to this scope for the need of recognition of the impacts of the past. However, the military is an institution, which has been viewed in terms of racial, colonial, and imperial power. However, the force of the military has not been confined to solely times of warfare. Despite the positive opportunities gained from military service, it is an institution which can and does yield power in issues of race and gender. Although these influences are prominent, they are not always presented to the community as positive or inclusive within military base life and structure.

This article will take a local historical example where the military was not only present within the community, but there was a high regard for community engagement, which served as a distraction to the reality of a military base in the community, synonymous with warfare and deaths. This example is the Castle Air Force Base. Located in Atwater California, its legacy is felt within the physical grounds, the people who were stationed there, and the communities it impacted during its service. This base not only serves the local communities, but the Central Valley and the United States. This article addresses the emphasis

placed on the Air Force base by the civilian population and how the civilian community was invited to engage in what the military personnel were doing in service to the U.S. However, there was no attention brought to any significant issues publicized other than the positive community engagement.

Castle Air Force base was established September 20, 1941 and was known as the Army Air Corps Basic Flying School. During World War II, the primary purpose of the base was to train pilots for air combat and launch bombing campaigns in Europe. On the aspect of gender and influencing the change in the power positions, Castle's training included female pilots from the Women's Air Service Pilots (WASPs). These female pilots were trained to occupy vacant positions due to need the for male soldiers to fight in the war. These women were effectively the "manpower" during WWII and performed instructional and ferrying duties during the war years.¹ The base, known as Merced Field at the time, received the first of the one hundred and fifty-six Women Army Service Pilots in November 1943 from Avenger Field, Texas. These women pilots served until the WASPs Program ended in December 1944.² This would not be the end of women participation as their presence and contributions would only increase over time for not only the base, but for the Air Force as well.

The base was renamed twice before becoming Castle Air Force base. The name Castle is in honor of General Frederick

“The base was renamed twice before becoming Castle Air Force base.”

W. Castle who stayed behind when his plane was on fire during a bombing raid in Belgium thus saving the lives of the rest of the crew until the plane crashed. After WWII and during the Cold War, the base served as the United States Air Force Strategic Air Command base which stationed a range of fighter and bomber planes at the ready to help defend the nation during a time of international tensions and conflicts. The base remained in operation after the end of the Cold War until it was selected as one of the bases for closure during the demilitarization process. The base was officially closed on September 30, 1995. Today the history of the base is visible with the sprawling complex houses and featuring dozens of dozens of decommissioned airplanes and fighter jets. Castle was home to various squadrons, and planes on display as part of the air museum now serve as physical reminders of the base's previous activities.

Castle's community engagement included hosting an open house as part of the Armed Forces Base day for the communities of the Central Valley for decades. The final Armed Forces Base day was held in the last year of base operation in 1995 due to budget cuts and military downsizing. Although it is not exactly known when these days and air shows performed for the public began, they date back to at least in the early 1950s. In 1958, Castle Air Force Base Historian Staff Sgt. William Redilla had recorded the base's celebration which drew a crowd of 20,000 visitors and described how “they started out as open houses and went to demonstrations to let the public come on the base and see what it was doing.” The earliest air shows started with Armed Forces Day, according to Helen McCarthy the community coordinator for Castle, “It was held the third Saturday in May... It was fabulous and quite elaborate in the '50s and '60s, up until the mid-'70's.”³

The history of the base ties into how the local communities and the Central Valley were able to come together and break the divide between the military and civilian worlds. The base held an annual event known as AAF Base Day where the military base would hold parades with the visiting communities displaying their servicemen and their band. Additionally, part of the base would actually be open for the civilian population to enter and view the various equipment and some of the military planes utilized by the personnel. This event was not only for the local communities, but for the entire Central Valley. Newspaper articles regarding these events outlined the record number of people from all over the valley coming to the base in order to get a glimpse into the lives of those in the Air Force in charge of defending the county. The base's final open house and air show was a three day event featuring air demonstrations, parade on the flight line, golf tournament, B-36 dedication, “Special Day for special People” on the eighth for the physically challenged and elderly to give them a chance to see displays and other demonstrations without the big crowds. This provided the opportunity for civilians of the Valley and a reunion of former members of the base to come together and say goodbye and recognize the base served the valley, state, and nation for fifty-four years.⁴



As seen from these descriptions, the annual AAF Base Day was something to bring the community together and provide entertainment for the public. However, hidden from these festivities is the reality the Air Force's purpose and function during the war years. Castle was in service during WWII, Korea, Vietnam, and the Cold War which the Air Force was a key player resulting in the bombings and destruction of civilian people and their homes. The base day's created inspiration and admiration for the military power and technological advancement the U.S. had, but it did not go into depth to the actual actions of military. The celebration is framed with the ideal of protecting the nation, but there is the lack of acknowledgment the military effectively means the destruction and death of those who are considered to be enemies of the nation. Along with the base and the people who served within, they are not only a part of the larger defense of the county, but they also served the local communities. Military bases are considered to be isolated pockets, gated and fenced off from the outside and from non-authorized personnel. The military holds national and global power and those who were within the military were needed to sustain this power. This creates a separation of power between the military and non-military worlds. The airbase was a military instillation, but it was situated within the city of Atwater and directly contributed to city development in its growth along with providing job opportunities, as well as recognition.

In conclusion, this article serves not only to highlight a certain part of the Castle Air Force base's history, but it is also to recognize to the impacts of the base on individuals and families who served along within what kind of ideals were highlighted by the base. As seen within its history, the division between genders was also crossed as demonstrated with the accomplishments from some of the first women pilots. The physical space of the base and some of the infrastructure is still there along with pieces of its history on display. The base, even though not serving the military, can still draw people from throughout the Central Valley to get a glimpse of its history.

1. Gloria Dale Griffin, Castle Air Force Base: Home of the B-52 Brigadier General Frederick W. Castle: Two of the Best of the Best (The Castle Air Museum), 4.

2. Castle AFB (Military Publishers, 1976), 15-16.

3. Betty Reiter, “The last air show: Castle Air Force Base hosts a final fling” in “An Historical Tribute, Now & Then,” Sun Star Sept 16, 1994.

4. Ibid.

Japanese Internment: A History That Should Never Be Forgotten

By: Alexander Garcia, PhD Student

World War II marked a period of fear, hatred, and xenophobia amongst white American citizens towards people of Japanese ancestry; this fear and hatred was exasperated after the bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. On February 19, 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, which declared people of Japanese ancestry “enemies of the state” and ordered the United States government to evacuate those of Japanese ancestry on the basis of protecting national security. Japanese and Japanese Americans were forcibly removed from their homes and placed in assembly centers, where they waited to be relocated to permanent internment camps.

The U.S. government created assembly centers with temporary housing built in large areas, such as fairgrounds and racetracks, in order to have all the Japanese and Japanese Americans in one central area. California was home to more than a dozen assembly centers in cities such as Arcadia, Fresno, Marysville/

“The U.S. government created assembly centers with temporary housing built in large areas, such as fairgrounds and racetracks,”

Arboga, Merced, Owens Valley, Pinedale, Pomona, Sacramento, Salinas, San Bruno, Stockton, Tulare, Turlock, and Woodlands. Internees waited in assembly centers until they were relocated to the permanent internment camps in locations such as Gila River, Arizona; Granada (Camp Amache), Colorado; Heart Mountain, Wyoming; Jerome, Arkansas; Manzanar, California (being the most famous of the internment camps); Minidoka, Idaho; Poston, Arizona; Rohwer, Arkansas; Topaz, Utah; or Tule Lake, California.

Manzanar was the most famous of these internment camps due to it being the first and largest of the camps. Japanese and Japanese Americans were incarcerated in Manzanar from December 1942 until its closure on November 21, 1945. During internment, many Japanese and Japanese Americans lost their homes, businesses, possessions, land, and identity. Unfortunately, not everyone who was interned was able to see the camps close; some of the internees died while in the internment camps.

When the internment camps eventually closed, Japanese and Japanese American internees were allowed to return home, but many had no home to return to. Japanese and Japanese Americans were stripped of their rights to own property, land, and businesses, and many lost everything due to Executive Order 9066. Even if they were able to hold onto their property, many homes and businesses were broken into, trashed, and vandalized with “No Japs Allowed” painted alongside the walls. When they returned home, people of Japanese ancestry faced racial prejudice and discrimination, despite their efforts to prove they were loyal to the United States. In some instances, they were met with violence and protests upon their return. Many had to restart their whole



Image: Merced Assembly Center Memorial.

lives after losing their businesses. Many people of Japanese ancestry owned and operated agricultural farmlands and produced berries and other vegetation. Even store owners lost their business, and in most instances, were not able to regain ownership.

Executive Order 9066 had lasting impacts on the lives of people of Japanese ancestry not only during the war, but also after the war ended. Executive Order 9066 and the establishment of internment camps were all done in the name of protecting the nation state by removing people who were considered to be a threat to the nation state's well-being.

"In order to ensure the history and impacts of Japanese Internment is not forgotten, the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), and its different chapters, have proposed to have the sites of internment memorialized."

In order to ensure the history and impacts of Japanese Internment is not forgotten, the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), and its different chapters, have proposed to have the sites of internment memorialized. One of these memorials is actually located right here in the city of Merced: the Merced Assembly Center Memorial, which is located inside the Merced County Fairgrounds. This particular memorial focuses on Japanese and Japanese Americans who



Image: Merced Assembly Center Memorial.

were forcibly removed from their homes from North California counties of Merced, Stanislaus, Humboldt, Sacramento, Napa, and Yolo, and brought to Merced. The purpose of the Merced Assembly Center Memorial is to inform the community of Merced and visitors about the experiences and the injustices Japanese and Japanese Americans suffered during WWII. Furthermore, this memorial aims to ensure these injustices, fears, and xenophobia never happen again.

My interest in Japanese Internment history began when I was an undergrad at UC Santa Barbara. My main research focus was on Japanese history and East Asian broadly, with a focus on United States history. During my Junior Year, I was enrolled in a "History of the U.S. and the World: Diplomatic Relations" course, where I started gaining interest in Japanese Internment. Now as a graduate student at UC Merced, my current research focuses on Asian and Asian Americans and Mexican and Mexican Americans in California from 1900 to 1945. Last summer, I traveled to Colorado, New Mexico, and Arizona, and while in those states, I visited research archives and was able to look at handwritten and typed documents, letters, work records, pay stubs, newspapers, and photos from Camp Amache (CO), Camp Santa Fe (NM), and Poston War Relocation Center (AZ). This year, I was able to research the Merced Assembly Center, which I did not know existed until my trip to Colorado, where I found documents of internees from Merced, California. I hope to continue research on Japanese Internment and visit more their locations, including Manzanar, which has always been an interest of mine but have not yet visited.

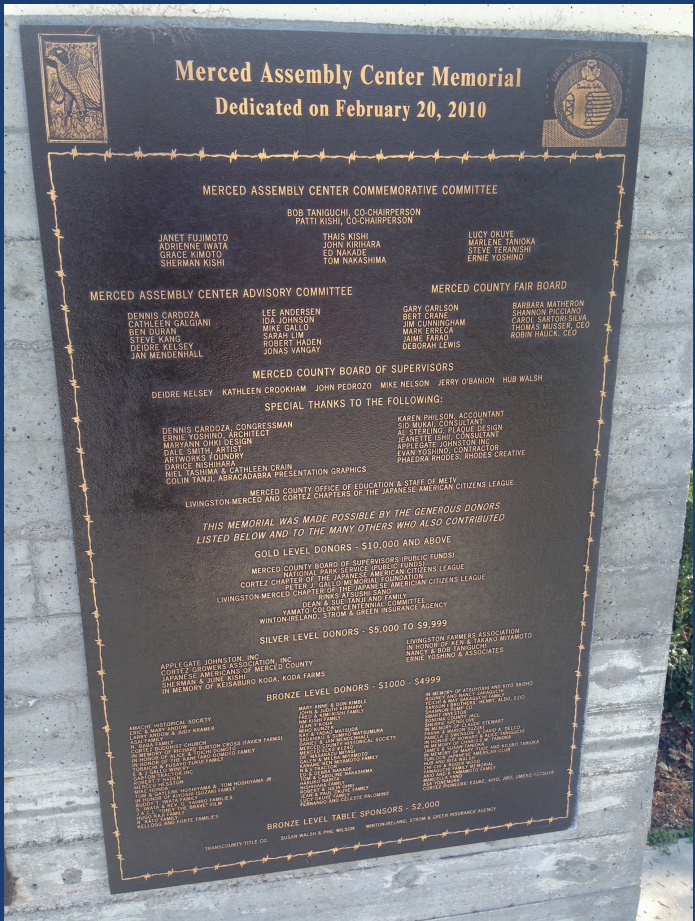


Image: Merced Assembly Center Memorial.

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