

Clio's Scroll



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Covert Art:
Ray_from_LA
Day of the Dead celebrant, California.

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Note from the Editors

This semester's publication of *Clio's Scroll* examines topics taboo to the average American. The culture of the dead, sexual education, and the September 11th attacks are subjects that ignite polarizing opinions and often inspire controversial discussions. Our selected articles are the academic manifestations of these discussions. We feel these pieces capture the gravity of their subject matter while offering persuasive and scintillating analysis. They are excellently researched, and demonstrate the intellectual achievement of the University of California, Berkeley's undergraduate researchers.

We hope that you enjoy reading about these topics, and that they compel you to further consider the issues they present. No question is ever truly and conclusively answered. These selections provide just one interpretation. May they whet your interest, and facilitate greater discovery.

Sincerely,
The Editors

A BRIEF HISTORY OF DÍA DE LOS MUERTOS IN OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA, 1970-2000

By Lauren Benichou

Introduction

The end of October is approaching. Despite the cold and gloom of the autumnal weather, in the city of Oakland something colorful is in the air. Vivacious illustrations of skeletons appear on flyers and magazines, contrasting with the foggy fall of the Bay Area. Death, which may seem macabre to some, becomes the main attraction of the Oakland Museum of California (OMCA) and the Fruitvale District. Two events occur on the weekend closest to the holiday of Día de los Muertos, which is traditionally celebrated on the first and second of November. For 15 years, the Día de los Muertos ceremony at the OMCA has provided a space for Oakland residents to mourn, remember, or honor departed relatives and community members. The museum event consists of a one-day ceremony, as well as earlier exhibitions and workshops. The Fruitvale Día de los Muertos Festival, on the other hand, has helped to boost Oakland's economy and to integrate the Fruitvale District into Oakland's social scene by filling International Boulevard with visitors from all over the Bay Area. The Fruitvale Festival is a one-day festival that includes concerts, food vendors, and dancers as well as a ceremony honoring

the dead. These two large audience-oriented celebrations tell only one side of the story. The development of the holiday in Oakland also includes the story of home-observances, which are characterized by heightened spirituality in a smaller space with a numerically reduced audience.

Thesis

My research traces the history of the large-scale Día de los Muertos celebrations in Oakland, and tries to establish the links between the Chicano movement and the different players who made Día de los Muertos a part of Oakland's cultural, educational and social life. While authors such as Stanley Brandes and Regina M. Marchi have written extensively on Día de los Muertos celebrations in the larger framework of the Chicano struggle, my research diverges. Instead, my work specially connects the movement to the defining players and events in the evolution of Día de los Muertos within the city of Oakland and details the local social dynamics of this evolution. The Chicano movement was part of a larger wave of civil rights movements and was principally concerned with the rights of the Chicano community. The legacy of the Chicano movement is still felt in Oakland's political, social, cultural and educational life today. The Chicano movement triggered a process of identity assertion among Latinos in the U.S., which inspired a generation to explore its own history and affirm its indigenous ancestry. This exploration of cultural roots pushed organizers, educators and artists to claim public spaces and assert the presence of Chicanos and Latinos in Oakland.

The various usages of Día de los Muertos—the personal character of the altars' content and the communal nature of the rituals—transformed this Mexican celebration into a symbol of Oakland's Chicano and Latino communities. The celebration has been used as a vehicle to transmit cultural history through educational programs, as well as a tool to unify the community and commemorate significant leaders who helped better the living standards of Latinos and Chicanos. In San Francisco, the celebration was an end in itself, but the development of Día de los Muertos in Oakland was more a means to an end. In this sense, vital Chicano organizations employed Día de los Muertos so as to teach, represent, and celebrate indigenous ancestry and Mexican identity.

Educators fought for bilingual programs and used elements of Día de los Muertos to teach youth about Mexican culture. Community organizers used Día de los Muertos as a means to revitalize and unify neighborhoods, while artists incorporated elements of the celebration into murals, exhibits and altars to express cultural pride and the Latino presence in Oakland and the Bay Area. Through these various channels, Día de los Muertos slowly developed into a symbol of Chicano and Mexican national identity. Its growth contributed to the positive public exposure of Chicano culture and represented the expansion of this cultural pride from a personal framework to the public sphere. During its transition to the public arena, the celebration retained its communal character, which enabled it to remain specific to Oakland and to incorporate historical and social elements from Oakland's Chicano and Latino past, especially through the construction of altars depicting the life of personal relatives or historical figures. Accordingly, this participatory aspect of the holiday smoothens and sustains its integration within Oakland's public and cultural environments as well as adding to the city's already rich cultural content.

Día de los Muertos is the culmination of years of fighting for public space and recognition by the Chicano and Latino communities of Oakland. The development of the holiday is marked by the constant struggle of a community to gain acknowledgment and public space for its own cultural growth. Chicana and Latina women especially played a significant role in bringing this celebration to the public as leaders, educators, activists and artists. In a sense, exploring the mechanisms behind Día de los Muertos' evolution brings forth the work of individuals and of the community that would otherwise be left out in a common historical survey. This paper highlights the contribution of Oakland residents in the making of the holiday in Oakland and explores one of the accomplishments of the Chicano movement, the claim for public space and public representation of Chicano and Latino culture. Thanks to the incorporation of Día de los Muertos within the multifaceted Chicano struggle in Oakland, the holiday found its place within Oakland's cultural life. Its acceptance and sustainability throughout the years is largely due to the work of community leaders as well as the participatory and cathartic nature of

the holiday. The following article narrates the story of the celebration within the city of Oakland and highlights the mechanisms behind its evolution.

Background

How has Día de los Muertos become an annual ritual for many residents of Oakland and the Bay Area? Away from the public eye, community members have celebrated and honored their ancestors through the observation of Día de los Muertos rituals for at least the past 30 years. My interview with one of the organizers of these private celebrations, Margaret Terrazas Santos, offers some details as to how such ceremonies are organized and conducted. Each year, one of the organizers offers her house as a venue for the celebration. The host fills the home with folk art, decorations, and treasures referring to Día de los Muertos' themes. Those were either bought at Corazón Del Pueblo, a store located on International Boulevard that specialized in Chicano, Mexican, and Latin American folk art, handmade by the host, or acquired throughout the years. An *ofrenda* or altar is built, leaving enough space for all the guests to add personal objects of their own. These objects range from cigarettes or coffee beans to personal jewelry, and are reminders of the deceaseds' tastes and hobbies. Sets of candles, each lit by a guest, slowly bring the altar to life and the flames illuminate the room with a spiritual glow. Margaret Terrazas Santos and Yolanda Ronquillo wanted to preserve the history of their ancestors, and pass on the stories of families present at the little celebration in the hope that the younger generations would pick up where they left off. Día de los Muertos is a part of their culture, and is on its way to becoming a defining feature of Oakland's cultural history.

The celebration originated in the midst of the Civil Rights era and the emergence of the Chicano movement. Changes in the political and social landscape of Oakland freed public space for multi-cultural events in the 1980s, and enabled the celebration to grow. In the early 1990s, the Spanish Speaking Unity Council, a nonprofit community development corporation created in 1964, and the Latino Advisory Committee of the Oakland Museum of California (LAC) initiated annual celebrations of the holiday with the help of public institutions and Chicano educators, organizers and

artists. Today, the Fruitvale Festival is the most popular Día de los Muertos celebration in the United States, and the OMCA's ceremony is highly regarded by administrators from other museums and event organizers from other institutions.¹ A director of the Smithsonian Institute once told Rafael Jesús González, a member of the Latino Advisory Committee, that the Oakland Museum's ceremony was one of the best celebrations of Día de los Muertos that the director has encountered in the United States.² Community leaders and Oakland residents such as Margaret and Yolanda have organized celebrations of the holiday for 30 years in various Bay Area locations. The multiple functionalities of this holiday are materialized through both public and private celebrations. First of all, Día de los Muertos serves as a mechanism of community building as well as a path towards identity assertion for the Chicano, Mexican-American, and Latino communities. Secondly, the holiday is a tool for teaching and passing on the spirituality, tradition, and history of the Chicano community to subsequent generations and to the broader Bay Area community. The large-scale celebrations at the OMCA and in Fruitvale are the result of a struggle to gain recognition and cultural freedom in public spaces, and represent important accomplishments of the Chicano and Latino communities.

Research Methods

My research is mainly based on interviews that I conducted in Oakland or that were conducted by the Friends of the Peralta Hacienda Historical Park for a project on the history of Fruitvale. Other sources include documents from the Oakland Museum of California and from the Unity Council, as well as booklets from different exhibits and community projects relating to the history of Latinos in Oakland. Note that some methodological issues may arise from using oral history as a base for constructing an historical narrative. Interviewees are likely to report or recount a story from their own perspectives. It is necessary to sort through factual and interpretative elements of each interview.

Various factors influenced the results of my interviews.

1 Regina M. Marchi, *Day of the Dead in the USA: The Migration and Transformation of a Cultural Phenomenon* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2009), 119.

2 Rafael Jesús González, in discussion with the author, March 2011.

First, the perception of the Chicano movement and its goal varied from one person to the other. Those interviewed expressed diverse perspectives on the Chicano movement. Some were solely interested in the struggle for workers' rights, while others were passionate about educational issues. Second, generational factors influenced the variation in the results. Members of older generations did not necessarily relate to the holiday, while younger interviewees would feel a special link to the celebration and considered the holiday a part of their heritage. Some expressed more closeness and personal ties to the celebration than others. These ties varied along with the role they had played in bringing the holiday to Oakland. Some viewed it as a tool more than a personal ritual, while others confessed that their work in building recognition for the holiday deeply impacted the way they perceived it. These factors affected the way some people spoke of the various Día de los Muertos celebrations and events in the Bay Area. In the midst of these various interpretations and accounts, the hard facts were sometimes unintentionally modified, and historical accounts differed from one individual to another. Since the majority of my research is based on interviews, the following account of Día de los Muertos in Oakland may leave some lacunas still to be filled.

Nevertheless, oral history brings to light stories that would never have been told otherwise. It highlights individual prowess and struggle that would not have been visible through library research. Interviewing community members is more than a research method. It is a way to get closer to the subject matter and to have unique encounters with the people who made Día de los Muertos possible. It gives depth to academic research and connects readers with human experiences. Día de los Muertos is more than just a celebration of the departed. It is a personal and participatory holiday that allows people to share private stories. In that sense, conducting interviews was necessary in order to appreciate the richness of the celebration, instead of limiting the exploration to its ceremonial structure.

Also, the reader should note that this research employs heavily politicized and contested terms. The term "Chicano" or "Chicana," "Latino" or "Latina," for example, contain a rich political history, which will not be addressed. In this article, the term "Chicano" or "Chicana" refers to individuals of Mexican descent

born and raised in the United States, while the term “Latino” refers to individuals from Latin America or of Latin American descent.

From an era of assimilation to an era of identity assertion

Día de los Muertos celebrations, as they exist in the United States today and audience-oriented celebrations of the holiday in Mexico, are modern creations. Their origins can be traced back to the indigenous celebration of *Todos Santos* (“All Saints”) in Mexico and other parts of Latin America. However, the observance of *Todos Santos* itself takes us back further in history. Since the pre-Hispanic era, death has been honored through the celebration of life, making life and death indivisible in ancient Mexico. Rafael Jesús González points to the human blood used to anoint the “Tree of Life,” a tree brought from the surrounding woods, which was then sculpted and painted into a pole bearing branches with birds made out of amaranth dough. The blood from human sacrifices represented death, while the sculpted pole represented the living world. González explains that the celebrations were called the “Small Feast of the Dead” and the “Great Feast of the Dead,” and each respectively celebrated children and adults who had passed away.³ However, the celebration of Día de los Muertos is the product of colonialism as well as modern phenomena. Compromising between newly introduced Catholicism from Spain, “Mexicans preserved their ancient customs as best as they could”.⁴

The fusion between the Catholic holiday of All Saints and All Souls day and the death rituals of the peoples of ancient Mexico resulted in a subtle compromise incorporating elements and symbols from both traditions. The Roman Catholic festival of All Souls Day, which is also known as the commemoration of the Faithful Departed, usually consisted of prayers and masses for the dead and was celebrated on November 1st and 2nd. The birds made out of amaranth dough became what is known today as *pan dulce* [sweet bread]. The marigold flower (or flower of death) used in pre-Hispanic rituals continued to ornament altars. The depiction of the “trees of life” remained since it fitted in the Catholic conception

3 Rafael Jesús González, *Días de los Muertos, Days of the Dead* (San Jose: Dragonfly Press, 2002), 1-3.

4 Ibid.

of Adam and Eve's Tree of Life and was integrated in images of the Virgen de Guadalupe in Día de los Muertos *ofrendas* and on altars.⁵ According to González, the touch of humor found in today's celebration of Día de los Muertos came from Spain, which later led to the typical skeletons, or *Calaveras*, taking on familiar tasks of daily life.⁶ Some of the most famous representations of such *Calaveras* were found in Jose Guadalupe Posada's engravings, which are now widely used in Día de los Muertos imagery. Stanley Brandes observes that the humorous elements of Día de los Muertos today in the valley of Mexico appeared as early as in the 18th century. While these elements were important components of the celebration, they were never a part of the Church-oriented elite's rituals and remained part of the more popular commemorations.

From the colonial period through the first quarter of the twentieth century, the celebration was mainly observed in rural indigenous communities. As Brandes points out, the "limited, sanitized coverage of Day of the Dead activities" and predominance of "accounts of formal religious activity" shows that the indigenous aspects of the holiday were underplayed by elite-owned newspapers during this time period.⁷ Such lack of coverage hints at the family-oriented features that characterized the celebration until its popularization, which sharply contrasts with the public and carnivalesque elements of today's Mexican celebrations. It also provides insight on the relationship between the Church-oriented elite and Día de los Muertos. Kristin Norget describes this relationship as being quite tumultuous and unfriendly. In fact, public authorities and the Catholic Church both "prohibited" indigenous aspects of Día de los Muertos from taking place or "discouraged" people from participating. Instead, they attempted to emphasize official religious practices over folk traditions and rituals.⁸ While the rituals continued to take place, this official suppression directly affected the way the celebration was perceived in Mexico in the turn

5 Ibid.

6 González, *Días de los Muertos*, 6-7.

7 Stanley Brandes, "The Day of the Dead, Halloween, and the Quest for Mexican National Identity," *Journal of American Folklore* 111 (1998): 364.

8 Kristin Norget, *Days of Death, Days of Life: Ritual in the Popular Culture of Oaxaca* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 219-220.

of the twentieth century.

While Mexican artists in the 1920s attempted to reconnect with their indigenous heritage through art, González underlines the fact that “what the writers, musicians, and painters accomplished was to foment a new respect for [...] indigenous custom and form, *not* [emphasis added] adopt them as an integral part of their own lives,” and that Todos Santos remained “a holiday of the poor and most especially the rural poor”.⁹ In that sense, Día de los Muertos remained a celebration associated with Mexican Indians throughout the first quarter of the twentieth century. Despite the emergence and popularity of folk arts in mainstream Mexican culture, rampant racism towards Indians continued to flourish. Regina M. Marchi points out that the celebration was not as popular in the middle of the century and that “many rural and Indigenous people [...] distanced themselves from their traditions” in order to alleviate the differences between them and the higher classes of urban mestizos.¹⁰ In fact, even indigenous people often rejected this past. In the city of Oakland, the first quarter of the twentieth century was characterized by a similar period of assimilation for Mexican-American, Mexican, and Latino communities, which partially prevented the development of Día de los Muertos celebrations in the United States.

In Oakland, there were approximately 3,200 residents of Mexican descent by the 1930s.¹¹ Some had been living in California prior to the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo signed in 1848. Others were either laborers who had been recruited by railroad companies in the 1890s or migrants who had fled their country after the Mexican revolution started in 1910. During World War II, many Mexican residents of Oakland moved from New Mexico or Arizona in order to find work in roundhouses or shipyards in West Oakland. Jesse Gutierrez has been living in Oakland since the 1940s and explained that his father had to work two shifts a day because of the shortage

9 Oakland Museum of California, *El Corazon de la Muerte*, (Oakland: Heyday books, 2005), 28.

10 Marchi, *Day of the Dead in the USA*, 30.

11 Lori Luján, “A Short History of the Mexican American Presence in Oakland,” in *Chincao/Mexicano Traditional and Contemporary Arts and Folklife in Oakland*, Ed. Willie R. Collins, (Oakland: Cultural Arts Division, 1995), 9.

in labor.¹² That same decade, the *Bracero* program, a guest worker program between the United States and Mexico, was enacted due to U.S. labor shortages and contributed to the increase in the Mexican population in Oakland. Another 5,000 workers were brought to work in Oakland canneries or to work in nearby fields.¹³ While the Mexican presence in Oakland increased, the period between the 1920s and the 1950s was marked by the assimilationist tendencies of the local communities.

These assimilationist tendencies and the predominance of Catholicism among the Mexican-American working class prevented the growth of Día de los Muertos in Oakland. Due to discrimination and racism, any cultural distinctions could block access to jobs or public services. Katherine Gutierrez, a long-time Oakland resident, described her upbringing in West Oakland during these decades. According to Gutierrez, most holidays were celebrated through the Catholic faith, and All Saints' Day was not particularly distinguishable from regular masses. While most Oakland residents of Mexican descent maintained aspects of their cultural heritage, many families enforced strict language rules in their households and prohibited the use of Spanish. Gutierrez understands the success of her children to result from their lack of accent. Her husband, Jesse Gutierrez, also added that one mortuary in Oakland refused to bury Latino soldiers during the war, and most Mexican immigrant workers were paid absurdly low wages.¹⁴ Such an oppressive environment led to "internalized oppression" among Mexican residents. Some even insisted on being identified as Spanish.¹⁵ Carolina Juarez, who grew up in Oakland and who is now the Co-Chair of the Día de los Muertos Committee of the OMCA, describes her childhood as one characterized by a voluntary assimilation:

My parents never spoke Spanish at home. They were trying so hard to make life easy and good for us. And they thought that it meant making us as American as possible, with no accent. They moved towards the American way of life rather than the Mexican way of life, even if we had *familia*, food, and Mexican

12 Jesse Gutierrez, interview by Holly Alonzo, transcript.

13 Luján, "A Short History," 10.

14 Jesse Gutierrez, interview by Holly Alonzo.

15 Luz Alvarez Martinez, in discussion with the author, March 2011.

music.¹⁶

Most Mexicans living in Oakland were practicing Catholics. As such, Mexicans and Mexican-Americans from urban areas would go to mass on All Souls Day or even visit the cemetery, but the masses did not present any elements belonging to the indigenous celebration of Día de los Muertos at this time. Besides the sermon, masses on All Souls Day were quite uneventful.¹⁷ These tendencies are far from surprising since similar behaviors could be observed in Mexico at that time. In *The Skeleton at the Feast: The Day of the Dead in Mexico*, Sayer and Carmichael describe the different celebrations in Mexico as non-monolithic but explain that “it is often among the mestizo population that the Catholic rites are of greatest importance, while the Indian population may carry out their own observances,” which are nonetheless religiously and spiritually charged.¹⁸

The Catholic rituals prevailed over the indigenous rituals among Mexican Catholics in Oakland as well. In other words, the indigenous celebration of Todos Santos could not have flourished in the United States at this period due to the assimilationist tendencies within the local populations in Oakland and to the unpopularity of the celebration among most urban Catholics in Mexico. No clear link existed between the indigenous traditions of Mexico and the Latino population in Oakland until the popularization of the celebration in Mexico during the 1970s. Tourism development programs sponsored by the Mexican state transported the celebration from the communal and private sphere to the public one, and consequently impacted the development of the holiday in the United States.¹⁹

It is hardly coincidental that the promotion of Día de los Muertos in Mexico and the birth of Día de los Muertos in the United States occurred in the same decade. It is important to explore how

16 Carolina Juarez (Co-chair of the Day of the Dead committee at the OMCA), in discussion with the author, February 2011.

17 Katherine Gutierrez (Oakland), in discussion with the author, March 2011.

18 Elizabeth Carmichael and Chloë Sayer, *The Skeleton at the Feast: The Day of the Dead in Mexico* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003), 17.

19 Stanley Brandes, *Skulls to the Living, Bread to the Dead* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 89. Marchi, *Day of the Dead in the USA*, 30.

the celebration has evolved in Mexico in order to show the clear connection between Oakland's Día de los Muertos celebrations and today's Día de los Muertos celebration in Mexico. The following descriptions illustrate the evolution of the celebration before and after the 1970s in the Michoacán town of Tzintzuntzan. The anthropologist Georges M. Foster depicted Todos Santos in the 1940s and showed that it consisted of rather quiet communal rituals and activities:

About four o'clock in the morning family groups begin to wend their way to the cemetery, carrying arcos and other offerings of food, to take up their vigil by the graves of departed relatives. Again yellow marigolds are scattered over all graves and candles are lighted. Toward dawn perhaps 40 tombs are thus arranged, and the twinkling of several hundred candles in the dark suggests will-o-the-wisps run riot... After daylight other persons come, to talk with friends keeping vigil, to eat a little, and to see what is happening. By 11 o'clock most people have gone home and the graveyard is again deserted.²⁰

Through the promotion of Mexico's indigenous past, state agencies managed to boost Mexico's tourism industry and indirectly transformed Día de los Muertos celebrations into full-blown tourist-oriented festivals. Brandes details the celebration after the intervention of state agencies in the 1970s in the same town described above:

There was the all-night vigil, of course, although its potential picturesqueness was marred by the presence of television cameras recording the scene live for a national audience [...]. Using an 18th-century open-air chapel as a stage, state agencies also mounted a production of José Zorilla's 19th-century Spanish classic drama, "Don Juan Tenorio." Drama and dance performers alike were brought in from outside, and, because a substantial fee was charged for this entertainment, it was tourists and tourists alone who attended. Along the highway leading through Tzintzuntzan, tourists could now buy food and drink from any of the numerous temporary stands set up to accommodate their needs.²¹

Progressively, the indigenous celebration became a symbol of national identity. Despite the mestizos' contempt for the celebration

20 Georges M. Foster and by Gabriel Ospina, *Empire's Children: The People of Tzintzuntzan*, (México, D.F.: Smithsonian Institution, 1948), 220.

21 Brandes, "The Day of the Dead, Halloween, and the Quest for Mexican National Identity," 369.

in the earlier part of the century, the commercialization of this indigenous holiday spread to Mexico City and all across Mexico. Brandes points out that what “separates the country from both Spain and the United States [...] is the Indian heritage that the Mexican state has chosen to elevate symbolically”.²² A similar argument can be made about the Chicano movement and the development of Día de los Muertos. What separates the Chicano population from mainstream American culture is its connection to Mexico’s indigenous past. This cultural distinction is at the core of Chicano identity and provided a vehicle for Día de los Muertos celebrations.

The Chicano Socio-Political movement and the Emergence of Día de los Muertos Celebrations in the 1970s

Born out of the Civil Rights era, the Chicano movement fought for equal civil rights and to end discrimination against Mexicans, Mexican-Americans, and Latinos. At the time, rampant discrimination and racism, combined with an era of reforms, created a greater political and cultural consciousness among Mexicans, Chicanos, and Latinos. Exploited farm workers, urban middle-class workers, urban youth and high school and college students across the U.S. saw a common struggle against institutionalized oppression. This socio-political movement encompassed various groups dealing with issues such as educational representation and cultural education through Chicano studies programs, improved working conditions and higher wages for Chicano farm workers, the creation of workers’ unions, and greater political representation of the Mexican-American population.

Tracing the exact origins of the Chicano movement is a difficult task since the movement itself did not have one main representative body. However, Carlos Muñoz Jr., Professor Emeritus at the University of California Berkeley and an active figure in the Chicano educational movement, distinguishes three historical events which propelled the Chicano struggle to the center stage and encouraged the activity of the various subgroups existing under the Chicano movement’s umbrella. Most precisely, these causes greatly impacted the Chicano student population of college campuses. First, the growing discontent among farm workers led to a major

22 Brandes, 361-362.

grape strike in California and across the nation. The Delano strike was started by Filipino farm workers and joined by César Estrada Chávez's National Farm Workers Association, who professed equality among workers through social justice and non-violence. The second cause was the rising dissatisfaction and distrust with the Democratic Party among the Mexican-American middle class. This general frustration stemmed from the lack of representation of Mexican-American voters, and unfulfilled promises by the Kennedy and the Johnson administrations, which had won Mexican-American votes and ignored the community's political demands. The third cause triggering the movement's rise was the victory of Mexican-American candidates in the 1963 elections in Crystal City, Texas. The city was entirely controlled by Mexican-American politicians and thus became a symbol of liberation and victory against white dominion in U.S. politics.²³ While these events are not representative of the entire Chicano movement, their influence on Mexican-American students, farmers, and middle-class workers is significant.

In the 1970s, the growth of Chicano political movements and their influences on the Bay Area seem to have elicited a need among Mexican-Americans, Mexicans, and other Latinos to explore their own identities. While Mexico highlighted its Indian heritage, Mexicans and Mexican-Americans in Oakland did the same. The children of earlier generations felt a need to explore their own roots and to express them. This generational phenomenon illustrates the transition from the assimilation period to an era of self-determination, and frames identity as a centerpiece of the Chicano struggle.

In retrospect, the rise of cultural consciousness and the search for identity was more complex and difficult than it might seem. Standing in between two cultural worlds, one foot in America and one back in Mexico, Mexican-Americans felt increasingly unsure as to how to define their own identity. Playwright and founder of *Teatro Campesino* Luis Valdez describes this ambiguity as an "identity crisis" in "Tale de La Raza":

The conquest of Mexico was no conquest at all. It shattered our ancient Indian universe, but more of it was left above

23 Carlos Muñoz Jr, *Youth, Identity, Power: The Chicano Movement*, (New York: Verso, 2000), 50-57.

ground than beans and tortillas. Below the foundations of our Spanish culture, we still sense the ruins of an entirely different civilization. Most of us know we are not European simply by looking in a mirror [...] Together with a million little stubborn mannerisms, beliefs, myths, superstitions, words, thoughts - things not so easily detected-they fill our Spanish life with Indian contradictions. It is not enough to say we suffer an identity crisis, because that crisis has been our way of life for the last five centuries [...] Used to hybrid forms, the raza includes all Mexicans, even hyphenated Mexican Americans; but divergent histories are slowly making the raza in the United States different from the raza in Mexico. We who were born here missed out on the chief legacy of the Revolution: the chance to forge a nation true to all the forces that have molded us, to be one people. Now we must seek our own destiny, and Delano is only the beginning of our active search.²⁴

Valdez emphasizes two points in his writings. First, he dissects Mexican identity and dismisses European roots as something that Mexican-Americans can associate with, but argues that Indian roots must be appreciated and recognized as part of their heritage. Second, he underlines the “divergent” path taken by those who were born and raised in Mexico, thus distinguishing between Mexican-Americans and Mexicans. In doing so, he understands that Mexican-Americans have a unique identity. Thanks to a fertile social and political environment, this identity crisis engendered a complex cultural building process and promoted the emergence of a new social and cultural identity known as Chicano.

What separated Mexican-Americans from other communities was not only their struggle against white supremacy and racism, but as Valdez remarked, their indigenous heritage. Rosario Flores, a resident of Oakland who grew up during the Civil Rights era, explains that there was a growing curiosity among Mexican-Americans to learn more about their heritage. Back in the 1970s, mainstream America held racist stereotypes of Latinos and Mexicans as descendant of “murdering people who ate people’s hearts”. Moreover, mainstream media reinforced these stereotypical views and depicted Mexicans as murderers and thieves, such as in the 1948 Hollywood movie *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, in which Mexican actor Alfonso Bedoya plays the role of a Mexican bandit. Rosario

24 Luis Valdez, “Tale de la Raza,” *Rampart Magazine*, July 1966.

explains that there was a need to destroy these stereotypes through the exploration of Mexican roots and traditions. Destroying such stereotypical views meant reconstructing a positive and self-asserting image of Chicano culture. Henceforth, Chicanos combined the experience gained from growing in urban America with freshly dug-up indigenous roots.

This indigenous heritage was apparent in Chicano art such as murals, political posters, and theatrical performances, but also emerged in celebrations such as Día de los Muertos. In 1973, a poster by the Chicano artist Xavier Viramontes depicted an Aztec man crushing grapes in both of his hands, along with the caption “Boycott Grapes: Support the United Farm Workers Union”. The arts also served as a mean to unify Chicanos and solidify their identity. In *La Conquista de Mexico*, a puppet show narrating the conquest of Mexico by Spaniards, Luis Valdez allegorized the divisions between Chicanos in the 1970s, and compared them to the divisions between Aztecs and other indigenous groups at the time of the Spanish conquest. In other words, Valdez conveyed a political message, using common history to show that such divisions could lead to defeat.²⁵ Along the same lines, some Chicano artists, community organizers and political leaders “encourage[d] future generations of Mexican-Americans to see a shared past”.²⁶ By politicizing their Indian heritage, Chicanos and Chicanas outlined their conceptions of Chicano culture as a union between the heated political climate of the sixties in the U.S. and the indigenous past of ancient Mexico. While general Mesoamerican indigenous themes were integrated in the Chicano movement’s art and discourse, specific elements of Día de los Muertos emerged as well.

Death and remembrance were central to the social atmosphere surrounding civil rights movements. The Vietnam War was raging and many people from the Chicano and Latino community did not come back. The politicization of Chicano identity was also associated with leading figures of the Mexican Revolution who had to be remembered as an essential part of

25 Luis Valdez, “La Conquista de México,” *Early Works: Actos, Bernabé and Pensiamento*, (Houston: Arte Público Press, 1990), 53-65.

26 Stacy Lee, ed., *Mexico and the United States*, (New York: Marshall Cavendish Corp., 2003) 157.

Chicano history. Meanwhile, the celebration of Día de los Muertos was increasingly linked to Mexican national identity and expanded across Mexico as a tourist attraction. Chicano artists such as Josefina Lopez, owner of Corazón del Pueblo in Oakland, began traveling back and forth, thus creating a cultural exchange between Mexico and the Bay Area. According to Shifra M. Goldman, author of “A Public Voice: Fifteen Years of Chicano Posters,” typical components of Día de los Muertos and folk art, such as Jose Guadalupe Posada’s skeletons, “have been accepted with enthusiasm by Chicano artists”.²⁷ Accordingly, celebrating Día de los Muertos appeared as the perfect way to link the Chicano struggles with a Mesoamerican past, and to encourage the construction of a common consciousness and collective memory.

Self-Help Graphics in Los Angeles and La Galería de la Raza in San Francisco organized the first Día de los Muertos events in 1972.²⁸ In San Francisco, the event focused on an exhibit set up at La Galería de la Raza, a Chicano/Latino space for art founded by artists Ralph Maradiaga and Rene Yañez in the Mission district, and provided an opportunity for Chicano artists “to re-create Mexican traditions of personal and collective remembering”.²⁹ Rafael Jesús González and other artists were invited to create their own Día de los Muertos altars for the event.³⁰ In doing so, artists retained the indigenous quality of the celebration by creating ofrendas to remember the past, and to mourn and honor ancestors, while incorporating elements of the contemporary socio-political climate.

Nevertheless, many Chicano artists were not necessarily familiar with the art of Día de los Muertos. Mia Gonzalez, a Chicana artist who participated in the first exhibit in 1972, explained that she relied heavily on the memories she had of her grandmother preparing an altar for Christmas, and was inspired by artists such as Posada or Diego Rivera. Other artists such as Yolanda Garfias Woo, who had studied Mexican folk art, ended up helping Gonzalez. Progressively, many Chicano and Chicana artists created altars

27 Shifra M. Goldman, “A Public Voice: Fifteen Years of Chicano Posters,” *Art Journal* 44 (1984), 50-57: 46, Accessed April 12, 2011.

28 Terre Romos, “Día de los Muertos,” accessed April 22, 2011.

29 Romos, “Día de los Muertos.”

30 Rafael Jesús González, in discussion with the author, February 2011.

reflecting the political and social issues that the Latino community dealt with. These honored political leaders such as César Chávez, while featuring the traditional pan dulce, marigolds and images of the Virgen de la Guadalupe. Whereas the popularity of the celebration led to the creation of an annual event and to a public procession in 1981, cultural issues and the public celebration of Día de los Muertos were not on the agenda of the Oakland Chicano community until the mid-1990s.³¹

The Development of Día de los Muertos in Oakland: a Community-Based Process

In the city of Oakland, large-scale Día de los Muertos celebrations emerged more than a decade after the San Francisco celebration started. Nevertheless, the Chicano community in the sixties and seventies was a self-determining force in increasing Mexican cultural representation in public institutions as well as expanding access to educational resources for Chicanos and Latinos.³²

For instance, the Latin American Branch of the Oakland Public Library opened its doors in 1966 and was the first branch devoted to serving the Spanish-speaking community. The founding of primary social service agencies and community organizations oriented towards the Latino community also illustrates the participation of Chicanos in the Oakland socio-political sphere. The Spanish Speaking Citizens' Foundation (SSCF), Centro Legal de la Raza and La Clínica de la Raza were all established between 1965 and 1971. They played significant roles in politicizing and unifying the Spanish-speaking community.³³ The Centro Legal de la Raza and la Clínica de la Raza provided legal and health services in Spanish while the SSCF was a family resource center, whose goal was “to empower the community and the individual to improve their quality of life while upholding [their] rich Latin culture,” through bilingual educational programs.³⁴

Meanwhile, local residents also discussed and organized

31 Regina M. Marchi, *Day of the Dead in the USA*, 48.

32 Alex M. Saragoza, *Life Stories From the East Bay Latino Community*, (Oakland: Oakland Museum of California, 2004), 27.

33 Rosario Flores, in discussion with the author, March 2011.

34 “About us,” Spanish Speaking Citizen Foundation.

around labor issues faced by Mexican and Latino farm workers. Katherine Gutierrez recalls picketing at a Safeway store in Oakland in solidarity with César Chávez's grapes boycott, and even picketed Coors beers because "they wouldn't pay good wages to Mexican immigrants".³⁵ She and her husband Jesse were members of the Spanish Speaking Unity Council and claim that they had gotten involved "with anything to do with civil rights".³⁶ Since there was a clear involvement of the community in labor and educational issues, paralleled with rising cultural and political awareness, the question remains: why did large-scale Día de los Muertos celebrations not emerged as early as they did in San Francisco?

One of the explanations for the late emergence of the celebration lies in the different objectives of the Chicano movements in various localities. In the East Bay, activists were more concerned with labor and educational struggles, whereas San Francisco's activists emphasized culture-centered activism and Chicano art.³⁷ In Berkeley, Chicano activists were attempting to strengthen the Chicano Studies program at the University of California, while activists in Oakland were marching and working alongside the United Farm Workers movement. As a young woman, Carolina Juarez took part in the educational aspect of the struggle and fought to establish bilingual curricula in schools. She and other members of the community alongside La Raza educators exerted pressure on Marcus Foster, the first African-American Schools Superintendent, to have bilingual education. Their demands included the creation of cultural courses, and a bilingual pre-school in the Oakland School District. This resulted in the creation of La Escuelita, the first bilingual school in Oakland.

Of course, this hypothesis does not imply that activists in San Francisco were not concerned with other aspects of the struggle. Nor does it assume that Oakland activists were not concerned with establishing public spaces to convey Chicano and Mexican culture. Nevertheless, Carolina Juarez points out "while artists like Esther Hernandez and Malaquias Montoya lived here in Oakland, much of the art activism took place in San Francisco revolving around

35 Katherine Gutierrez, interview by Holly Alonzo, transcript.

36 Ibid.

37 Carolina Juarez, email to author, March 29, 2011.

Galería de La Raza”.³⁸ This account sheds some light on the question, but does not completely resolve it. The question remains as to why Chicano artists did not bring Día de los Muertos to Oakland’s art scene or give some exposure to the celebration, as did the founders of Galería de La Raza in San Francisco’s Mission district.

The absence of large-scale Día de los Muertos events in Oakland can be best explained in terms of the availability of cultural infrastructure and in terms of political influence. In Oakland, the African-American community made up 40% of Oakland’s population by 1970 and was the most influential minority in terms of public cultural, politics, and social space.³⁹ In fact, the Black Panther Party had its headquarters located in Oakland and was highly active in areas such as education, health, and social programs.⁴⁰ Only 7% of Oakland’s population was Hispanic, and the Chicano movement’s influence was much greater in San Francisco and Los Angeles.⁴¹

Additionally, public spaces and public cultural institutions were more accessible and open to specific communities in San Francisco than in Oakland. In San Francisco, the Mexican Museum opened its doors in 1975 and solely dealt with Mexican, Chicano, and Latino arts. The Mission Cultural Center for Latino Arts also opened in the late 1970s. Its objective was to promote Latino cultural expression, and it eventually became “the largest cultural center in the continental United States”. Professor Alex M. Saragoza also pointed to the liberal nature of San Francisco’s population as a factor in the early installment of Día de los Muertos events, and called the city a “different political animal,” in reference to its famous liberal and countercultural tendencies.⁴² From the Beatnik literary movement to the hippie generation, San Francisco’s counterculture rejected conservative American values, making the city a relative haven of open-mindedness.

38 Carolina Juarez, email to author, March 29, 2011.

39 Thomas Albright, “The Oakland Dilemma: Who runs a ‘Museum for the People?’” *The New York Times*, September 14, 1969, accessed April 22, 2011.

40 “Struggle for Social Justice,” Calisphere, accessed April 22, 2011, http://www.calisphere.universityofcalifornia.edu/themed_collections/subtopic6d.html.

41 “Bay Area Census,” accessed April 22, 2011.

Alex M. Saragoza (Associate Professor of Chicano/Latino Studies at UC Berkeley), in discussion with the author, March 2011.

42 Alex M. Saragoza, in discussion with the author, March 2011.

The Oakland Museum of California opened its doors in 1969 as a so-called “museum for the people,” but a controversy prior to the actual opening demonstrated that the museum functioned within a prejudiced framework. Although the Museum Director J.S. Holliday and the Museum Educational Coordinator Julia Hare intended to “make the museum relevant to all ethnic components of the community,” the museum administration tackled their efforts and challenged the decision to appoint a multiracial Educational Advisory Council.⁴³ This disagreement resulted in the firing of Holliday and the resignation of Hare. While the controversy is an apt representation of the larger social dynamics that were at play in the late sixties, it also highlights the social dynamics between Oakland minority communities.

In the discussions concerning the museum’s goals and the appointment of a multi-ethnic and multi-political Educational Advisory Council, attention was brought to the fact that the Museum commission was entirely composed of white individuals. In the month following the controversy, the African-American community remained the most influential group other than the whites. A journalist who wrote about racial turmoil at the OMCA following the museum’s opening in 1969 reported the Black Caucus’ demands concerning the entirely white administrative office and city-appointed Oakland Museum Commission:

[Black Caucus Chairman] Paul Cobb said that “The Black Caucus has been assured that the Black representation on the Museum Commission will reflect the Black population of the City of Oakland.” This assurance, Cobb said, came from the City Council, which voted on September 16 to promise that three out of four of the next appointments to the museum would be minority persons, “with a strong emphasis” on having 11 three black.⁴⁴

While other minorities were included in the discussions concerning the OMCA’s administration, they did not seem to have an important influence nor were they mentioned in most newspaper articles regarding the events.

43 Carol Long, “Mrs. Hare Quits, Blasts Oakland Museum.” *Sun Reporter*, August 23, 1969.

44 Carol Long, “Black Caucus Battles TV Network, Oakland Museum.” *Sun Reporter*, September 27, 1969.

Most publications dealing with the OMCA either failed to mention the participation of Chicanos or other minorities in the struggle over cultural representation in the Museum administration, or simply referred to non-black and non-white groups as “brown”.⁴⁵ While San Francisco had entire museums dedicated to Chicano, Latino, and Asian cultures, the OMCA’s promise for “permanent ethnic exhibits were endangered” before it even opened its doors.⁴⁶ Thus, the OMCA’s administration and commission not only represented another obstacle in the fight for racial equality, it provided limited space for the different minorities of Oakland. In the years following the disputes over the lack of diversity in the OMCA’s administration, exhibits at the Museum were largely representative of the African-American community. For instance, the celebration of “Negro history week” in 1970 and the exhibits labeled “Black untitled III” in 1972.⁴⁷ Meanwhile, other minority groups still had little access to public cultural institutions such as the OMCA. Despite these social and institutional obstacles, Día de los Muertos made its way to Oakland, but took a divergent route.

Based on the interviews I conducted, the birth of the annual procession in San Francisco seems to correlate with the emergence of Día de los Muertos activities and ceremonies in the city of Oakland. Evidently, few Bay Area residents had heard about or witnessed the first Día de los Muertos event in San Francisco’s Mission district in 1972. Thanks to the annual procession launched in 1981, the holiday’s visibility in the Bay Area increased considerably. Thus, in opening Día de los Muertos activities to public participation, La Galería de la Raza contributed to the development of the celebration in the East Bay.

Moreover, demographic shifts in the 1970s and 1980s and the election of Oakland’s first African-American Mayor, Lionel Wilson, in 1977 impacted Oakland’s political and social landscape.⁴⁸

45 Long, “Mrs. Hare Quits, Blasts Oakland Museum.”

46 Carol Long, “Oakland Museum Hears Protests” *Sun Reporter*, Aug 30, 1969.

47 Cleveland Bellow, “On The Art Scene.” *Oakland Post*, December 13, 1972, accessed April 20, 2011. “Museum Observes Negro History Week.” *Oakland Post*, February 5, 1970.

48 Gabriel Orozco et al. “The Unity Council: A Brief History of a Pioneering Community Development and Service Organization,” (August 2008), 36.

The Latino population had slowly risen but was most certainly undercounted, because many were undocumented immigrant workers. This change in demographics reinforced the identity of Fruitvale “as a working class Latino neighborhood,” which was a determining factor in choosing Día de los Muertos as a unifying neighborhood celebration.⁴⁹ The election of Lionel Wilson as Mayor of Oakland marked the beginning of a brighter future for Oakland’s peoples of color. At his funeral in 1998, Congresswoman Barbara Lee told the crowd that “he [had broken] glass ceilings for people of color and women,” and diversified Oakland’s administration, thanks to his support for affirmative action.⁵⁰

Additionally, Mona Younis notes, “a significant number of [1960s Chicano] activists remained [in Oakland] and now headed community organizations devoted to assisting and empowering their communities,” thus ensuring the continuation of the Chicano’s movement legacies.⁵¹ Thanks to these changes, Día de los Muertos was introduced to the local Chicano and Latino communities through a multitude of channels and events in the early 1980s.

One of these channels was education. The community-oriented agencies that the Chicano movement had engendered utilized Día de los Muertos activities as a means to educate Chicano youth and instill a sense of common heritage among Chicanos and Chicanas. Rosario Flores was a youth counselor at the SSCF when the procession in San Francisco started. The SSCF was geared towards educating Oakland Chicano youth through educational programs and community events. At the time, the SSCF sponsored and hosted an annual *Día del Barrio* (“Neighborhood day”) in Josie D. de la Cruz Park—formerly known as Sanborn Park—in Fruitvale in 1981 and 1982. Community members and high school students planned most of the event, with the help of the organization. During the event, Rosario Flores recalled that “people discussing Día de los Muertos activities” because Día del Barrio occurred around the same time (i.e. the end of October).⁵² Conversations about the holiday were already

49 Ibid, 36-38.

50 Thaa Walker, “Oakland Recalls Lionel Wilson With Love/ Former Mayor Blazed Trails for Black,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 10, 1998.

51 Mona Younis, “San Antonio and Fruitvale,” *Cityscape*, Vol. 4, No. 2.

52 Rosario Flores, in discussion with the author, March 2011.

reaching the ears of Oakland's Chicano residents. However, Día de los Muertos became more relevant through the various summer school programs and educational programs offered by the SSCF.

Artist Xochitl Guerrero was the daughter of the Oakland resident and Chicano muralist Zala Nevel. According to Rosario Flores, Zala Nevel frequently designed detailed murals in the community, and included elaborate depictions of Día de los Muertos with scenes from the history of ancient and modern Mexico. Following in her father's footsteps, Xochitl not only pursued a career as an artist, but maintained the family tradition and promoted Día de los Muertos activities through the art programs that were part of the SSCF's educational and summer school programs' curriculum. Xochitl and other members of the SSCF conducted intensive summer classes in the 1980s, teaching art, history, and literature to Chicano youth with Día de los Muertos as part of the curriculum.⁵³ In this framework, the celebration served as an educational tool and a means to remember leading Latino politicians and historical figures. However, exposure to Día de los Muertos extended beyond the Chicano and Latino youth communities.

In 1982, the City of Oakland under the direction of Mayor Wilson launched the famous Festival at the Lake, an annual multicultural festival located at the 54-acre Lakeside Park on Lake Merritt in Downtown, which occurred the first weekend of June.⁵⁴ The urban festival celebrated and recognized the diverse neighborhoods and ethnic groups of Oakland. From Taiko Japanese drummers to hip-hop artists, this giant street party brought "tens of thousands" of visitors and was viewed as "Oakland's jewel".⁵⁵ As a community organization, the SSCF was invited to participate in the parade, which was one of the festival's many entertainments. Rosario and other members of the SSCF thought that Día de los Muertos was the perfect theme for the group and that it would increase the visibility of Chicano cultural heritage. Additionally, they made information on the holiday and the organization available to curious passersby and set up information tables. Through its participation in

53 Ibid.

54 "Oakland's Festival of the Lake, May 31 through June 2," *Sunset*, June, 1982.

55 Rhonda White-Warner, "Festival at the Lake: Defining Cultural Diversity," *Oakland Post*, March 10, 1993, 4.

the festival, the SSCF transported the traditions to the public sphere and exposed them to a larger audience. The SSCF eventually became a key element in the advancement of the celebration in the Fruitvale district through its association with the Unity Council, but this did not occur until the mid-1990s. Meanwhile, unforeseen developments in San Francisco's procession inspired a group of Oakland residents to reclaim the holiday and to celebrate it in a more intimate and spiritual setting.

In the early 1980s, Margaret Santos, a Chicana community organizer who lived in the Richmond area, often visited San Francisco in order to witness the small nocturnal procession in the Mission district. However, the planners of the procession did not set limits on who could participate. Although the organizers had increased the visibility of the celebration through San Francisco's educational programs, its recent establishment and its limitation to the gallery space left many residents in the dark as to what the meanings of Día de los Muertos were.⁵⁶ Margaret quickly realized that "there was no focus on stopping people from joining and these people did not really know what was going on".⁵⁷ She emphasized the "inauthentic" nature of the procession and the lack of understanding by describing some people dressed in Halloween costumes. The analogy with Halloween undoubtedly refers to the commercialization of the holiday. This monetization meddled with spirituality resulted in the "bastardization" of Halloween and in the loss of Halloween's original meaning.

By organizing celebrations at their own houses, Margaret and Oakland resident Yolanda Ronquilla intended "to maintain the spirituality of the ceremony and [pass] down the family stories" to younger generations, and thus ensure that both stories and traditions "become part of a common history". In other words, they wanted to ensure that Día de los Muertos was not going to share the fate of Halloween.⁵⁸ The participants attending their celebration were diverse but limited to a private circle. They first invited their immediate

56 Catherine Bins, "Day of the Dead Was Not Always a San Francisco Celebration," *Mission Local*, November 2, 2010.

Margaret Terrazas Santos, in discussion with the author, April 2011.

57 Margaret Terrazas Santos, April 2011.

58 Margaret Terrazas Santos, April 2011.

family to participate. Later, community members and friends joined them in celebrating and honoring the dead. While the celebration never became “public,” it did expand to other households by the intermediary of various participants.

During the first years of the private celebration, Roberto Vargas, former chair of today’s OMCA Latino Advisory Committee, often attended and later organized his own observance with his family. Luz Alvarez Martinez, another member of today’s LAC, was also invited to Yolanda’s Día de los Muertos *velación* or vigil. More than a decade after her first visit, Luz planned a typical Día de los Muertos trip to the Holy Sepulchre Cemetery in Hayward so as to share the experience with her elderly mother, Felisa Alvarez Martinez, who passed away a few months later.⁵⁹ According to her, this visit to the cemetery consisted of the construction of an altar, the making of *papel picado* or perforated paper, and the burning of copal. Henceforth, visiting the cemetery on Día de los Muertos became a family tradition. In the privacy of their homes, Margaret and Yolanda maintained a certain “authenticity” to the celebration for thirty years by keeping Día de los Muertos personal and more community-minded.

While these particular celebrations have no direct bearings on the large-scale celebrations that followed, they pertained to the history of Día de los Muertos by affecting individual participants who later became influential players in the establishment of the annual Día de los Muertos exhibit and ceremony at the OMCA. According to Barbara Henry, the chief curator of Education at the OMCA, it was under the leadership of Roberto Vargas, who had attended Margaret’s private ceremony, that the celebration was born and reclaimed at the museum. Moreover, the emergence of this holiday as a Chicano family tradition prior to the birth of the large-scale celebrations shows that public institutions were not vital to the survival of the holiday, and that its evolution was mostly community-based. Nevertheless, public institutions provided the link between the celebration and Oakland’s multi-cultural audience.

The Development of the Oakland Museum of California Día de los Muertos celebration and the birth of the Fruitvale

59 Luz Alvarez Martinez, in discussion with the author, April 2011.

Festival in the 1990s

The development of Día de los Muertos in Oakland took a different turn in the early 1990s. So far, the celebration had been family-oriented, or utilized as a tool to build a collective history and educate Chicano youth. However, two particular events allowed for the emergence of large-scale celebrations at the OMCA and in Fruitvale. The first event is one that many community members referred to as “the *cholo* controversy,” which led to the foundation of OMCA’s annual Día de los Muertos ceremony. The second was the turnaround of the Spanish-Speaking Unity Council after it almost declared bankruptcy in 1989 and the shift that ensued concerning its goals and strategies, which shaped the orientation of the Fruitvale Festival as a Día de los Muertos celebration. These events opened space for Chicano and Latino activists to reclaim Día de los Muertos as theirs and to share their cultural history with Oakland.

The “Cholo controversy” and the Development of Día de los Muertos at the OMCA

1989 was an eventful and controversial year for the American art world. Andres Serrano’s *Piss Christ*, which had been funded by the National Endowment for the Arts, elicited a surge of criticisms from offended politicians and religious figures. At the same time, the retrospective “Robert Mapplethorpe: The Perfect Moment,” an exhibit dedicated to the late photographer’s career, was traveling between art galleries. Mapplethorpe was known for his controversial photographs of nude, sadomasochistic scenes. However, the Serrano scandal pressured Christina Orr-Cahall, the director of Washington’s Corcoran Gallery of Art, to cancel “The Perfect Moment,” fearing for the gallery’s reputation. By canceling the show, Orr-Cahall opened a Pandora’s box. The arts community responded to this attack on artistic freedom by projecting more of Mapplethorpe’s work on the museum’s wall, which in turn led to a series of congressional debates on the proper role of the NEA. Nevertheless, the show went on and other venues hosted the retrospective, defying censorship, and setting a precedent that would be difficult to overturn.⁶⁰

In the context of this general anti-censorship sentiment,

60 Wendy Steiner, *The Scandal of Pleasure: Art in Age of Fundamentalism*, (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1995) 16-29.

the achievement of the Chicano community in removing a “disrespectful” art piece from the OMCA’s gallery was impressive and significant. This collective effort launched a debate on cultural representation and the need to increase the community’s participation in the museum’s affairs, and led to the creation of the Latino Advisory Committee in the early 1990s, which was followed by the creation of Día de los Muertos as an annual exhibit and ceremony.

In the early 1990s, Juanita Meza Velasquez, former director of the Chicano/Latino Employee Association (Amigos of the City of Oakland), began to receive numerous complaints from Chicano residents about a particular object exhibited at the OMCA. The piece was the figurine of a *Cholo* with a can of beer in his back pocket. The work *Key Terms in Latino/a Cultural and Literary Studies* provides a concise definition of “cholo” as it is used today:

Depending on context and period, when used by Chicano/ as the term may designate variously: a Mexican American or Chicano/a, a term of pride, and a synonym for *pachuco* and *pocho* (terms that predate and overlap with Chicano); a gang member (an insult if used by Anglos, a positive term of personal and collective identification if used by *cholos*).⁶¹

This definition clearly shows the importance of the context in which the word is used and similarly, the lack of context is exactly what had offended Chicano visitors when they first saw the figurine. The showcase gathered elements from different cultural and ethnic groups and displayed them together in one room.⁶² Juanita remembered seeing miscellaneous objects representing the queer community, together with a set supposedly representative of Latin American cultures and wondered, “if it was all they could come up with to represent Chicano people in this town”. Moreover, this showcase portrayed the Latino community as a monolithic group, which exacerbated existing stereotypes of Latinos and Chicanos. Contextually, the cholo statue “reinforced stereotypes and [did not] have adequate interpretation to dispel misconceptions,” and simply

61 Paul Allatson, *Key Terms in Latino/a Cultural and Literary Studies*, (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 67.

62 Juanita Meza Velasquez (former president of the Amigos of city of Oakland), in discussion with the author, April 2011.

did not fit with the overarching theme of the showcase.⁶³

Alerted to the growing displeasure of Chicano activists and community members, the OMCA administration organized several meetings to discuss the possible future of the art piece. Juanita, Richard Samora and other active members of Amigos fought long and hard to ensure the removal of the piece. They even convinced the artist to write a letter outlining the reasons why he believed his art had been de-contextualized.⁶⁴ Tom Frye, the Chief Curator of History, tried to justify the presence of the cholo figure as relevant to Latin American history, but eventually, agreed that the context in which it was placed was simply inadequate. Despite the tensions that the incident had created, open communication had been established between the community and the administration and more issues were brought to the table. The deep gap between the presence of the Chicano community in Oakland and its actual representation in public institutions was highlighted as one of the community's major concerns.⁶⁵

From that point on, the OMCA acknowledged the need to increase the visibility of the Spanish-speaking communities of Oakland and scheduled a series of exhibits related to Latino and Chicano history. Another major change was the creation of the Latino Advisory Committee as a representative body of the local community, whose participation in museum's activities eventually led to the organization of Día de los Muertos exhibits and ceremonies under the leadership of Roberto Vargas. During the 1990s, the Latino population had doubled, thus making the absence of a large community celebration all the more inconsistent with the cultural reality of the city. In October 1995, the Chicano community saw its efforts rewarded. Under the supervision of the LAC, guest curator Bea Carrillo Hocker and the museum staff, the first Día de los Muertos exhibit and communal ceremony was organized.

In gaining access to a public institution such as the OMCA, the Chicano and Latino populations of Oakland exposed their cultural history to non-Latino audiences. In engaging with local

63 Barbara Henry, "Evolution of Días de los Muertos at the Oakland Museum of California," January 17, 2005.

64 Juanita Meza Velasquez, in discussion with the author, April 2011.

65 Ibid.

communities through the celebration, the museum moved a step closer to fulfilling its role as “a museum for the people”. In the following years, the event grew immensely and included an array of activities, all meant to reinforce the relationship between the museum and local groups. The OMCA event also facilitated the inclusion of the holiday as a part of school curricula because of the positive response the event received from both teachers and schools alike.⁶⁶ Its popularity pushed the LAC to create an alternative committee to deal solely with the logistics of the event. While a large percentage of the audience was Latino, the Project Director for the event, Evelyn Orantes, argued that the celebration had really become more about Oakland.⁶⁷ Barbara Henry clearly spells out the participatory goals of the celebration:

Community members may participate as exhibitors, *ceremonia* leaders, presenters, demonstrators, teachers, etc. And as you know each element of the celebration is designed to engage visitors actively in the rituals associated with the tradition so they can have sacred space and time to honor and remember loved ones.⁶⁸

In other words, the museum accentuated the participatory nature of the celebration and therefore eased its integration into the cultural life of Oakland. The OMCA became a vehicle to bring the cathartic power of Día de los Muertos to Oakland, enriching the celebration by enabling and expanding broader community involvement.

The Birth of the Fruitvale Festival

The 1980s was a decade characterized by severe financial and safety issues in Fruitvale. At the time, the Reagan administration had created a financial climate hostile to the health of nonprofit organizations. With an increase in military spending, and a relatively small monetary investment in social programs, the Reagan administration’s economic policy had severe consequences for Oakland’s community nonprofits.⁶⁹ Oakland had also suffered severe damages after a 7.1 magnitude earthquake struck the Bay Area in 1989, which exacerbated the difficulties in Oakland’s already unstable

66 Henry, “Evolution of Días de los Muertos.”

67 Evelyn Orantes, in discussion with the author, March 2011.

68 Henry, “Evolution of Días de los Muertos.”

69 Orozco, “A Brief History” 39.

economy.⁷⁰ In an interview, Terry Alderete, chief coordinator of the Fruitvale Festival, described the Fruitvale area as “a war zone” due to the decrease in businesses and the high crime rates.⁷¹ Meanwhile, the Spanish Speaking Unity Council (SSUC), a community development corporation in the Fruitvale district, experienced a deep financial crisis due to cuts in government social spending. This crisis brought the organization to the verge of bankruptcy and consequently led to serious cuts in services and facilities.

At the height of the crisis, the SSUC contacted its former executive director Arabella Martinez and asked for assistance. Under Martinez’s leadership, the organization underwent serious adjustments and adopted a new strategy, which saved the SSUC from completely disappearing. The ensuing changes led to the creation of the Fruitvale Festival and had a significant impact on the festival’s future development.⁷²

Martinez’s strategy focused on two major causes of the SSUC’s downfall. First, the fact that the SSUC had lost its ties to local organizations and had significantly grown out of the local Latino community directly threatened its influence and support base. Second, the lack of place-based priorities heavily affected the efficiency of the organization, meaning that the SSUC needed to geographically narrow its focus.⁷³ From these observations, Arabella Martinez established new priorities for the SSUC with a focus on the Fruitvale District below Foothill Boulevard and “thus, the focus of the Unity Council became community revitalization within this specific neighborhood”.⁷⁴ The fact that “Latinos comprised more than one third of Fruitvale population by the 1990s” shaped the direction of revitalization projects.⁷⁵

Meanwhile, the Festival at the Lake was receiving its own share of criticism from displeased residents, which followed a wave of violent altercations that occurred during the Festival in 1994.

70 Younis, “San Antonio and Fruitvale,” 223.

71 Marchi, “Day of the Dead in the USA,” (includes an interview with Terry Alderete), 96.

72 Orozco, “A Brief History,” 38-57.

73 Orozco, “A Brief History,” 50-54.

74 Orozco, “A Brief History,” 54-55.

75 Mounis, “San Antonio and Fruitvale,” 226.

That year marked “the beginning of the end” for the festival, along with SSCF’s small Día de los Muertos activities.⁷⁶ However, the OMCA had started its own Día de los Muertos communal ceremony “to provide audiences a basic understanding and appreciation of Días de los Muertos, particularly as a historical and contemporary tradition of Chicanos/Latinos in the United States” and to “heal the loss of loved ones, to raise awareness of the issues affecting our communities, to nurture unity and to inspire community involvement and ownership”.⁷⁷ The goals of the museum seemed to match the ones set by the Unity Council in its project to revitalize the Fruitvale District and celebrating Día de los Muertos as a neighborhood festival appeared to be an excellent strategy for two reasons. One, the holiday was relevant to the majority of the Spanish-speaking community as a Mesoamerican celebration, and, second, the celebration had a cross-cultural quality to it because of its concentration on the universal theme of death.

In their effort to revitalize Fruitvale and leave the unhappy memories of the 1980s behind, the Unity Council launched its first Día de los Muertos Festival in 1996. The Festival was relatively small at first, with 2,500 people in 1996. Thanks to sponsor funding and media advertising, 20,000 people attended in 1997.⁷⁸ With such a turnout, the Unity Council succeeded in its goal to boost the Fruitvale commercial area and make the neighborhood a part of Oakland’s cultural life. In fact, Congresswoman Barbara Lee presented the event as a nominee for inclusion in the Library of Congress. The growth of the festival directly impacted the livelihood of local merchants and business owners, and introduced new locations to visitors who had never been to the Fruitvale prior to the creation of the Festival. It was also an opportunity for the local artists community to expend their influence in the Fruitvale and to enrich the festival with their own creations and art classes for the community.⁷⁹ Currently, the festival is the largest one-day festival in the country and attracts approximately 100,000 visitors every year.

76 Thaa Walker, “Festival at the Lake Discontinued/ Debt from Oakland fete proved insurmountable,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 07, 1997.

77 Henry, “Evolution of Días de los Muertos.”

78 Orozco, “A Brief History,” 67.

79 Marsha Murrington, Interview by Gabriel Orzco et al., “A Brief History,” 67.

Conclusions

The history of Día de los Muertos in Oakland is intimately linked with the Chicano struggle for political and social recognition. While the holiday originated in the encounter between Catholicism and Mesoamerican religions, it remains a modern creation, born in the social context of the late twentieth century. The intervention of tourism agencies elevated the celebration as a symbol of Mexican national identity and contributed to its commercialization. Meanwhile, the emergence of civil rights movements affected the social and political landscape of the United States in significant ways. It is during that time that Chicano identity was forged and politicized as the core of the Chicano movements' discourse. The rich cultural heritage of Mesoamerican societies was used to advance the struggle for racial equality. Chicano artists incorporated elements of this heritage in political posters and theatrical plays. Others incorporated these elements in their political and educational strategies. Some simply saw the need to honor their ancestors, and mourned the dead Chicano and Latino soldiers who never made it back from Vietnam.

As a reclaimed holiday, Día de los Muertos celebrations emerged in the midst of these turbulent times as a way to remember ancestors and stay unified as a community. The first events were organized in San Francisco and in Los Angeles in the early 1970s. Thanks to the availability of public institutions and the leftist tendencies of San Francisco, the celebration flourished and a procession was added in 1981. In Oakland, the political and social circumstances for the growth of the holiday were less favorable. The Chicano movement had a relatively small influence on the politics of Oakland since Oakland was the headquarters of the Black Panthers, and the unequal political and cultural strictures only allowed limited access to any minority group. Moreover, like most ethnic minority groups, the Chicano community had little access to public institutions such as the OMCA. Finally, Chicano activists in Oakland were more concerned with educational or labor issues than with cultural ones. In this context, the celebration of Día de los Muertos in Oakland was deeply rooted in a struggle against racial inequality and first became a means to fight for political and cultural recognition. The

politicization of this multifarious tradition allowed the celebration to spread throughout California and become a significant element of Chicano resistance and culture. National conditions of the 1960s and 1970s were ideal for Día de los Muertos to grow and soon the opportunity was introduced to smaller urban centers.

At this time, the social, political and cultural conditions for the celebration of Día de los Muertos slowly burgeoned in Oakland. The demographic shifts as well as the election of Mayor Lionel Wilson opened Oakland's doors to the influence of San Francisco's Día de los Muertos procession. Local community organizers and active community members organized home observances of the holiday, thus contributing to its integration in Oakland. While these personal celebrations did not directly lead to the creation of large-scale celebrations, they propagated the traditions of Día de los Muertos and influenced individuals who would later take a more public role. As a living tradition, Día de los Muertos was continuously enriched as it traveled through various social environments and levels of involvement, and migrated from one corner of the continent to another. Home celebrations reinforced the relationship between the holiday and the local Latino community before its exposition to a wider audience and added to the richness of the soon-to-be public celebration.

Along with the changes in Oakland's politics, the controversy at the OMCA and the new strategy of the Unity Council fostered the development of the celebration and enabled Día de los Muertos to reach multi-cultural audiences. Exploring the possibility of a public commemoration of the holiday served the Unity Council and OMCA's goals in unifying the community. Additionally, a public celebration would provide a greater visibility to the Chicano community. In offering the space and the resources for Día de los Muertos to grow, the OMCA and the Unity Council served as two means to bridge Latino and non-Latino communities through cultural immersion. At the same time, Día de los Muertos' participatory nature and cross-cultural themes facilitated its integration into Oakland's folklore. Death is a universal experience that links all beings together. Thanks to this universality, Día de los Muertos provides an alternative space for any individual to actively explore his

or her relationship with death or creatively remember the life of the deceased. Creating an altar can be a cathartic experience, but it can also be a means of expression. As such, the making of an *ofrenda* also adds to the holiday's versatility and adaptability. In other words, the celebrations of Día de los Muertos in Oakland appeal to ubiquitous emotions, which makes it accessible to everyone, regardless of religion, ethnic background and class.

The celebration is both a means and an end by reclaiming the roots of a people and uses identity assertion as a weapon of social development. The role of Día de los Muertos in Oakland's history thus may be compared to the role of Mardi Gras for African-American communities in New Orleans, or to the role of Indigenous Peoples' Day in the struggle of indigenous communities to reclaim Columbus Day. In a way, Día de los Muertos is also a reminder about the intimate link existing between life and death. In a nation where video games, movies, and the media reduce death to a distant banality, the celebration of Día de los Muertos reminds us that death is an inherent and important part of life. Oakland's large-scale celebrations are tools used to fight against the desensitization of local communities to violence and its consequences, while providing the means to deal with death productively and creatively.

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SEX IN SCHOOLS: THE SEXUAL EDUCATION FILM OF THE POSTWAR 1940s AND '50s

By Jessica Pena

"I had a wet dream last night. Ya know, when sperm comes out of your penis".¹

Besides being unintentionally hilarious, this line is not what one would normally expect from a film for teenagers in the 1950s. Instead of being tight-lipped about sexual behavior, it's frank, honest and, most importantly, unabashedly forthright in its discussion of the sexual realities of adolescence (wet dreams included). This is not the Cleaver household; though, the boys are still named Wally.² More than just aprons and suburbs, the post-war boom of the late 1940s and 50s saw the "population trend"³ becoming increasingly "urban"⁴ and expansive as the rate of births in 1946 alone rapidly rose from 2.8 to

1 *As Boys Grow*, Dir. George Watson, Medical Arts Productions, 1957.

2 Ibid.

3 Benjamin C. Gruenberg, *High School and Sex Education*, (Washington D.C.: United States Public Health Service, 1940), XII.

4 Ibid.

3.4 million.⁵ This combination of industrial escalation and population surge resulted in an additional expansion of the United States government as well—in schools particularly. It is in the post-war 1940s and 50s where the sexual education film comes to represent not only a shift in sexual information from families and churches to the public schooling system but a shift in that sexual knowledge from a biologically-based “foundation in facts”⁶ to a more morally-based “phase of character education”.⁷ Sexual behavior, gender roles and matrimonial preoccupation became the knowledge transmitted to adolescents through the medium of government-sponsored films.

Before the displays of dating etiquette became fashionable in schools, it was the circulation of venereal diseases and the spread of “sex crimes and delinquencies”⁸ which initially prompted the movement of sexual education into the public school arena. After the maelstrom that was WWI, rampant venereal diseases and prostitution, abroad and at home, were seen not only as “morbid phenomena” and public nuisances, but the result of a “defective adjustment of boys and girls to the living conditions of men and women”.⁹ As WWI tore apart Europe, the raging problems of disease and perceived “perverted attitudes toward sex” were seen as the results of a two-fold trend: the increasing “industrial” world and the subsequent absence of familial guidance with regard to children’s sexual knowledge.¹⁰ Not surprisingly, several progressive reform groups such as the American Social Hygiene Association, founded in 1913¹¹, saw the absence of this guidance as an urgent reason for the relocation of sex instruction to the schools, where “instruction” instead of ignorance would mold “the leaders of the next generation”.¹² That next generation, the baby boomers, would be the generation who would receive this expanse in-school sexual education. Though WWI may have been the initial impetus for the relocation of sexual

5 “Population and Household Economic Topics,” Census.gov.

6 Gruenberg, *High Schools and Sex Education*, 25.

7 Ibid, XIII.

8 Gruenberg, *High School and Sex Education*, 1940, XIII.

9 Gruenberg, Benjamin C., ed. 1922, 1.

10 Ibid, 2.

11 Maurice Bigelow. *Sex-Education*. New York: J.J. Little and Ives, 1936, 3.

12 Gruenberg, Benjamin C., ed. 1922, 3.

instruction from parents to the schools, it was WWII that prompted the switch of not only the instructive medium (the pamphlet to the film), but a shift in the underlying intent: from biological instruction to moral character. Published in 1947, the same American Social Hygiene Association that had discussed a need for an honest “study of biology” and “examination of the reproductive processes,”¹³ now professed that the conditions of war were causing the “breakdown of the family” and a new “general social etiquette” needed to be taught in order to re-establish “wholesome” family living amongst the youth.¹⁴ With a postwar rise in teenage pregnancies and an increasing number of clandestine abortions, estimated between 200,000 and 1.2 million, the federal government “implemented aggressive and innovative techniques” to counter this rising problems.¹⁵ The demeanor of the sexual education literature was changing from a program about disease prevention to one heavily focused on items such as “posture in relation to individual health,”¹⁶ ideas of “genuine manhood and womanhood,”¹⁷ and “family relationships,” newly proffered through the medium of in-class films.¹⁸

Not surprisingly, one of the first films to be shown in schools, Disney’s *Story of Menstruation* does not just comprise the biological presentation of menstruation but a simultaneous message of maintaining one’s moral character and an ideal, physical appearance. Biology, in these films, becomes tinged with messages of moral characters as the narrator states, “slumpy posture is just as bad inside as it looks outside”.¹⁹ Social behavior and sexual knowledge are linked as the film titles suggest. From Disney’s *Story of Menstruation* in 1946 to *Are You Popular?* in 1947 or *Social Sex Attitudes in Adolescence* in 1953, sexual knowledge became increasingly associated and taught as the precursor to “healthy attitudes” and

13 Bigelow, *Sex-Education*, 5.
14 *Education for Human Relations and Family Life on the Secondary School Level*, (New York: American Social Hygiene Association, 1947), 7.

15 Alexandra M. Lord, *Condom Nation: The U.S. Government’s Sex Education Campaign from WWI to the Internet*, (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 94.

16 Ibid.

17 Ibid.

18 Gruenberg, *High School and Sex Education*, XVI.

19 *Disney’s Story of Menstruation*, Disney, Co., 1946.

“meaningful personal experience”.²⁰ For Mary and Bob in *Social Sex Attitudes in Adolescence*, a “free and open discourse” about the biology of sex in early childhood resulted in popularity and subsequent “self-confidence” through adolescence, which spelled success for their marriage.²¹ Consequently, a biological knowledge of sex became only a precursor to a proper “social experience” where marriage is seen as the culmination of social maturity.²²

However, the social experiences in these films are usually conveyed through a means of sexual segregation. The sex ed class itself was divided along gendered lines due to the fact that “boys and girls” already attended “separate physical education classes,” and students were thought to “ask questions more freely in segregated groups”.²³ However, the separation of the sexes in the actual classrooms translated to the on-film portrayals of the sexes as two distinct models where “men and women” have “customarily different roles”.²⁴ The rules of dating etiquette laid out in 1953’s *Beginning to Date* reveal the young man to be the one who instigates most dates while the girl “does her hair and makeup”.²⁵ In 1951’s *Going Steady?*, the boy pays for the girl’s dinner and takes her out for an evening of ice skating when, at the appropriate curfew, he returns her to her home.²⁶ Despite the fact that it was then considered “acceptable for girls to plan dates,”²⁷ the actual acts of calling, making plans, and paying for the evening’s event are all presented as the responsibility of the boy.²⁸ However, though the social interactions between the genders display a definitive contrast in roles (one being passive, the other active), the actual sexual knowledge being taught reveals an even stronger discrepancy amongst the segregated sexes.

Let’s start with the boys. The 1957 film *As Boys Grow* begins

20 *Social Sex Attitudes in Adolescence*, McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1953.

21 Ibid.

22 Ibid.

23 Gruenberg, *High School and Sex Education*, 13.

24 Ibid.

25 *Beginning to Date*, Encyclopedia Britannica Films, Inc., 1953.

26 *Going Steady?* Coronet International Films, 1951.

27 Marion O. Lerrigo and Helen Southard, *Learning About Love*, (Washington D.C.: American Medical Association, 1955), 20.

28 *Social Sex Attitudes in Adolescence*, McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1953.

in an already gendered atmosphere. A montage of hefty young men in track uniforms grace the opening credits as they run track, play baseball, and interact with their coach. It is the coach figure, not the teacher or any parental figure, who becomes the arbiter of sexual knowledge to these adolescent males. In various locker room discussions, the coach answers questions from the crowd of curious boys. “What’s puberty?” one asks as the coach proceeds to his charts (conveniently placed within the locker room) to answer with a frankness and tolerance for “individual differences” amongst the varying body types and rates of growth amongst the young men. It is the only film, produced for use in school programs during this era, which discusses sex as an act of pleasure, not just procreation. The film also addresses male masturbation as “something normal” and goes on to dismiss the previous notions of masturbation as an act which “affects your mind or your manhood” as completely “untrue”. Although the film does perpetuate a certain masculine stereotype of the “tall, muscular body” as desirable, the general tone of openness transcends sexual ignorance to reveal not only male sexual knowledge, but female sexuality as well. Menstruation is taught to the young men as something “you ought to know”.²⁹ However, though menstruation is covered in the films for young women like this film for young men, barely anything else is revealed for the girls’ edification.

For a film that is supposed to be the compliment to *As Boys Grow*, 1953’s *Molly Grows Up* is different in tone and message. Instead of the coach, the school nurse becomes the advisory figure. But, unlike the coach, the nurse does not figure as the sole agent of information in the film. Unlike *As Boys Grow*, relatively little amount of screen-time is situated in the classroom. The central location is the home where Molly’s mother, father, and sister comprise the nuclear unit surrounding Molly’s budding curiosity about her sexuality. However, unlike the boys who displayed a relatively diverse set of questions (What’s puberty? What about nocturnal emissions? How does reproduction work?), Molly has a singular desire: her period.³⁰ Like the coach in *As Boys Grow*, the nurse speaks about how “we’re all different” and develop at various rates, but when it comes to the

29 *As Boys Grow*, Dir. George Watson, Medical Arts Productions, 1957.
30 Ibid.

biological processes of sexual reproduction, much is omitted. When those handy charts are shown depicting the reproductive process, no mention is made about how an egg becomes fertilized and menstruation is explicitly pegged as not just a monthly cycle, but a “normal process leading up to motherhood”.³¹ The primacy of the family, marriage, and motherhood within the film not only highlights the stark differences in sexual knowledge being taught amongst the two sexes, but it’s also indicative of an overarching theme in many of these films: how this knowledge can be used to develop a marital maturity.

The marriage of Mary and Bob in the beginning of *Social Sex Attitudes* reflects more than what the film describes as just the “intangible quality we call love”.³² The connection, made in the film, between Mary and Bob’s sexual education and their subsequent marriage is a link that permeates the majority of the films. In *Going Steady?*, the singling out of one girlfriend or boyfriend is considered the step “before thinking seriously of marriage”.³³ In *Beginning to Date*, the act of dating multiple partners, “trying on different boys” is seen as a necessary step in familiarizing oneself with the opposite sex in preparation for marriage.³⁴ Even Disney’s *Story of Menstruation*, a film that deals with topics largely biological, closes with a montage where the girl, now imbued with sexual knowledge of the reproductive processes, becomes a wife and a mother to a new baby girl ready to learn.³⁵ The cycle continues. In each of the films, a trend of regimented steps can be seen. First, the girl or the boy learns of basic sexual biology, a “proper knowledge of sex,” in order to later, in adolescence, learn and appreciate sexual differences amongst the genders and subsequently date in preparation for a “bright,” conjugal future.³⁶ Sexual knowledge is not just about information or edification, but about forming a “healthy attitude step by step from childhood” in order that one can subsequently marry and have a

31 *Molly Grows Up*, Dir. Charles Larrance, Medical Arts Productions, 1953.

32 *Social Sex Attitudes in Adolescence*, McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1953.

33 *Going Steady?* Coronet International Films, 1951.

34 *Beginning to Date*, Encyclopedia Britannica Films, 1953.

35 *Disney’s Story of Menstruation*, Disney, Co., 1946.

36 *Social Sex Attitudes in Adolescence*, McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1953.

family.³⁷

However, not every marriage depicted results in matrimonial bliss. Whereas Mary and Bob were able to foster a seemingly successful relationship based on a foundational knowledge of the sexual processes and plentiful experience with the opposite sex, in 1958's *How Much Affection?*, the marriage between Fred and Eileen is tainted with the marks of teenage pregnancy and a loveless marriage.³⁸ Unlike Mary and Bob, Eileen and Fred succumbed to their strong, sexual “urges,” with the result being not only a baby, but glaring shame as Eileen is seen cowering from her former school peers, on the sidewalk, with her baby carriage in tow.³⁹ Sexual promiscuity, also known as the “petting problem” in several of the sexual education pamphlets and films, is rendered, as in *How Much Affection?*, with an extremely wary eye.⁴⁰ In the case of adolescent affection, “physical urges fight against your reason,” and against “fine thoughts of love”. Sexual intercourse is “the way happy marriages are built, but [it] can lead to act unwisely” as in the case with Eileen and Fred. Their marriage, cast in dour scenes of shadows and sulking, not only recapitulates this argument against sex outside of marriage, but does so in a distinctly gendered tone. Eileen’s pregnancy kept Fred from being “an engineer,” and now “he has to keep a day job to take care of Eileen and the baby,” as he’s seen smoking and drinking on the couch while Eileen lies to her peers about how happy they are.⁴¹ The pitfalls of teenage pregnancy displayed in the film serve to further emphasize the arguments of the other films concerning sexual knowledge and sexual behavior: sexual intercourse is reserved for “happy marriages,” and sexual knowledge is the pathway to appreciating and finding that conjugal bliss, wedding bells, and white dresses that only a film could provide.⁴²

These films, or “visual aids,” which began as an instructive course to ward against sexual ignorance with regard to venereal

37 *Social Sex Attitudes in Adolescence*, McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1953.

38 *Ibid.*

39 *How Much Affection?* McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1958.

40 Marion L. Faegre. *Understanding Ourselves*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1943, 36.

41 *How Much Affection?* McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1958.

42 *Ibid.*

disease, emerged as a tool, in the postwar 1940s and 50s, to display newly intensified concerns over sexual and social behavior – “the education of the personality”.⁴³ They represent a “redefinition of sex education” which was not only preoccupied with the “scientific, ethical, [and] social instruction” of young people, but also focused on the role of the school in influencing this instruction.⁴⁴ The settings of these films, oriented, for the most part, around the classroom, emphasize the need for more than just a rudimentary education of the hormones, glands, or changes involved in puberty and sexual reproduction. They effectively link this sexual knowledge to the shaping of social behavior and the perpetuation of gender roles.⁴⁵ Even the films, such as *Molly Grows Up*, which do not primarily take place in school only enhance the notion of gender separation being prescribed: women learn from their “mothers,” while boys interact on the field or in the gym.⁴⁶ The prevalent concentration of these films on dating etiquette, marriage, and the perils of sex outside of marriage elevate a message of sexual differentiation beyond just “the physical differences”.⁴⁷ The discourse is direct, gendered, and focused on essentially one thing: the creation of a “happy family” through marriage.⁴⁸ However, ironically, the discourse does not stem, in large part, from these families it so promotes. Instead, what the content and use of these sexual education films, to foster familial formation, represent is the active expansion of the federal government. After WWII, the government took direct control as the primary conduit for teaching social and sexual behavior not for the single benefit of biological knowledge, but as “the community’s chief official agency for the training of citizens”.⁴⁹

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43 How Much Affection? McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1958, XIII.

44 Maurice Bigelow, *Sex-Education*, (New York: J.J. Little and Ives, 1936), 1.

45 *Your Body During Adolescence*, McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1955.

46 *Molly Grows Up*, Dir. Charles Larrance, Medical Arts Productions, 1953.

47 Ibid.

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INVENTING AND REINVENTING THE BARBARY WARS: THE EFFECT OF SEPTEMBER 11TH ON THE SOCIAL PRODUCTION OF HISTORICAL KNOWLEDGE

By Susan C. Babb

“The first airliner slammed into the World Trade Center at precisely 8:46 A.M., the second 15 minutes later. I was on my way to work, to an office opposite the Twin Towers, when it happened. I emerged from the bowels of the subway tunnel a few blocks from ground zero and was confronted by a scene of devastation that could have come straight from the London Blitz six decades before: refugees streaming away from the disaster, sirens blaring, police and emergency workers rushing around, and, enveloping all in a dark haze, clouds of ash and soot and smoke. The first of the World Trade Center towers had already collapsed. Before long I would watch the second one falling as easy as a Lego toy under a child’s fist. The bile rising in my throat, saddened, disgusted, dazed, I walked away from this scene of horror, looking back only occasionally, in wonderment, at a Manhattan skyline that in one terrifying moment had been transformed forever”¹

1 Boot, xii.

The scene outlined above is one that Americans have replayed over and over again. From the handful of films to the countless books that have been produced in the past decade, Americans are well aware of the rhetoric that is continually used when remembering the events of September 11, 2001. However, this passage is not found in any of these popularized narratives. Nor is it found in any book about September 11th. Rather, this is the opening passage to Max Boot's *Savage Wars of Peace*, the first book addressing the Barbary Wars published after the terrorist attacks of 2001.

Within the past decade, the Barbary Wars, a series of events that are given scarce coverage even in U.S. history courses, have received an unprecedented level of attention. With only thirty-four sources published on the Barbary Wars between 1900 and 2000, 2001 to 2011 saw no less than fifty-eight publications on the topic.² The most obvious reason for this explosion in publication lies in the history of the Barbary Wars. The First Barbary War (1801-1805) was the United States' first encounter with an Islamic power following its independence, an explicit connection that is often noted by many historians. Thus, with the attacks of September 11th and the ensuing War on Terror, many Americans have felt compelled to learn more about America's first war in the Middle East in the hopes that it will help them understand the wars of the present.³

The First and Second Barbary Wars, fought with Tripoli (1801-1805) and Algiers (1815-1816) respectively, mark a series of ongoing contentions between the U.S. and the Muslim states of North Africa. For centuries Morocco, Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli engaged in piracy in the Mediterranean as a means of economic livelihood. As colonies of the Ottoman Empire, Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli were responsible for paying annual tribute to the Ottomans. Thus, the Barbary States turned to the seas, capturing foreign ships and holding them for ransom as a means of gaining revenue. This

2 See appendix for a working bibliography of literature on the Barbary Wars.

3 This is not a paper dealing with the histories of the Barbary War or 9/11. Rather, it aims to convey and analyze the distinctions between the way the history of the Barbary Wars has been told before and after 9/11. For a history of the Barbary wars, I would recommend Frank Lambert's *The Barbary War: American Independence in the Atlantic World*, though any in the bibliography will give a basic understanding.

practice, though common throughout the world, has regularly been termed privateering when referencing Europe, and piracy when referencing the Barbary States. Nonetheless, because it was such a wide practice, the great powers of Europe found it more economical to pay annual tribute to the Barbary States and thus protect their shipping from seizure. Until independence, the United States had been protected in the Mediterranean by the treaties held by England and then, during the Revolution, France. However, upon independence, the U.S. lacked the funds, organization, and will to form such treaties in North Africa. Instead, it built a navy, entered two wars, and paid various ransoms and tributes, ultimately costing the country millions of dollars. Nevertheless, by the end of the war in 1816, Algiers signed a treaty agreeing to end piracy and the other Barbary nations followed.

Unlike contemporary Islamic terrorists, the Barbary pirates operated under recognized nation-states and possessed no explicit political agenda. Their practices were based on economic purposes. They did not attack United States territory. Rather, the U.S. sought a war in North Africa, when a treaty agreement would have been more cost effective. Yet still, there are those who seek to draw parallels between the Barbary Wars and the events of 2001.

In order to better understand the increased interest in the Barbary Wars, I performed a content analysis of books on the topic, published between 1900 and 2011.⁴ Here, special attention is paid to the year 2001, serving as a break in the literature for the purposes of comparison. In the century from 1900 to 2000, there were thirteen sources published, while the decade from 2001 to 2011 saw eleven sources published. Though these differences are not as dramatic as those noted for the total number of sources produced, given the great effort it takes to publish books, the fact that the two are roughly the same is notable. Beyond this, the content analysis revealed marked differences between the two bodies of work. The first gives

4 This includes books and chapters within books that are written explicitly about the Barbary Wars. These sources were chosen over others because they are more easily accessible to the general population than pieces published in academic journals for example. While I hope that these materials will prove representative of larger trends, in depth content analyses of the other source materials will need to be completed before definitive statements can be made on the subject.

much attention to themes of patriotism, focusing on the American perspective, creating a heroic narrative throughout most of the pieces.⁵ The works published after 2001, while still offering patriotism and heroism, shift from highlighting the American experience of the war to demonizing the Barbary people. Through making explicit connections to September 11th, these works largely employ a backward-looking perspective instead of recognizing the historical specificity of each event. This has resulted in a skewed understanding of the Barbary Wars, where the United States and the Muslim world are presented as destined to war with one another, and has facilitated the post-September 11th demonization of Muslims in the United States.

Though most historians reject the applicability of major theoretical frameworks, many of the pieces examined demonstrate similarities with two frameworks. The majority of the pieces align with Samuel P. Huntington's *The Clash of Civilizations* (1993). Although not all of the works before 2001 follow the course that Huntington lays out, there is a clear progression toward this theory as the century closes. Furthermore, no less than five sources make direct and indirect references to the themes Huntington addresses.⁶ Thus, "The Clash of Civilizations" will be treated as representative of a larger discourse that many authors have grappled with especially since 2001: the trajectory of relations between the West and Islam.

The majority of the pieces written after 2001 represent various forms of continuity with this theory.⁷ Huntington's basic thesis is that, with the end of the Cold War, global conflicts would turn away from political, economic, or ideological differences. Instead, they would focus on the historically rooted civilizational differences, dividing the world into seven, possibly eight, civilizations.

⁵ This is not to say that every piece contributes to the heroic narrative without fail. Indeed there are variations and several shifts that take place that do not necessarily qualify as creating a patriotic narrative. However, this form of nationalism is the most general theme in the body of work as a whole and most easily demonstrates the shift following 9/11.

⁶ See Tucker 23, Kitzen x, Parker 172, and Kidd Preface and 167.

⁷ This is not to say that all of the pieces fall into Huntington's framework perfectly, but merely that much of the literature has segments within it that correspond to Huntington's key claims about the civilizational clashes between the West and Islam.

⁸ Huntington points to the 1,300-year history of conflict between these groups.⁹ However, his analysis does not recognize the vast history of conflict within the West, within the Islamic world, and between these “civilizations” and other regions. In over a millennia of conflict, Huntington pinpoints two regions and highlights only a few instances of contention. He draws a straight line from the founding of Islam through to the present, ignoring the diverse contexts within which conflict arose, and the vast cultural fluctuations that took place both in the West and the Muslim World.¹⁰ Similarly, historians writing from 2001-2011 have highlighted the Barbary Wars and September 11th, drawing an equally confining line between the two events and making the ensuing War on Terror appear inevitable. These works likewise ignore the long history of Western dominance over the Muslim World following the decline of the Ottoman Empire.¹¹ Thus, working within the framework of an inevitable “Clash of Civilizations,” Huntington and many historians have offered an analysis that does not take into account the actual diversity of contexts that have produced these unique historical circumstances.

A major alternative to Huntington’s analysis is Edward Said’s *Orientalism*. The central claim that Said puts forward is that notions of “the Orient” have been produced through colonialism and occidental dominance. Thus, occidental perceptions of the Muslim world came from representatives of colonialism—such as colonial administrators, missionaries, and academics—and served to reinforce the colonizing

⁸ Huntington doubts whether or not Africa will be able to rise to the level of “civilization,” offering a somewhat racialized perspective that fits with the sub-human characteristics historical works have given the Barbary people since 9/11. In addition, it should be noted that Huntington’s main claim does not concern the West and Islam specifically, but future global civilizational conflicts. However, many historians following 9/11 have spoken to his work by name and thus it requires brief mention for this paper.

⁹ Huntington, 31.

¹⁰ Major historical moments and disruptions have been ignored, including, but not limited to: the Gunpowder Revolution, the rise of global free trade, the Industrial Revolution, the fall of the Ottoman Empire, and Western colonialism in the Middle East.

¹¹ For more information on the historical circumstances that have contributed to the current situation between the United States and the Middle East see M. Shahid Alam’s *Challenging the New Orientalism*, particularly the essays entitled “Clash of Civilizations? Nonsense,” “A History of September 11,” and “Dialectics of Terror.”

system, consistently portraying Middle Easterners as subordinate to their colonizers.

Out of the handful of books that break with the “Clash of Civilizations” trend, the majority cite Said or *Orientalism* specifically, attributing this framework for their own historical rejection of established notions of dominance.¹² While this analysis is highly relevant and has contributed to the understanding of how knowledge of the Muslim World is produced, there are notable areas to be further developed. Particularly, Said offers only one sentence on the Barbary Wars, merely stating that he is going to ignore this significant event in the United States’ production of knowledge on Islam.¹³ Furthermore, Said only focuses on instances of imperialism and not on circumstances of mutual geopolitical conflict, such as the Barbary Wars.¹⁴ Nonetheless, given the current surge of interest in the Barbary Wars, they should be analyzed within their context—something that Said’s contributions, and the contributions of those who have followed him, have started to create. Still, it is significant that even the most well known alternative framework openly ignores the Barbary Wars, thus contributing to the lack of critical interpretation that has allowed historical determinists to dominate the post-September 11th discourse.¹⁵

12 No less than five sources reference *Orientalism* either directly or indirectly. See Sha’ban, 81; Parker, 172; Lambert, 13; Kidd, 165; and Peskin, viii and 212.

13 Said, 294.

14 It can be argued that the Barbary Wars represent an early tendency of American imperialism, with the U.S. forcefully ending the long accepted economic practice of the Barbary States for its own benefit. However, it should be remembered that at the time of the Barbary Wars, the U.S. was not a world power and barely had the financial stability to build a navy or finance the war, ultimately leading to the 1805 treaty for annual tribute payments to Tripoli. Thus, the conflict should be viewed more as an engagement between mutual actors and not as an instance of U.S. imperialism. For more information see Lambert pp. 5, London, 24, and Kitzen, 44.

15 By historical determinists I strictly mean those who use one historical event to claim that a later historical event was inevitable. I recognize that there are trends in history that are consequences of major historical events. However, I reject the historical selection that takes place when one argues that because the U.S. fought its first war with the Muslim Barbary States that 9/11 and the subsequent War on Terror were inevitable. This reading allows for historical misinterpretations and neglects several relevant factors leading to 9/11. For more information see *New Orientalism*.

As a means of demonstrating the shift in historical production following September 11th, I performed an analysis of the prominent themes from 1900 to 2000, followed by a comparison of how the two bodies of work deal with similar themes and the new and very distinct themes that arise after 2001. It should be noted that this work does not aim to be comprehensive, but rather to begin a critical analysis of historical production as influenced by September 11th so that later scholarship can continue this work.

First and foremost, it should be understood that while both bodies of work offer patriotic narratives, they do so in very distinct ways. The first focuses on America's youth as a nation and the great obstacles it had to overcome for its success, the inherent qualities that make America unique and even superior to other nations, and relies heavily on rhetoric from the revolutionary period to glorify the assertion of American ideals of freedom, liberty, and democracy in the world. The second body of work also creates a highly nationalistic narrative, but rather than emphasizing the past, these emphasize the fact that the Barbary people are distinct from the American people in all the positive qualities that Americans possess. They are attributed with only negative qualities, making them almost subhuman which serves to legitimize the American use of force against the Barbarians in the 1800s. Furthermore, in the second body of work, American nationalism consists largely of glorifying American force and power over its moralistic ideals.

The first body of work stresses that America was a new nation, which had to face many difficulties to be victorious in the Mediterranean. In this way, the authors make the successes of 1805 and 1816 even more worthy of glorification. As Glenn Tucker notes in his narrative history, despite the fact that the United States was "new and relatively feeble" and "enervated and indebted after its long battle for independence" it still went to war in Barbary "where others either had feared to venture or had failed, and in a great burst of power and courage ... won and left the world in a better state for its efforts".¹⁶ In citing America's hardships, a narrative is created that encourages the reader to be proud of the perseverance of his or her forefathers, who fought for righteousness where even the great powers of Europe had failed. In the words of Howard P. 16 Tucker, 465.

Nash, “freedom brings its responsibilities and dangers along with its blessings”.¹⁷

Along the same lines, these works refer continuously to ideas commonly associated with the American Revolution. The use of this founding rhetoric creates an association between the Barbary Wars and what is largely considered to be the United States’ just war for independence, filled with its honorable language of freedom, liberty, and democracy. Many refer to the Barbary pirates as committing “mortifying degradations that must be cutting to every American who possesses an independent spirit,” or directly reference the Revolutionary War and those who died “that our country might live free” and even credit the sailors of the Barbary Wars as serving “their nation that we who follow might live free”.¹⁸ Others simply affirm that the Barbary War was a matter of protecting the U.S.’s freedom abroad.¹⁹ However, Allen and Forester take an interesting approach to emphasizing American ideals in relation to Barbary. Both of these authors relegate the slavery experienced by captives to a position of less significance than the captives’ loss of freedom. Forester claims that “the prisoners were not suffering as badly in their confinement as they might have suffered,” providing a less extreme portrayal of slavery than other authors.²⁰ He goes further to assert that this marginality of suffering did not matter much “for the man who has lost his liberty has lost almost everything already”.²¹ In giving the notion of freedom importance above all else, these works serve to justify America’s role in the Barbary Wars, but more significantly to legitimize the patriotic values that this rhetoric represents. The focus here is not on Barbary, but on America itself and the revolutionary

17 Nash 8; For more examples throughout the body of work that speak to the United States overcoming great obstacles for its victory in the Mediterranean see Allen 301, Irwin 198, Macleod and Wright Preface, Forester 16, and Whipple 7. Furthermore, while this type of characterization of the war is nearly absent from the works following 9/11, London’s *Victory in Tripoli* offers similar rhetoric, see page 9. Though it should be noted as the only work to do so in the second set of sources.

18 Tucker 23, Nash 7-8, Nash 10.

19 Kitzen, x.

20 For these more extreme portrayals see Macleod and Wright and Irwin.

21 Forester, 174.

principles these authors claim it was fighting for.²²

Finally, the patriotism in the earlier works can be seen through affirmations of America's exceptional qualities as a nation, qualities that the authors present as causing the United States to occupy a unique position globally. Throughout *The First Americans in North Africa*, the authors continually argue that in the Barbary Wars, the United States stood as a positive example to the world, breaking with the corrupt European practice of buying off pirates and demonstrating how to successfully "suppress the Mediterranean corsairs".²³ Others, such as Tucker, cite the Barbary Wars as having unparalleled significance in the Mediterranean, saying, "perhaps never was a more singular voyage made".²⁴ In what seems like a culmination of these two conceptions of American exceptionalism, Nash cites the Barbary Wars as responsible for launching the United States into a position charged with "world leadership and freedom".²⁵ Despite distinctions, the above authors focus on what they see as the unique qualities of America, qualities responsible for giving the nation an exceptional role in the world. They use the Barbary Wars to highlight these exceptionalities, but not at the expense of the Barbary people. Instead of debasing Barbaries as a means of elevating Americans, they provide the U.S. with a distinct global role, ultimately glorifying the nation without directly addressing the role of the Barbary people.²⁶

Moving away from these themes representative of only the first set of historical works, I will give an analysis of how the two bodies deal with the same themes differently. At the most basic levels, a shift takes place in the way the literature addresses the Barbary people. Whereas previously the Barbary people were treated merely as a backdrop to the American drama of war abroad, following 2001 the Barbary people become a main focus of the literature. Highlighting

22 For more, see Allen, 10-11; Forester, 183; and Martin, 39.

23 Macleod and Wright preface and 15.

24 Tucker, 18; See also Tucker, 14.

25 Nash Foreword; See also Nash 8-9.

26 While American Exceptionalism pervades the literature before 9/11, there are two examples that deal with American Exceptionalism post 2001. On page 29, Boot asserts America's role as "the world's policemen." On page 9, London handles American exceptionalism explicitly, listing the qualities that he thinks are responsible for America's unique position in the world.

the negative differences between Barbaries and Americans serves as a distinct feature of the second body of work.

There are surprising differences in the way the two periods offer descriptions in their narratives. Physical descriptions of what the Barbary pirates look like are entirely absent from the body of work before 2001. Instead, where physical descriptions are offered, authors focus mainly on the environment of the Barbary Coast. Allen opens his history by informing the reader that “Barbary is in the latitude of our Southern States, and is blessed with a mild climate and fertile soil”.²⁷ He continues on in this manner, eventually even offering trivialities such as “the cities were built with extremely narrow streets”.²⁸ In paying special attention to the setting, these works serve to place Americans within the Barbary Wars, providing the readers with a physical environment in which to envision their American heroes. Even Tucker offers this type of depiction, though his narrative gives special attention to the Muslims in Barbary. He describes an imagined call to prayer, in which “across the city seated on its rolling hills sounded the long, singsong wails of the Moslem priests, calling plaintively from the rooftops, towers, and mosques”.²⁹ While here the depiction deviates from the strict elucidation of setting that the first two authors offered, the images serve to place Americans within the Barbary context. This makes the heroic narrative more entertaining for the reader while consistently maintaining a United States-centered perspective.

In the years after 2001, authors pay special attention to describing the appearance of the Barbary people—the first time any mention of the North Africans’ physical attributes is given. Zacks portrays the Barbaries as “bearded men in loose billowy pants and turbans”.³⁰ Similarly, Oren terms them “bare-chested pirates in turbans and pantaloons”.³¹ Both authors depict traits that are commonly associated with contemporary Middle Easterners: turbans and loose pants. Furthermore, Leiner describes the Barbaries

27 Allen, 1.

28 Allen, 2; Chidsey also serves as an example of this attention to setting.

29 Tucker, 11.

30 Zacks, Prologue.

31 Oren, 22.

as “armed with scimitars, pistols, pikes, and knives”.³² In addition, Zacks and Oren consistently pair their physical descriptions of the Barbaries with weapons. Zacks describes that they were “carrying scimitars and pistols” and Oren asserts that they had “sabers grasped between their teeth and their loaded pistols in their belts”.³³ This continual pairing of physical descriptions with the possession of weapons helps create a conception of the Barbary people as perpetually and inherently violent. Whether intentional or not, in only offering descriptive triggers (i.e. turbans and loose pants) that many Westerners associate with Middle Easterners today, the works seem to be indirectly linking conceptions of violence with contemporary Middle Easterners. This connection is further supported by many of the post-2001 authors’ continual insistence that the Barbary Wars are directly linked to September 11th, a theme that will be explored later on.

More generally speaking, the two sets of work approach the portrayals of Barbary violence very differently. The first body of work takes a very passive tone, implying violence rather than speaking to it directly. Irwin conveys the anxiety of an American Commander that “the American prisoners in Tripoli be massacred”.³⁴ The author relates a prospective massacre to the reader without directly discussing who would be responsible for it. Through the context, it is clearly implied that the Commander fears that the Pasha will massacre the American prisoners, but still, the author chooses not to say so directly.³⁵ However, this passivity is completely reversed after 2001. Authors consistently point to the Barbaries as directly perpetrating actions against Americans. Wheelan provides possibly the best example of this, relating how the Barbaries “relentlessly attacked, killed, maimed, and enslaved civilians on the high seas”.³⁶ This depiction leaves no ambiguity as to who is committing these

32 Leiner, 3.

33 Zacks Prologue and Oren, 22.

34 Irwin, 192.

35 “Pasha” was the title given to the ruler of Tripoli; Examples of this type of passive language when referencing Barbary violence abound in the literature from 1900 to 2000. For more see the works of Allen, Macleod and Wright, and Forester, particularly pages 19, 12, and 28 respectively.

36 Wheelan, xxii.

acts of violence. Similar to the uses of weapons imagery, the use of active language when linking violence to the Barbaries helps reinforce conceptions of the Barbaries as a characteristically violent people.³⁷

In line with the trends previously discussed, the two bodies of work individualize the narrative in distinct ways. Before 2001, continuing to build a patriotic narrative, the authors give much attention to elevating specific Americans to positions of greatness. Concluding his analysis of the Barbary Wars, Irwin cites the conflicts as “productive of heroes,” referencing Stephen Decatur and William Eaton specifically. In his words, these two men were “audacious spirits in whose exploits countless thousands have taken pride”.³⁸ Similarly, Chidsey credits Decatur and Eaton as “by anybody’s definition indubitably heroes”.³⁹ Taking the heroism further, Tucker offers a more general assessment of the Americans who fought in the Barbary Wars, claiming, “few Americans in history have been entitled to greater applause than the heroes of the Barbary Wars”.⁴⁰ The personalization of heroic rhetoric takes the glory of the Barbary Wars out of abstraction and allows the reader to identify with specific individuals symbolizing patriotism. This makes the War’s glorification relatable, helping the reader to fully conceptualize the American experience of the War.⁴¹

After 2001, the literature leaves the individualization of heroics behind and uses individualization as another means of demonizing the Barbary people through associations with violence. Relating the diplomatic relations between Algiers and the United States, London personalizes an ultimatum the Dey gave the U.S.⁴² The sailors could comply with the Dey’s request, or their “ship

37 For more of the many examples of this treatment of violence following 2001 see Boot, 3; Boot, 14; Zacks, 2; Lambert, 4; Leiner, 2; and Guttridge, 63.

38 Irwin, 204.

39 Chidsey, 142.

40 Tucker, 465.

41 There are numerous instances of heroism throughout the first body of work. For more, see Allen, 301; Macleod and Wright, preface; Tucker, 12; Tucker, 453; Tucker, 455; Nash, 10; Chidsey, 136; Martin, 42-49; and Kitzen, x. In addition, while the individualization of heroism is predominantly a device employed before 2001, Boot offers an example following 2001.

42 “Dey” was the title given to the ruler of Algiers.

would be blasted to bits and sunk where she rested”.⁴³ Dey’s explicit willingness to use such destructive force helps to individualize the more generalized assertions of violence previously discussed. London provides his audience with a specific example to point to as a means of legitimizing these broader claims, leaving the reader with a concrete image of Barbary violence.⁴⁴

Perhaps the most striking comparison is in how the concept of terror is addressed and changes over time. Of the pieces that deal with the term terror before September 11th, only one uses the term in direct reference to the Barbary people.⁴⁵ Other sources, such as Chidsey’s *The Wars in Barbary* use other terms to describe the emotional reaction that Americans had to the Barbary pirates. Of the pirates, he says, “panic was their principle weapon,” the term terror not yet found in the repertoire of commonly used phrases and conceptions.⁴⁶ Interestingly enough, the remaining sources, which employ the term “terror,” do so in reference to the reaction that the Barbary people had to American force. Macleod speaks of the United States as “a force powerful enough to strike terror into the hearts of the Barbary rulers”.⁴⁷ Thus, it is clear that before 2001 terror as a concept was not well developed. The treatment of terror is varied and is associated no more with the Barbary people than it is with Americans. However, this disjunction is completely turned on its head after September 11th.

There is no denying that September 11th introduced the concept of terror into American culture in an entirely new way. After the national trauma of the terrorist attacks in 2001, the term “terror” became connected to senseless acts of brutal violence. Clearly the term could no longer be treated with such ambiguity as it had before. The majority of the authors writing after September 11th address this shift by embracing the term and using it to describe the acts of the Barbary pirates. Throughout the pieces published after 2001, “terror,”

43 London, 5.

44 For more examples of demonization through associations with violence after 9/11, please see Boot, 14; Boot, 27; London, 4; and Zacks, 8.

45 In the Preface, Whipple claims that the Barbary States “had been terrorizing merchant shippers for centuries.”

46 Chidsey, 7; See also Chidsey, 137.

47 Macleod and Wright, 201; See also Macleod and Wright, 2 and Tucker, 20.

or any form of the word, is referred to no less than twenty-three times.⁴⁸ Nineteen of these references explicitly claim that the Barbary pirates were engaged in terrorism, with two referring to modern terrorism in the Barbary States, and only two examples distinguishing the Barbary practices as different from terrorism as presently conceptualized.⁴⁹ Some of the sources discuss how the Barbary States “wielded terror in the name of Islam,” how their “credo was piracy and terror,” and how they “used their navies as instruments of terror”.⁵⁰ Others simply term it “the terror of piracy” or the “Barbary terror”.⁵¹ And there are those who refer to the pirates as terrorists directly, with Wheelan even terming the Barbary War “the first war on terror”.⁵² Clearly September 11th spawned a new conceptualization of the Barbary people. In America’s first war with a Muslim power, it was no longer adequate to simply label them pirates. The heroic narrative could no longer suffice. September 11th created a need to understand the United States’ history with the Middle East, a need that these sources filled by turning the Barbary people into terrorists.

Similarly, the significance that authors give the Barbary Wars is completely different after September 11th. Before 2001 the authors largely argue that the Barbary Wars were an important event globally. There are various reasons: it led to the creation of the U.S. Navy, it asserted America’s role as a global player, and it rid the Mediterranean of Barbary piracy, making the region safe for global trade.⁵³ Conversely, following September 11th, the significance of the War is portrayed very differently. Principally, the majority of the works treat

48 The derivatives include terror, terrorism, and terrorist.

49 For the sources that directly connect terrorism to the Barbary people see Wheelan, xxii, 366-367, 368; London 9, 232, 237, 242; Lambert, 8; Leiner, 4; Guttridge 7, and Oren 65. For the sources that reference modern terrorism in the Barbary States see Boot, 28 and Parker, 159. For the two examples of dissention see Parker, xvi and Parker, 159.

50 See Wheelan, xxii, xxiii, and 366 respectively. See also Wheelan, 367.

51 London, 9 for the first and London 232, 237, and 242, and Leiner, 4 for the second.

52 Wheelan xxii; for the literature that refers directly to the Barbaries as terrorists see Lambert, 8 and Guttridge, 7. However, it should be noted that Lambert is not calling the Barbaries terrorists, but is quoting from a source that does, offering a critique of such generalizations.

53 See Tucker, 465; Whipple, 6; and Kitzen, xi.

the Barbary Wars as if they hold a powerful lesson for the present.⁵⁴ Some, such as Boot, simply ask “What lessons might these small wars of the past teach us about small wars in the future?”⁵⁵ Others openly state the lesson they see to be gained. Taking a relatively moderate stance, Parker sees the Barbary Wars as teaching Americans that force should be used “as an adjunct of diplomacy, not as a substitute for it”.⁵⁶ Unconcerned with moderation, London frames the wars as demonstrating “whether to give in to or actively fight against terrorism,” the implied answer being to fight.⁵⁷ And then there are those who simply seek “to make sense of current events”.⁵⁸ However, regardless of the perspective on what should be gleaned, the very search for a lesson implies the use of an anachronistic perspective, viewing history through the lens of current events rather than through the specific contexts of historical events. Indeed, Lambert is the only writer following 2001 to emphasize that “to understand the Barbary Wars, one must pay close attention to the context in which they took place”.⁵⁹ Nonetheless, with the cultural anxiety that September 11th created, following 2001 the literature is eager to gain some moral from the Barbary Wars to relate to the present.

Some authors take this a step further and actually begin to draw parallels between the Barbary Wars and the “War on Terror”. Wheelan argues “that in the wake of the 2001 terrorist attacks on Washington and New York, the United States found itself in a new war much like the one two centuries earlier”. The Barbary War “against Moslem Tripoli,” he notes, “was not so different for today’s war on terror”.⁶⁰ With the rhetoric of terror already in place,

54 It should be noted that hints of this exist in Whipple’s work, but he presents the lesson as far more general arguing that “those who do not learn the lesson of history are condemned to repeat it.” See page 8. Furthermore, Fischer’s entire work seeks to understand if the Barbary Wars can be seen as providing Constitutional precedent for the invasion of Haiti under the Clinton Administration.

55 Boot, xv.

56 Parker, xv.

57 London, 11.

58 Lambert, 7; this qualification also applied to Peskin who views the Barbary Wars as instrumental in constructing a history of globalism, something necessary for understanding current global circumstances. See page 211 specifically.

59 Lambert, 9.

60 Wheelan, xxii.

it seems to be a natural progression that the War on Terror must be a historical continuation of the wars against the Barbary terrorists. Thus, in connecting the past to the present, the literature legitimizes the heroic Wars in Barbary and in turn reaffirms the U.S.'s current global conflicts.

There are several entirely new themes in the literature that arise after 2001. At a very basic level, this shift is demonstrated through the new use of the term "enemy". Nowhere in the literature before 2001 are the Barbary people referred to as "the enemy".⁶¹ Rather they are referred to as pirates, corsairs, and the like. However, after 2001 the Barbary Wars are no longer concerned with creating heroic American narratives. Instead they are concerned with othering the Barbary people to the extent of making them the undisputable adversary. And, as if this binary were not enough, authors begin referring to Barbary through demonic imagery. The Barbary Coast is compared to hell multiple times and the Barbary people are deemed "evil".⁶² These latest methods of categorization place the Barbary people in an unprecedented oppositional role to the United States.

Finally, the most obvious shift following 2001 is in the number of books concerned with the Barbary Wars, which discuss September 11th. Nine out of the eleven books give space to at least mention if not analyze the terrorist attacks.⁶³ Indeed, four mention September 11th in the opening sentence, the quote from *Boot* at the beginning of this paper being but one example.⁶⁴ These moments of reflection on September 11th take several forms. Some have chosen to emphasize conflict, Guttridge, for example, remembering that September 11th was not the first conflict between the U.S. and the Middle East and Kidd questioning if an unavoidable clash between Islam and Christianity looms in the future.⁶⁵ Wheelan uses September 11th to reaffirm the moralistic justification for the Barbary Wars and

61 See *Boot*, 20; *Wheelan*, xix-xxii; and *London*, 238.

62 *Zacks*, 10; *Oren*, 64; *Oren*, 22.

63 The only two authors that do not refer to 9/11 are *Zacks* and *Peskin*. By now, *Zacks* should be well noted for his post 9/11 demonization of the Barbary people. *Peskin* refers to issues of globalism, thus hinting at the U.S.'s global position and encounters following 9/11, but not giving voice to the event directly.

64 The others include the works by *Parker*, *Guttridge*, and *Kidd*.

65 *Guttridge*, 7; *Kidd*, preface.

to affirm the values represented in the “War on Terror”. He argues that “while the Barbary War resembles today’s war on terror tactically and strategically, it resonates most deeply in its assertion of free trade, human rights, and freedom from tyranny and terror”.⁶⁶

Understandably, September 11th has affected the American psyche at a deep level and these authors are only beginning to broach the innumerable questions that Americans are left asking. However, many authors have been far too willing to explain September 11th through the Barbary Wars. In the direct connections that are made between the two, often the only answer left is to eradicate the Muslim problem once and for all, using the only means possible—force.

In directly linking al Qaeda terrorists, responsible for the deaths of nearly 3,000 innocent people, to the Barbary pirates, many of both academic and popular historians have successfully demonized all Muslims, past and present. The historical belittling and terrorization of entire nation-states has facilitated the same treatment of current nation-states in the region. Throughout the past decade, authors have continually tried to prove that terrorism existed 200 years ago. If they can successfully legitimize the Barbary War as a war on terror, then they begin justifying the current War on Terror. Thus, they argue that terrorism has existed in the Middle East for centuries and it falls to the United States to eradicate it—just as it eradicated Barbary piracy after it had plagued the Mediterranean for centuries.

These arguments are not only historically inadequate, failing to take into account several key factors in the context of each historical event that make them distinct from one another, but they can have severe consequences for the present. In looking at materials that are most easily accessible to the public, I have tried to mark a distinct moment not only in the production of historical knowledge, but also in orientalist production. While claiming truth, these historians, with few exceptions, have misrepresented history to fit their perspectives. Rather than analyzing the Barbary Wars in their own right, historians analyze them through the lens of September 11th, drawing parallels that do not exist historically. However, this error does not end with the historian. It is mass produced and marketed to Americans, still very much living in the personal and societal trauma of September 11th, who seek to understand America’s

66 Wheelan, xxvi.

history with the Middle East as a means of gaining some insight into what compelled terrorists to target their nation. Yet, instead of providing responsible histories of the Barbary Wars, authors have reaffirmed the United States' current international position, drawing a straight line from the Barbary Wars to September 11th and ignoring everything in between. The United States' "big fist" did not bring lasting peace to the Mediterranean in 1816 and history provides little reason to believe that it will bring lasting peace to the Middle East today.

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