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Clio’s Scroll, the Berkeley Undergraduate History Journal, is published twice yearly by students of the Department of History at the University of California, Berkeley. The journal aims to provide undergraduates with the opportunity to publish historical works and to train staff members in the editorial process of an academic journal. Clio’s Scroll is produced by financial support from the Townsend Center for the Humanities, the Associated Students of the University of California (ASUC), and the Department of History. Clio’s Scroll is not an official publication of the ASUC or UC Berkeley. The views expressed herein are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the journal, the editors, the university, or sponsors.
Letter from the Editors

Dear readers,

To all who have picked up the Fall 2021 edition of Clio’s Scroll, thank you. It is with the time and interest you dedicate to our journal that we may continue to bring the very best of undergraduate historical research to the public. As the COVID-19 pandemic rages on and we continue to experience a so-called historic time, it is easy to perceive our circumstances as exceptional. Yet as history students, we have found insight and security in studying the past to better comprehend how we should face the present. We hope that this edition of Clio’s Scroll can serve as a similar reminder to our readers that our moment is never one that stands alone from the history we analyze in books.

This semester, it gives us immense pleasure to publish the work of three outstanding scholars. Each of these papers complicate monolithic interpretations of historical movements whose general trajectories are widely familiar: school desegregation, California environmentalism, and Maoism in China. They pay attention to various perceptions and uses of racial discourse, gender ideology, and philosophy, eschewing a simple dichotomy between those in power and those below.

First, in her meticulous case study of Ravenswood High School during school desegregation in the 1960s, UC Berkeley alumni Tara Madhav examines how East Palo Alto’s Black community debated whether desegregation was necessary to provide Black students with excellent education. Next, Henry Lloyd-Hughes of King’s College, University of Cambridge writes a multifaceted analysis of the Hetch Hetchy Controversy, examining how supporters on both sides of the conservation versus preservation debate found themselves defined by a gendered binary. Finally, UC Berkeley alumni Deshi Zhang presents a thorough analysis of how Mao’s Anti-Confucian, Pro-Legalist campaign drew from Qin Shi Huang’s Legalism, illuminating how the Cultural Revolution was not an all-out rejection of tradition. These essays were selected from an impressive array of submissions due to their unique voice, rigorous attention to primary source material, and thought-provoking arguments.

Lastly, we would like to extend a hearty thanks to our managing editor, Katherine Booska, and our board of associate editors for their scrupulous work and dedication throughout the semester. We speak together when we say that this edition is a labor of love, for history and for our fellow undergraduate scholars.

Sincerely,

Miranda Jiang and Reva Kale
Co-Editors in Chief
REVA KALE is a junior studying History and minoring in Public Policy. She is interested in legal history as well as the history of South Asian migration to the United States. In addition to Clio's Scroll, she works as an organizer for a nonprofit, serves as a volunteer tutor, and is hoping to become fluent in Spanish! She enjoys binge-watching Game of Thrones and exploring all the good places to eat in the Bay!

MIRANDA JIANG is a senior majoring in History and French. Her senior thesis focuses on crime and print culture in 1920s French-occupied Vietnam. She has previously worked on Chinese American history with the Oral History Center at UC Berkeley and the 150 Years of Women at Berkeley History Project. She has worked as a SURF and URAP summer fellow. She loves playing the carillon, writing creatively, and practicing languages with friends, family, and strangers.

KATHERINE BOOSKA is a third-year student from rural Angwin, California, majoring in History, and considering a minor in Politics, Philosophy, and Law. She is interested in religious history, intellectual history, the history of morality, and intersections between law and religion in the United States. Katherine also studies Russian and Hebrew. Outside of her classes, Katherine is a Conduct caseworker at the Student Advocate’s Office and tutors writing at the Student Learning Center. For comedic relief, she improvises with Best Laid Plans Improv and Improv 4 Charity, and writes sketches for Bootleg Sketch Comedy. Katherine loves long trail runs in the hills of Berkeley, visiting independent bookstores, and watching the newts at the UC Botanical Garden.

BELLA AN is a fourth-year student from Orange County, CA majoring in History and Legal Studies. Her focus is on how early Christianity and law shaped the Roman Empire. Her other interests include Bay Area politics and legal theory. In her free time, Bella enjoys film photography, exploring different coffee shops around the Bay, and going on really, really long walks.

PARKER BOVÉE is a senior from Sacramento, California majoring in History. Coming from a family with two other History majors, he has always been deeply interested in understanding the past. Parker hopes to focus his undergraduate work and beyond on the American West in exploring differing notions of American identity along ethnic and economic lines. Aside from worrying too much about exams, he is regularly disappointed by his hometown Sacramento Kings, frustrated by Liverpool FC, and captivated by a wide array of music.

KACIE COSGROVE is a second-year student from Valley Springs, California. She is majoring in History and French, and her emphasis in history is on the cultural history of the United States in the 20th century. She hopes to write her
senior thesis on the topic of forced sterilization of indigenous women in the United States in the late 20th century. Overall, she is interested in the power dynamics between oppressors and oppressed groups throughout world history. Outside of Clio’s Scroll, she is a caseworker for the Suitcase Clinic at UC Berkeley and is a member of the UC Rally Committee. In her free time, she enjoys eating Thai food, writing letters to friends and family, and being in nature.

HANNAH PEARSON is a third-year transfer student from Concord, California majoring in History. It was during her senior year in high school that she found her calling in history, thanks to her teacher, Dr. Andrew Hubbell. Her area of interest is in American History, specifically 20th century conflicts. She also has an interest in the Atlantic Revolutions of the late 18th and early 19th century. In her free time, she enjoys watching TV shows and movies, listening to Spotify playlists, and planning her next adventures. She hopes to become a historian and work for the US government.

LILLIAN MORGENTHALER is a senior from Menlo Park, California majoring in History and Ancient Greek and Roman Studies. She is especially interested in the history of ancient religions, marriage traditions, and gender roles under the Roman empire. In her spare time, she enjoys reading novels (and the occasional biography), baking, and watching historical dramas.

TESSA MOUW is a third-year history major from Los Angeles focusing primarily on European History in post-Columbian times. On a pre-law track, Tessa is particularly interested in the evolution of law and the changing meanings of citizenship and inclusion throughout history. Tessa is also interested in the history of food from the perspective of how certain foods become integral parts of cultural identity, as well as how global politics have been driven by the desire to gain access to certain ingredients. Tessa is also a historical research intern for CGO Studios, a company that creates virtual reality recreations of historical events. In her spare time, she enjoys watching documentaries, working on art projects, and cooking new recipes.

KARAH GIESECKE is a fourth-year undergraduate student majoring in History and Anthropology. She is particularly interested in histories surrounding gender, gendered life experiences and consumer culture. This fascination with gender and consumption has led her to pursue the one-year thesis route as she explores the connection between the development of synthetic materials in American consumer culture and the ability to keep menstruation hidden. She calls herself a third culture kid and grew up between the Midwest, Greece and the Bay Area. When not at the Free Speech Movement Café or the Anthropology Library absorbed in magazine advertisements from the early 20th century, she runs a sustainability and lifestyle blog that integrates her research with her lived experiences, teaches a style of swing dancing called Lindy Hop, and is learning to roller skate.
VINCENT LIU is a sophomore from Los Angeles pursuing a majoring in history. His focus is mainly on 20th century America, specifically its foreign policy and changing relationships with other countries. In his spare time, Vincent enjoys watching basketball, playing video games, and walking his dog.

XIAOLU “NINA” LIU is a sophomore pursuing a major in History. Her current focus is China, particularly the modern period. She is particularly intrigued by the dynamics of human interactions shaping identities of self, political ideologies, economic structures, and cultural norms. She is also committed to learn more about conflicts in human societies from a historical perspective and ways to promote justice, unity and equity, using historical knowledge. Academic interests aside, she is an avid reader, a passionate novelist, a film aficionado and a TV-drama fan who often cries herself to sleep when deeply touched. She loves art and museums as well as music – all soul-shaking experiences with one’s innermost being that makes one human.

ASHLEY YANG is a second year transfer from UCSC double majoring in Ancient Greek and Roman Studies and History. Her research interests lie in the politics in art and visual culture. In her free time, Ashley enjoys tending to her many plants as well as avoiding any and all translations possible until the very last minute to preserve her sanity.
Author Biographies

TARA MADHAV graduated from the University of California, Berkeley with a Bachelor of Arts in History and Political Science in May 2021. Her research focuses on the relationship between educational inequality and residential segregation, with broader interests in legal history, the history of urban development, the history of education, political economy, and the history of the American West. She currently works as an Americorps program coordinator for the literacy organization Reading Partners at Costaño Elementary School in East Palo Alto, California. In her free time, Tara enjoys exploring new places (close to home and far from it), reading and roaming through bookstores, hiking, and visiting family. She would like to sincerely thank Professor Caitlin Rosenthal, Professor Bernadette Pérez, Professor Waldo Martin, Professor Mark Brilliant, Debra Peterson at the San Mateo County Historical Association Archives, Steve Staiger and Darla Secor at the Palo Alto Historical Association Archives, Susan McElrath at the Bancroft Library, the Institute of Governmental Studies, Elvira Monroe, and the other Ravenswood community members and East Palo Alto residents who shared their materials and time with her.

HENRY LLOYD-HUGHES is an undergraduate in his final year studying History at King’s College, University of Cambridge. His academic focus lies in American History, specifically twentieth-century social and cultural history. He has a particular interest in histories of gender and is currently writing his undergraduate dissertation on gender and the socio-cultural construction of the American astronaut. Henry hopes to pursue postgraduate study and would love for this to include time abroad in the United States. Aside from academia, Henry enjoys spending time at home in Sheffield (UK) and exploring the Peak District National Park with his dog, Ozzy. Henry also loves travelling and hopes to see more of the world after university. He would like to note his thanks to Dr Bobby Lee for teaching and supervising this paper.

DESHI ZHANG graduated from University of California Berkeley with a Bachelor of Arts in History in 2021. Growing up in Northeastern China, his interest in history first came from hearing family stories and misadventures that took place in the early to mid-twentieth century. As a result, his research mostly revolves around how political movements and ideologies shape common people’s life trajectory. After getting his B.A., Deshi is now pursuing a master’s degree in Computer and Information Technology, hoping one day to combine his skill sets and contribute to a greater good. Other than history, he likes to spend time making food, re-watch the animated series Bojack Horseman, and starting translation projects that he rarely finishes. Deshi would like to give his sincerest thanks to Dr. Lewis Bremner, Professor Joseph Kellner, and Professor Michael Nylan for their invaluable teaching and thus for making this paper possible.
“We Had to Do the Educating Ourselves”

Community Control and Desegregation at Ravenswood High School in East Palo Alto, California, 1958-1976.

Tara Madhav

Introduction

“Mr. Taylor, you’re suggesting that these kids here aren’t getting a good education. Is that correct?”

“What I am saying, not just suggesting, is that this is a segregated school. A segregated education is inherently an inferior education, be the segregation white or black.”

In a 1968 news broadcast, Malcolm Taylor, the principal of Ravenswood High School in East Palo Alto, California, argued that his school could not provide a sufficient education because its predominantly Black student body attended a segregated school. While Taylor felt that the school could not be considered adequate because it was segregated, students demanded improvements in the school’s education that would reflect the needs of their “segregated” community. More than 300 students staged a sit-in on September 11, 1968, to demand the resignations of Taylor and four white staff members, the hiring of full-time Black counselors, classes in Black history, Swahili and soul music, and improvements in the English and math curricula. Taylor eventually resigned in response to these demands. The students at Ravenswood led protests similar to demonstrations by Black students in New York and Chicago who, in the late 1960s, championed their community’s increased role in governing their public schools and de-emphasized the importance of an integrated school environment for a high-quality education.

Such debates around the value of segregated education were shaped by the racial and physical isolation of the Ravenswood attendance zone. Nestled in the extreme south of San Mateo County, a suburban region below San Francisco, East Palo Alto and the neighboring area of Belle Haven (a neighborhood in Menlo Park) came to include nearly the entire Black population of the county due

to discriminatory housing practices in the 1950s. The midcentury construction of Highway 101, also known as the Bayshore Highway, physically separated this “East Bayshore” area from neighboring communities. As a result, when the Sequoia Union High School District decided to build a high school in East Palo Alto in 1958, concerns immediately arose as to whether the school would become segregated. The Sequoia Union district ran five high schools across seven cities that, except for Ravenswood, were predominantly white. These fears were quickly realized – the Bayshore Highway became the original boundary for Ravenswood, reinforcing residential segregation in the district’s school attendance zone. Ravenswood’s student body became predominantly Black in the decade since its opening in 1958, going from 60 percent Black in 1965 to 94 percent Black in 1970.2

Ravenswood’s predominantly Black student population and the community met the district’s efforts to desegregate the high school with varied responses. Some parents agreed with the district that the school should go from 94 percent to 40 percent Black through mandatory student transfers in 1971, or they supported the school’s closure in 1976 so their students could attend integrated high schools. Other parents did not agree with the district’s aim to desegregate the district by altering Ravenswood rather than the other five district high schools. Ravenswood community members sought improvements at their school, which lagged in academic achievement compared to the other district schools; the school had the lowest percentage of graduated students who finished college in the district and the lowest median reading and math scores.3 Members of the Ravenswood community sought to increase their authority over personnel selection, curricula, and activities at the school, joining other advocates of the “community control” movement nationwide.

I argue that the Ravenswood community and the Sequoia Union district disagreed on whether integration would close the academic opportunity gap between students at Ravenswood and

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students at the other high schools in the district. Sequoia Union officials believed (and were legally obligated to believe) that ensuring their schools were racially balanced was paramount to equalizing educational opportunity. Conversely, as community members became disillusioned with desegregated education, they rejected the premise that a predominantly Black and “segregated” school could not provide students with excellent educations.

Centering the perspectives of Black students, parents, and community leaders can help us to reframe the history of school desegregation. Black students and their families who resisted integration did not necessarily oppose the principles of desegregation. They opposed “racial balance” remedies which assumed that Black students would receive better educations in integrated schools. District leaders under state and national mandates to desegregate their schools after the Supreme Court’s 1954 decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* focused on achieving balanced racial representation in schools, a goal that turned out to be near impossible to reach given underlying residential segregation. Black community leaders sought to localize control over public schools in their cities and neighborhoods; when community control failed to provide some local advocates with meaningful authority, they established independent schools. East Palo Alto resident Gertrude Wilks founded Nairobi Elementary School and Nairobi High School, independent institutions with robust Afrocentric curriculums, in 1968 and 1969 respectively.

Scholars and historians who study community control argue that Black communities saw equitable financial and political sway, rather than integration, as crucial to improving their schools, but they have not analyzed how residential segregation, a major impediment to integration, deepened the drive for local control in Black communities that did not see their priorities reflected within the school districts they belonged to. In the effort to ensure “racial balance” at Ravenswood, the district failed to fully accommodate the community’s demand for local control, which intensified as parents and students did not find the integrated school experience adequate for their children. When the district closed Ravenswood in 1976, they conclusively desegregated the district, but former Ravenswood students were the only ones to lose their neighborhood high school in the district’s effort to create racially balanced schools. Revisiting this history can help us understand why desegregation no longer
served the interests of residents in racially isolated communities like East Palo Alto.

**Historical context**

School districts after *Brown v. Board of Education* desegregated their schools to equalize education for white and Black students. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Legal Defense Fund, the legal organization that represented the plaintiffs in *Brown* and prominent post-*Brown* school desegregation cases, sought to establish a demographic percentage at each school that was within 10 to 15 percent of the black and white enrollment within the school district. This approach would fulfill the mandate of the *Brown* ruling, which condemned the social ills of segregated education. Integrationist advocates hoped to provide Black students with equal access to quality instruction, curricula, and facilities.

While prevalent after *Brown*, the reasoning that Black and white students could only attend schools that were academically equal if they were integrated faced doubt. Legal scholar Derrick Bell argued that the judiciary, responsible for enforcing desegregation, equated “equal educational opportunity” with remedies that created racially balanced schools. In the effort to integrate schools, however, Bell argued that the courts paid relatively little attention to the effects of these remedies on Black communities and did not take more decisive action to make Black schools educationally effective. If desegregation efforts were intended to equalize opportunity, some asked why Black student achievement was linked to proximity to white schools.

Segregation remedies based on “racial balance” also became more difficult to implement in the 1960s and 1970s. The growth of the suburban periphery led to deeper racial segregation in urban areas as white residents “fled” to federally subsidized developments, which complicated desegregation efforts. The Supreme Court case *Milliken v. Bradley* (1973) further entrenched the urban-suburban residential divide. Because *Milliken* limited districts from implementing mandatory interdistrict desegregation programs

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5 Bell, “Serving Two Masters,” 479.
except in specific cases of state discriminatory action, desegregation efforts were nearly completely dependent on the student population within a single district after the decision. As integration became more difficult to achieve, some Black communities sought solutions to fix disparities in public education without pursuing integrated schooling.

With desegregation efforts waning in popularity and increasingly difficult to implement, community control movements, which situated Black educators, students, and leaders as the best entities to oversee schools for Black students, sought to establish high-quality schools in neighborhoods where children continued to struggle. The rise of the Black Power movement in the late 1960s led to a waning desire to implement potentially disruptive segregation remedies in predominantly Black communities that increasingly sought self-determination over their schools.

The demonstration district in the Ocean Hill-Brownsville neighborhood, a predominantly Black and Puerto Rican section of Brooklyn, remains the most prominent example of the community control movement. The Ocean Hill-Brownsville neighborhood did not exist as a single entity until 1965, when the New York City Board of Education included both Ocean Hill and Brownsville in a new district, and community organizers found a common cause in their lack of representation on the district board. Local advocates created an independent school board in 1966, which the New York City Board of Education formalized in 1967 with an experimental model for local control. The community control movement in the Ocean Hill-Brownsville demonstration district resulted in major conflict — efforts by the governing board to expand authority over personnel decision-making led to tensions with United Federation of Teachers educators, who decried the board’s rejection of “conventional merit standards” for their personnel and launched a strike of 50,000

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teachers in fall 1968. The Ocean Hill-Brownsville case underscored that while community control efforts sought to organize and empower majority-Black areas, the existing power structure was not built to accommodate their demands.

Community control efforts, nominally an effort to provide neighborhood authorities with authority over their schools, did not meaningfully re-allocate financial and political power. Educational reform advocates Babette Edwards and Preston Wilson wrote in the New York Amsterdam News on Ocean Hill-Brownsville that “the decision by the establishment to ‘experiment’ was related to giving the community the illusion of control.” Edwards and Wilson castigated the district for artificial reforms, writing further: “...such small gains were not achievements toward community control, but activities allowed because, individually and collectively, they had an inconsequential impact on the system.” They doubted the impact the “current ‘game plan’” would have, which split the district into eight “community districts.” In East Palo Alto, the community doubted that re-making Ravenswood into a “new,” integrated school with an innovative curriculum would lead to visible improvements in the education that Black students received.

The rise of independent schools, then, enhanced the same principles of self-determination that drove local leaders to pursue community control. Neither desegregation nor a massive influx in local funding, courtesy of War on Poverty legislation, seemed to improve the quality of schools in Black communities. These independent institutions sought to rehabilitate pupils’ relationship to their African identity and educate students on Black nationalist theory, but they were also pragmatic responses to the “deficiencies” of public services, including education. The Nairobi Schools sought to prepare students for college while ensuring that students felt accountable to their community.

9 Brier, “The Ideological and Organizational Origins,” 181; Rickford, We Are An African People, 37.
12 Rickford, We Are An African People, 16.
My research examines how residential segregation also led to movements for community control in Black communities like the East Bayshore area. While Black communities in urban areas struggled to gain resources and autonomy from the existing city authorities, the Ravenswood community sought to claim autonomy from a multi-city school district that was otherwise predominantly white. Community leaders in the Ravenswood attendance zone sought equitable financial and political power compared to neighboring areas and felt disgruntled with the district’s inability to fully empower their movement for community control. They supported community control not because they disagreed with the ideals of school desegregation, but because they prioritized academic improvements at Ravenswood over district-wide integration. Harvey Kantor and Robert Lowe argued that scholars neglected to link efforts to secure community control with the political context that shaped how schools operate.\(^\text{13}\) I attend to the study of “context” by analyzing how residential segregation did not just complicate integration in the Sequoia Union High School District — it drove the Ravenswood community, most of whom lived east of the Bayshore highway and were physically segregated from the surrounding areas, to find a common priority in seeking increased local control over their public education.

Scholars have not fully addressed how residential segregation shaped the development of the Black community control movement. Studies of community control center the experiences of Black students in cities like New York and Chicago, where leaders in predominantly Black communities sought to improve public schools by providing neighborhood educators, students, and families with increased control over curriculum and personnel rather than through integration.\(^\text{14}\) While traditional interpretations of the so-called “urban crisis” emphasize the decline in metropolitan resources as white families moved from cities to federally subsidized suburban developments after World War II, Elizabeth Todd-Breland argued in *A Political Education: Black Politics and Education Reform in Chicago since the 1960s* that such a focus erases the history of Black community organizing that drove efforts to educate children within


\(^{14}\) Todd-Breland, *A Political Education*, 47-54.
struggling city public education districts.\textsuperscript{15} These efforts came from pre-\textit{Brown} movements that championed high-quality and separate schooling for Black students.\textsuperscript{16} In \textit{Race, Schools, and Hope}, Lisa Stulberg argues for a more nuanced history of the school choice movement, arguing that efforts for community control are mischaracterized as purely anti-desegregation. Instead, Stulberg explores the complex interplay between “integration” and “nationalism.”\textsuperscript{17} Both Stulberg and Todd-Breland challenge the traditional narrative that proponents of community control movements were purely antagonistic towards public education. However, like other studies of school reform in the 1960s and 1970s, their research is focused on cities, where community control advocates sought increased authority over their neighborhood schools because they were governed by authorities that were not accountable to their needs. The case of East Palo Alto is distinct because the area, while unincorporated and directly governed by San Mateo County, was a separate entity from the surrounding areas. While residential segregation created disparities in political and financial power between East Palo Alto and its neighbors, it also fostered institutions that were uniquely accountable to the struggles that the community faced.

The existing scholarship also does not examine how the movement towards Black community control shaped desegregation efforts in California. In California, widespread residential segregation meant that school districts had to bus students to effectively desegregate their schools.\textsuperscript{18} Efforts by Black community leaders to create community-controlled institutions played an important and understudied role in the debates that shaped the implementation of busing programs. For example, Rand Quinn documents how community leaders and parents in Bayview-Hunters Point, a predominantly Black neighborhood in San Francisco, opposed the 1983 consent decree between the San Francisco Unified School District and the NAACP because it would

\textsuperscript{15} Todd-Breland, \textit{A Political Education}, 3.
\textsuperscript{17} Stulberg, \textit{Race, Schools, and Hope}, 20-21.
\textsuperscript{18} Mark Brilliant, \textit{The Color of America Has Changed: How Racial Diversity Shaped Civil Rights Reform in California, 1941-1978} (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 233-236.
turn four schools into academic magnets to attract transfers and desegregate the neighborhood schools. The community protested that the school district unfairly chose to only alter the schools in their neighborhood rather than consider a district-wide solution. After failing to procure the appropriate funds, the district decided to delay the implementation of the decree and close one of the community’s newest schools, drawing widespread protests in Bayview-Hunters Point. Quinn considers this resistance in the context of San Francisco’s struggle to desegregate. Scholars have not taken such incidents and considered how the specific conditions of California school segregation, primarily the need to desegregate through busing because of residential segregation, adds a layer of complexity to the traditional interpretation that white communities resisted busing and Black communities struggled to achieve integrated schooling because of this resistance. The movement towards community control in East Palo Alto parallels other Black community control movements in the United States that resisted “racial balance” remedies, making the East Palo Alto case an important contribution to existing literature on the history of desegregation in California.

Russell Rickford detailed the history of the Black independent schools movement, including a discussion of the Nairobi Schools, in We Are An African People: Independent Education, Black Power, and the Radical Imagination. Russell Rickford argued that Gertrude Wilks and other leaders of the Nairobi Schools espoused an ideology of “pragmatic nationalism,” a framework that I incorporate into my discussion. However, I differ from Rickford’s focus. I analyze the significance of the Nairobi Schools for the Ravenswood community’s resistance to integration rather than the schools’ broader significance for Black independent institutions. Rickford documented the failures of the district in incorporating community feedback to close Ravenswood and the inadequacy of the Sneak Out program as reasons for the creation of the Nairobi Schools. I contribute to this analysis by discussing the specific efforts to establish community control over affairs at Ravenswood. Rickford wrote that Wilks “joined the thrust for community control, supporting ‘militant’ school board candidates, agitating for the appointment of more black

19 Rand Quinn, Class Action: Desegregation and Diversity in San Francisco Schools (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2020), 71.
faculty and staff in East Palo Alto schools, and pressing for greater community and parent participation in selecting administrators and shaping policy.”

I expand upon Wilks’ actions by analyzing the Municipal Council and the Ravenswood School-Community Council, dissecting how they became crucial outlets for voicing the community’s increasing opposition to transfers and closure. Wilks’ rejection of desegregation was part of a larger community push against integration as the necessary standard to achieve equal schooling for Black and white students, and I examine the debates that shaped this eventual push.

### Segregation in East Bayshore

Segregation at Ravenswood was the direct result of state and local actions that physically restricted Black residents to East Palo Alto and Belle Haven. The Bayshore Highway physically separated the predominantly Black communities from the surrounding cities and became the original boundary for the Ravenswood attendance zone. East Palo Alto lacked political and financial power because it was unincorporated until 1983; while Belle Haven could claim more representation because it belonged to an incorporated city, it was still as demographically and geographically segregated as East Palo Alto. East Palo Alto and Belle Haven struggled to maintain political clout within the Sequoia Union district, which repeatedly failed to prevent Ravenswood’s segregation and failed to invest in academic improvements at the school.

Bayshore Highway, also known as State Highway 101, created a physical boundary that separated East Palo Alto and Belle Haven, which sat near the San Francisco Bay, from its neighbors and negatively impacted the city’s business district. In 1932, the state extended the Bayshore Highway from San Francisco to San Jose. It followed the direction of the Southern Pacific Railroad but was built closer to the Bay, so it bisected East Palo Alto, leaving only a small portion of the town west of the highway. The Ravenswood

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20 Rickford, *We Are An African People*, 110.
Chamber of Commerce issued resolutions in 1923 and 1926 insisting that the highway should be constructed along the bay shore; despite their protests, the highway was built straight through the community, becoming the only densely populated area to be split by the Bayshore highway.\textsuperscript{23}

In 1940, the California Highway Commission decided to expand the highway to increase road capacity and to curb accidents that had become commonplace, but the expansion would further disrupt the city landscape.\textsuperscript{24} During negotiations over the widening of the highway, East Palo Altans clamored for a thoroughfare that would have gone east from San Carlos Avenue in San Carlos to run alongside the Bay rather than bisecting the area. The Bayshore Freeway Committee, formed by the local elementary school district, advocated for a highway that would bypass the community and create a less dangerous route.\textsuperscript{25} However, John Skeggs, an assistant state highway engineer, and other state officials argued that building a route to run along the Bay shore would have been more expensive. The expanded highway removed most of Whiskey Gulch, the area’s business district, and forced more than 50 firms to relocate — only five firms decided to relocate within East Palo Alto.\textsuperscript{26}

Neighboring towns annexed economically productive areas, further undermining business in East Palo Alto and damaging its political capacity. For example, the Hiller Aircraft Company, which moved to East Palo Alto in 1947 and was one of only four companies producing helicopters at that time, was annexed by Menlo Park as part of the Belle Haven area.\textsuperscript{27} Histories on this period credited the annexations with stripping the community of crucial tax revenue and establishing dependency on surrounding communities. The City of East Palo Alto stated that the annexations “denied the future city of East Palo Alto vital corporate tax revenue,” while Rhonda Rigenhagen argued that the Menlo Park annexations of Belle Haven and Newbridge reduced the area’s property values by one-fourth.\textsuperscript{28}

\textsuperscript{23} “City of East Palo Alto Historic Resources Inventory Report,” 60-61.
\textsuperscript{24} "Detail of proposed Bayshore involvement," \textit{San Mateo Times}, July 26, 1940.
\textsuperscript{25} "Bayshore Highway mixed blessing to East Palo Alto," \textit{Palo Alto Times}.
Because neighboring communities could annex the most desirable areas, the remaining community of East Palo Alto would not be annexed nor could it claim an adequate tax base to incorporate and provide services as a city.  

As East Palo Alto struggled to maintain its political and economic cohesion, massive increases in the regional population coincided with a sudden concentration of Black families in East Palo Alto and Belle Haven. After World War II, the population of San Mateo County increased rapidly. The population swelled from 115,000 in 1940 to 235,000 in 1950, and in 1960, the population totaled 450,000. Despite this boom in population, the Black population of the Mid-Peninsula remained small and geographically concentrated. While most of the Bay Area’s population growth occurred in San Mateo, Santa Clara, and Alameda Counties during this period, in 1960, San Mateo County had only 10,486 Black residents. According to Leda Rothman of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, these individuals lived “for the most part” in Menlo Park, which had 13,587 residents in 1960, and East Palo Alto, which had approximately 18,000 residents in 1960.

Belle Haven and East Palo Alto became segregated areas due to widespread blockbusting practices by realtors. In November 1954, William A. Bailey and his family became the first Black residents of the formerly all-white Palo Alto Gardens tract in East Palo Alto. They may have been the first Black family to move to East Palo Alto after World War II. According to Adele Lempert, a white resident of the Gardens who had moved in a week before the news, members of the community became immediately concerned with the possible devaluation of their property. Members of the Palo Alto Gardens Association sought to draft a “gentleman's agreement” which would require prospective buyers in Palo Alto Gardens to receive the association’s approval. Some residents offered Bailey $3,750 to

30 “County of San Mateo 2017-2019 Profile.”
32 “City of East Palo Alto Historic Resources Inventory Report,” 70.
33 Mary Madison, "Interracial Community," Palo Alto Times, August 1958 (date unknown).
move out of the community, but with the support of local groups, Bailey and his family stayed put. Soon, the community began to receive letters from Floyd Lowe, president of the California Real Estate Board, which offered special inducements and exclusive listings to sell their homes through Lowe’s office in East Palo Alto.³⁴ Other realtors knocked on doors and convinced many to sell their homes.³⁵ According to the Palo Alto Times, these realtors “warned” residents that “soon it [the area] would become all Negro” to prompt them to sell.³⁶ Realtors employed similar blockbusting tactics in majority-white Belle Haven. Lowe then advertised Belle Haven homes for sale in the San Francisco Sun-Reporter, a newspaper published for the city’s Black community.³⁷ By 1960, the population of East Palo Alto was 82 percent Black.³⁸ Menlo Park remained majority-white, but the neighborhood of Belle Haven did not, underscoring how effective the Bayshore was at isolating Black residents. Menlo Park had only 349 non-white residents in 1950, but by 1957, the city had 2,949 non-white residents who were concentrated in Belle Haven.³⁹

Belle Haven and East Palo Alto were linked by their demographic compositions, physical separation from the surrounding areas by the Bayshore Highway, and eventual inclusion in the Ravenswood attendance zone. Both areas found a common cause in strengthening community control over their public schools. In a 1971 report, the East Bayshore Community Central Coordinating Planning Committee adopted a series of policies to develop the area, noting that the two communities “share many problems: unemployment, limited commercial services, and inadequate public transportation.” ⁴⁰ The report recommended a series of community development policies, including one to increase the quality of public education through community control. The

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³⁴ U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Hearings before the United States Commission on Civil Rights, 1960, 657.
³⁵ U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Hearings before the United States Commission on Civil Rights, 1960, 657.
³⁹ “City of East Palo Alto Historic Resources Inventory Report,” 70.
committee members emphasized their common support: “East Bayshore desires local control of education, preferably by greater representation of parents, citizens, students and teachers.” While the report identified that Belle Haven and East Palo Alto had common concerns, it also identified the particular disadvantages that East Palo Alto faced as an unincorporated community. The report stated that “Belle Haven is a part of a larger city, and as such, has benefited in quality of services and, with the advice and assistance of the Belle Haven Advisory Committee, in the development of special programs.” While East Palo Alto “acquired some degree of local self-government in the creation of the East Palo Alto Municipal Council,” which could advise the county on area needs, the community “suffers from its unincorporated status, with a lack of local control over services and a limited tax base to support service costs.” The East Bayshore area found common priorities in their struggle to wield adequate political power, a struggle that would intensify as the district considered remedies to desegregate their schools that would affect enrollment at Ravenswood.

**Desegregation and residential segregation**

This section documents the Sequoia Union district’s attempts to institute racial balance at Ravenswood by drawing and changing certain school attendance boundaries. The school district fielded concerns about segregation at Ravenswood long before the high school closed in 1976. Community members viewed school attendance boundaries as a corrective to residential segregation, while district officials repeatedly did not take decisive action to “break” segregated housing patterns that would ensure Ravenswood became a segregated school. Ravenswood community members placed pressure on the school district to restore racial balance in their schools but were repeatedly disappointed with the district’s inability to ensure full integration. As the district debated effective ways to desegregate, Ravenswood’s academic offerings continued to lag behind those of the other schools in the district. For example, in 1968, Ravenswood did not offer 40 percent of the district’s electives and teachers taught 19 percent of their courses with two or more grades combined. These failures drove efforts by

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Ravenswood community leaders to strengthen their influence in the operation of the school.

East Bayshore community members feared that Ravenswood would become a segregated school from its inception. In May 1955, voters in the Sequoia Union High School District passed a bond to construct two new schools, including one in East Palo Alto. Students in East Palo Alto attended Sequoia High School in Redwood City until Menlo-Atherton High School opened in 1951 in neighboring Atherton. In 1957, the district trustees met to determine what Ravenswood’s boundaries would look like. The board initially sought to include the entirety of neighboring Belle Haven and East Palo Alto in the attendance zone for Ravenswood, which would have zoned every Black student in both areas to attend Ravenswood, creating a segregated school. The district faced fierce backlash to their suggested demarcations. Norman Howard, an East Palo Alto resident and a representative for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, stated at a June board meeting: “It is the board’s obligation to see that it (the fifth school) does not become a segregated school.” Donald Barr, another East Palo Alto resident, referred to the area as a “suburban ghetto.” Barr also argued that just as the district acknowledged the inequities that children faced in the classroom, they had to account for the “socio-economic” factors that could lead to segregated schooling. Community members from the East Bayshore community presented a petition to the board with 3,668 names that asked to establish Willows Road as the school attendance boundary rather than the Bayshore highway, which would include a higher number of white students in the attendance zone. The district ultimately decided to

43 Hearings before the Select Committee on Equal Educational Opportunity, 92nd Cong., 1st sess., 1971, 4783.
46 Hearings before the Select Committee on Equal Educational Opportunity, 92nd Cong., 1st sess., 1971, 4783.
zone part of Belle Haven for Menlo-Atherton, seemingly successful in their attempt to avoid a segregated school.

While the student bodies at Ravenswood and Menlo-Atherton appeared to be racially balanced when Ravenswood opened in 1958, by the mid-1960s, the schools were clearly segregated. Turner stated in July 1957 that after the new boundary was put in place, the student population in East Palo Alto would be 15 percent Black and the student population attending Menlo-Atherton would be 9 or 10 percent Black. In 1964, the *Stanford Daily* reported that Ravenswood’s student body was 49 percent Black and Menlo-Atherton’s student body was 4 percent Black. Woodside was 4 percent Black and San Carlos, Sequoia, and Carlmont High School had “virtually no” Black students. The efforts to create school boundaries that would prevent de facto segregation had failed. This could not have come as a surprise to district officials. In a 1971 report which found the district in violation of Title VI, the San Francisco Regional Office for Civil Rights stated that “the District recognized that the school would be identified as a minority school” because they had maintained data on the racial composition of Ravenswood since 1958; the district only began to track student body demographics at the other schools in the 1964-1965 school year.

The district had to shift attendance boundaries to deal with increasing segregation at Ravenswood. To ameliorate the situation at Ravenswood, and resolve issues of overcrowding at other schools in the district, the district decided in March 1963 to transfer 239 students residing in the Willows area of Menlo Park from the Menlo-Atherton attendance zone to Ravenswood by the beginning of the 1964-1965 school year. In 1957, when the district trustees met to determine the Ravenswood attendance boundaries, they decided not to include the Willows area, which was majority-white, in the Ravenswood attendance zone. The Office for Civil Rights would later state that this decision was “made in response to strong community concern over blockbusting, property values, and race”; in the lead-up to the boundary decision, the board received 223

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letters predominately from residents of the Willows area who implored the district to keep their neighborhood in the Menlo-Atherton attendance zone. Ed Becks, former president of the South San Mateo County NAACP, argued that the boundary shift in 1964 actually contributed to increased segregation at Ravenswood. Becks argued that the percentage of Black students at Ravenswood increased from 45 percent in the 1962-1963 school year to 49 percent in the 1963-1964 school year because more Black families had previously moved to the Willows area.

As segregation deepened at Ravenswood, the community placed increased pressure on the district to decisively integrate the school by closing the school. In 1965, the district-appointed Citizens Advisory Committee on Ethnic Problems recommended that, in response to the increasingly segregated situation at Ravenswood, the district should close the high school and transfer students who chose to attend Ravenswood should return to the high schools they originally attended. The report stated that the Ravenswood student population was 60 percent Black, estimated it would increase to become 70 percent Black the following year, and estimated further that the student population could become 90 percent Black in the next three to five years. Elliot C. Levinthal, chairman of the committee, stated that the only real alternative to Ravenswood’s closure would be to institute two-way busing; however, he added that doing so would require delineating new attendance boundaries and “the effects on real estate sales in a ‘Ravenswood’ area in San Carlos, for instance, would not be good.” While the feared implications of two-way busing certainly guided the committee’s decision to close Ravenswood, civil rights groups in East Palo Alto and district students agreed that the school should be phased out. However, the district board ultimately decided against a phase-out of Ravenswood in 1965 after two new trustees from San Carlos and Woodside came out against the phase-out.

The district continued to resist closing Ravenswood, opting for a solution to racial imbalance that would allow Ravenswood to

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52 Fender, “Fight Continues over Ravenswood Boundaries.”
remain open and provide greater resources to improve academics at the school. Calls to close Ravenswood arose again in 1969 after outside studies determined that a phase-out would be the best solution to desegregating the district. However, with community support for efforts to improve services at Ravenswood, the district board determined that they would keep the school open. At the July 2, 1969 board meeting, the trustees adopted a resolution that they would keep Ravenswood open, achieve racially balanced schools by September 1971, and develop a plan to achieve this racial balance by June 1, 1970.

The district board decided to desegregate the district through voluntary transfers. The district, however, faced resistance for a component of the plan which would allow for mandatory busing if Ravenswood could not maintain an adequate number of voluntary transfers. While community members generally accepted voluntary desegregation, some residents emphasized their opposition to a plan that would require mandatory busing. As the district sought community feedback before the June 1970 deadline, more than 600 residents asserted at a board meeting in April that they wanted no part of “forced, two-way busing.” George Kerska, president of a group named Parents for Neighborhood Schools, voiced opposition to what he thought would be “the crushing additional tax burden the plans would impose on all of us” for “an almost fanatical dedication on the part of a couple of school board members to achieve a meaningless mathematical racial balance not required by any court or government agency.” In response to Kerska’s suggestion that “forced” busing would increase taxation rates, Jerry Allen, president of the San Carlos-Belmont Human Relations Commission, retorted: “I pay taxes, as much as some of you and maybe a little more than some of you. To own property seems to be a prerequisite for this meeting…” Opposition to busing based on financial concerns stood with opposition to busing based on perceptions of Ravenswood students themselves. One speaker remarked that her daughter was “beat up” by Black students at Carlmont High School: “I have to teach my daughter the art of

fisticuffs. It’s too bad we have to take these kids in.” Against the protests of these residents, the board adopted a plan in June for the 1971-1972 school year that would establish a voluntary transfer program with a mandatory backup component. This mandatory component would allow the district to randomly select students for transfer if the district could not maintain adequate minority enrollments at the schools. However, in the 1971 school board elections, two candidates who ran on platforms to oppose mandatory busing won. Trustees William Jordan and Percy Roberts voted with two other trustees to suspend the mandatory part of the program in July.

The district board’s rejection of mandatory busing triggered legal action from community members who sought to restore the program on the basis that the state had taken actions to make East Palo Alto into a segregated community. Robert Gomperts, a parent living in Menlo Park, recruited four attorneys to file a complaint in the United States District Court for the Northern District of California. In the case, Gomperts v. Chase, the attorneys argued that the state played a decisive role in four actions that led to segregation: the state highway commission constructed the Bayshore Highway, which became the natural boundary for Ravenswood’s attendance area, the state-licensed realtors who sold houses exclusively to Black families in the East Bayshore community, state-chartered banks used discriminatory loan policies, and the state did not curb the use of racially restrictive covenants. The plaintiffs also presented the June 1970 letter from the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW), which found the district in violation of Title VI, as evidence of the state’s purposeful segregation. The case was ultimately unsuccessful for the plaintiffs, because while the Sequoia Union district was segregated based on racial imbalances in enrollment, the case did not fit into the expectations for “classical de jure school segregation.” After they lost in district court, the plaintiffs’ attorneys filed an appeal to the Circuit Court of Appeals and, after the appellate court denied temporary relief without a hearing, they decided to file for a writ of certiorari at the Supreme Court. In a short opinion, Justice William O. Douglas ruled that while, based on the

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61 Robertson, The Conscience of a Community, 40.
62 Robertson, The Conscience of a Community, 72.
HEW letter, there was clear evidence that Ravenswood was an “inferior school,” and the amended voluntary transfer program “takes, at most, only minimal steps toward equalizing the educational opportunities at the district’s high schools,”63 he would defer to his colleagues, writing that “the precise contours of de jure segregation have not been drawn by the court.”64

Without the option to enforce mandatory busing if an inadequate number of people would choose to transfer to Ravenswood, the district struggled to maintain sufficient enrollment at the school.65 Voluntary desegregation could not restore racial balance at Ravenswood. Furthermore, no law or case decision prevented the district trustees from assigning students to schools based on achieving racial balance. In attempting to compromise on how desegregation would take place, the trustees implemented a program with no guarantee that it would restore racial balance to Ravenswood. The school district’s attempts to overcome residential segregation through voluntary means was met with resistance from white families, but Black families from East Bayshore held their own reservations about a plan that focused more on enrollments and less on tangible improvements in educational equality.

**The struggle for community control**

Numerous organizations that strengthened local political power arose in the 1960s, providing crucial outlets for community leaders to provide input on efforts to desegregate Ravenswood. In 1967, after community activists failed to hold an election on incorporating East Palo Alto, the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors established the East Palo Alto Municipal Council.66 The Alto Park Community Council, which served the whole East Bayshore community, served a similar function, but the Municipal Council received official approval and county funding. The Municipal Council formed the Ravenswood School-Community Council in 1969. Community stakeholders were increasingly frustrated with the district’s inability to yield substantial authority

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64 Robertson, *The Conscience of a Community*, 74.
The need for community involvement became apparent even to outside observers. On June 6, 1969, a panel from the Personnel Standards and Ethics Commission of the California Teachers’ Association released a report that criticized the quality of education at Ravenswood and insisted that improvement required “expert, hard, sincere work in human relations.” The report recommended that the district close the high school at the end of the school year, reassign all students and staff to other schools within the district, and open a new, “high-quality” school that all students could attend. These drastic measures were based on uncompromising observations that the panel members recounted in their report — students at Ravenswood were “aimless and undirected,” the “prevailing mood is one of distrust, hostility and fear,” and according to the group, they had “never encountered a sorrier example of low faculty morale.” While the panel’s observations were severe, the report also stated that Ravenswood students needed “attention, concern, respect and discipline” rather than money. In other words, the district would have to make a concerted effort to engage and involve Ravenswood staff, students, and parents in the management of their local public high school.

After the report, the board sought to establish a community council that would provide East Palo Alto residents with some advisory influence over operations at Ravenswood. At the Sequoia Union District board of trustees meeting on July 2, 1969, the trustees determined that Ravenswood would remain open. At the meeting, Trustee Charles Chase acknowledged the stakes of community involvement: “I feel we must keep Ravenswood open, but we can only do that if there is a complete change of attitude on the part of the community.” Trustee Jack Robertson voiced his support for a group that could provide the board with local input: “It’s essential here that we have a local educational council in the Ravenswood

area, and we must give it some power. If we don’t, we will insult the East Palo Alto community.” This emphasis on community needs led the board to agree on appointing a local school council by “September 15 or as rapidly as possible.” Community members agreed that the community should be involved. At a public forum in June that logged 140 attendees, eight discussion groups discussed the future of Ravenswood. All eight groups favored opening Ravenswood, while six groups stated that the Ravenswood community should receive local control through a “mini-board” that would receive jurisdiction over Ravenswood. The forum released a “consensus” report and a “minority report” published by a “black caucus” — while the “consensus” report left the question of how local control should be established to the school board, the “minority” report emphasized that the effort to establish local control should be led by those who lived in the Ravenswood attendance area.

Herbert Rhodes, chairman of the East Palo Alto Municipal Council, took the initiative to negotiate the formation of the council with the school district. This was despite the council’s refusal to take a decisive stance in favor of keeping Ravenswood open — Jean Fassler, a council member, stated that “it hasn’t been the policy of the board to involve itself in school matters.” The original proposal aimed to establish a school-community council that included five members of the student body, five citizens that live within the Ravenswood attendance area, and five school staff members. The council would interview and screen applicants for teaching and non-teaching jobs at school, as well as make recommendations to trustees. However, questions over the board’s functions soon turned into broader disagreements. The school district did not approve of giving the committee access to confidential information on applicants who applied for teaching positions at Ravenswood. In a letter, Ralph Keller, president-elect of the California Educational Placement Association, wrote that the organization’s policy “specifically states that school districts ‘should make the placement papers available to no one but their own school district employers.’”

The board still sought to provide the council with hiring information, requesting that Superintendent George Chaffey ask the association if the council could examine hiring information if the applicant approved of them doing so, but it is unclear whether the council ever received this information.

Residents argued that the board did not provide the council with enough autonomy. Controversy arose over the structure of the permanent council — while the board maintained the 15-person composition from the original proposal, they replaced the five school staff members with five Ravenswood parents, added two faculty members selected by fellow teachers, and designated Principal Earl Meneweather an ex-officio member and secretary of the council. At the school board meeting on March 4, 1970, where the board established a permanent council, seven members of the interim council submitted their resignations. They did so because the council rejected proposals to elect members of the council directly and to afford the council more control over selecting school personnel. The council also objected to Meneweather’s position on the council. Outgoing chairman Elbert E. Mitchell objected to the presence of “management” on what the San Mateo Times reported he called a “citizens committee.” The council’s demands echoed the language of the California Teachers Association report — one point called for “more community involvement and greater respect for dignity of community people by members of the staff.” Council members felt that the trustees were not considering their recommendations despite the board’s willingness to accept proposals from other community councils in the district. Community leaders insisted on a degree of local control that the district did not yield.

The council criticized the district board’s inability to meet their demands for true local control as proof that the trustees were not equipped to govern affairs at Ravenswood. At the March 4 meeting, council member Betty Maxwell voiced the council’s dissatisfaction with the district and on March 17, the district received a letter from the South San Mateo County NAACP chapter criticizing

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75 “Sequoia Trustees Hooted,” San Mateo Times, March 5, 1970.
76 “Sequoia Trustees Hooted,” San Mateo Times.
the board for rejecting the interim council’s proposals. In the letter, branch presidents James Haugabook and branch secretary Gelsomina Becks wrote that the board’s rejection of the proposals “reinforces our branch position that it is impossible for black students to get a relevant, meaningful education within the Sequoia district.” Becks and Haugabook also wrote that because the district had accepted the recommendations of other interim councils in the district, “the board represents the majority of the district — which is white, wealthy, middle class, and racist.” They called for “complete autonomy,” and until such autonomy could be achieved, they called for the district to establish a council with “de facto autonomy.” Community members like Becks and Haugabook did not hold faith in the school district to provide an adequate education at Ravenswood.

As attempts to strengthen local control failed to satisfy their demands, members of the community began to doubt if integration would tangibly improve education at Ravenswood. In April 1969, the district approved a voluntary transfer program, where any student at Ravenswood could transfer to another high school in the district and any student at another high school in the district could transfer to Ravenswood. The plan was introduced not purely as a means to desegregate the district; according to the San Mateo Times, Chaffey introduced the plan to equalize minority enrollment at the schools and eventually phase out Ravenswood. The East Palo Alto community doubted that the voluntary program would adequately desegregate the school. The San Mateo Times noted that, at the April 2nd board meeting where the plan was introduced, within the Ravenswood community, there seemed to be a shift in opinion towards maintaining local control versus transferring students from the school. Israel Harris, quoted in the Times article as an East Palo Alto “civic leader,” stated at the meeting that the “problem at Ravenswood is not education, ‘it’s congenital American racism.’” Harris questioned whether integration was an appropriate measure for the district to take.

Similar feelings of dissatisfaction in the community arose in 1970 when the district sought to create a “new school” at

77 “School Board Is Told It Is ‘White, Wealthy and Racist,’” San Mateo Times.
Ravenswood in 1971 and implement what they hoped would be a progressive curriculum. This new school would ideally attract transfers and improve the school’s academics. The original plan (which was later altered to remove the mandatory busing component) would also transfer most Ravenswood students to ensure that each high school was racially balanced, with no more than 25 percent minority student enrollment at each school; according to the *Palo Alto Times*, in 1970, the student body at Ravenswood was “95 percent black.”

The board stated that minority enrollment at Ravenswood would be around 40 percent; however, trustee Jack Robertson later wrote that because the 25 percent minority limit was for grades 9 through 11, the other 15 percent of the minority population would be seniors, and they were not required to participate in the voluntary transfer program. Therefore, the “increased” minority enrollment at Ravenswood was actually equivalent to that at the other high schools. Meneweather, who applied to serve as principal of the “new” high school, reported to the newspaper that students were forming a Black student union because “they are reluctant to have the school broken up.” He added: “They have developed a dignity and pride — they’re aware of a new unity. They like what they have done for themselves.”

The school-community council held similar reservations and the Municipal Council passed a unanimous resolution to hold all actions towards remaking Ravenswood “in abeyance” until the board addressed and resolved the council’s objections. In their resolution, the council stated that the desegregation plan “deals unfairly with this community.” The resolution criticized the district for enforcing a complete reorganization at Ravenswood. The council wrote: “The action will eliminate all vestiges of ‘community control’ at Ravenswood High School while retaining such ‘community control’ in the other schools of the district.”

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83 Sandul, “Ravenswood Principal Hits ‘New School’ Plan.”
84 Sandul, “Ravenswood Principal Hits ‘New School’ Plan.”
between the community and the school, giving the district a disproportionate amount of influence at Ravenswood.

Some Ravenswood students grew increasingly opposed to the idea that they would not just have to transfer out of their school, but that their school’s identity would become irreversibly changed as a result of incoming non-minority transfers. At a meeting between board members and representatives of the district-wide Student Advisory Council in November, several Ravenswood students voiced their resistance to a mandatory transfer program. Andre Lavaly, the student body president, told the board that “they [the students] don’t want to leave their community.” He stressed that the students recognized the mandate to desegregate, but did not agree with the changes that Ravenswood would undergo to facilitate integration: “We understand what it’s about. We are not against desegregation. But we are against the program adopted by this board.” The students emphasized that they preferred a voluntary program, questioning why the district sought to desegregate the district by radically decreasing the Black enrollment at Ravenswood. Trustee Helen Kerwin stated at the meeting that the transfer plan could also relieve overcrowding at other schools and bring enrollment numbers at Ravenswood up to a sufficient standard. Student Ramona Mastifull was dubious of this premise, asking why the school could not transfer white students one way to Ravenswood and Menlo-Atherton. She emphasized her feeling that the district was deliberately undermining the school’s connection to its community: “Why can’t you keep Ravenswood 50 percent white and 50 percent black? What you’re trying to do is to make Ravenswood an all-white school so it will lose its identity.” Ravenswood students hesitated at the suggestion that the Black student body at Ravenswood had to be reduced to desegregate the district as a whole.

Within the student community and beyond, the sentiment that the district could not appropriately govern affairs at Ravenswood was increasingly common. Community leader and parent Gertrude Wilks told the Stanford Daily in 1977: “I felt that Ravenswood could have worked but it was controlled by the Sequoia Board of Trustees. The community had no control or say in

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the program.” This deepening sense of alienation from the public school system, which seemed to be failing Black students, drove Wilks to open the Nairobi Schools in 1968.

The Nairobi Schools
Understanding community control in East Palo Alto requires understanding the passionate activism of Wilks. Wilks co-founded the Mothers for Equal Education, the organization which started the Nairobi Schools, and was elected to serve as mayor of the East Palo Alto Municipal Council in 1974. Wilks was initially a deeply committed participant in organizations designed to improve education at Ravenswood — in a 1970 book published by the Nairobi Day School, Wilks listed how she served as vice president of the Parent Teacher Association at Ravenswood, served as chairman of an entity called the Community School Relationship Group, and organized a Spring Concert with over 650 participants. In her memoir, Wilks stated that when her family moved to the area in the mid-1950s, she “liked what she saw” in terms of the public education her children could receive: “Nice looking schools were within walking distance and a brand new modern high school, Ravenswood, was being constructed.” However, Wilks lambasted the school when her oldest son, OJ, received a substandard education. Wilks decried that OJ would “graduate hardly able to read,” “wasn’t prepared for anything, let alone college,” and “had been badly destroyed along with hundreds of others.” In 1980, she stated that she became an activist when OJ told her that he could not read well enough to complete an application for a position at Lockheed Martin, an aerospace and defense company. Wilks began to contact other mothers who were “familiar with the problem of de-education” and held initial meetings in June 1965. This group decided to call themselves “the Mothers.”

88 Gertrude Wilks, Gathering Together: Born to be a Leader (N.p.: Xlibris Corporation, 2010), 107.
89 Day School E.P.A., 11; Wilks, Gathering Together, 111.
Wilks mobilized other members of the Ravenswood community to campaign for change. She sought urgent community action, staging protests with members of the NAACP and the Congress of Racial Equality outside of district offices in Redwood City throughout the summer of 1965. The group rallied in support of the report from Eliot Levinthal and the Citizens Advisory Committee on Ethnic Problems, which as previously mentioned, called for Ravenswood to be phased out, but Wilks grew increasingly frustrated with the district’s refusal to accept the proposal and to implement a workable solution. Wilks felt attached to the community, but she saw the lack of adequate education for her children as a decisive flaw: “Either something had to be done about the school, or I would have to give my property away and leave East Palo Alto, seeking better educational opportunities for my other two children.”  

For Wilks, Ravenswood’s deficiencies reflected poorly on the appeal of the community as a whole. Seeking an immediate solution, in 1966, Wilks started the Sneak Out program, an organized effort to place Black students with white families in neighboring and higher-performing schools. Wilks sent her son to live with a woman who could enroll him at Cubberley High School in Palo Alto. The Sneak Out program placed fifty students from the Ravenswood attendance zone within and beyond the Sequoia Union district high schools, but the Sneak Out was not a permanent solution for the Mothers, even when the district “pre-empted” the Sneak Out program in 1968 by authorizing 100 Black students to transfer from Ravenswood to schools in Palo Alto or Menlo Park. Students reported incidents of racial hostility at the other high schools at the same time that Sneak Out participants demanded courses in Black history and Swahili, similar to their peers at Ravenswood. Graffiti stating “N*****s stay out!” and “This bathroom for blacks only” appeared at high schools in Palo Alto. Leaflets appeared from a group that called itself “Society for the Prevention of N*****s Getting Everything.” Some families even made

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91 Day School E.P.A., 12.
94 Rickford, We Are An African People, 109.
their Sneak Out students leave their homes. These incidents deepened the Mothers’ desire to form an independent institution.

The Mothers sought to establish educational institutions that would be led by community members, as opposed to district officials. Wilks wrote that “so many attempts had been made in our community that had failed,” citing federal college preparatory program Upward Bound and “pilot programs” which were “planned from outside.” Wilks summed up the desire for a community-based program in writing: “Other folks had made them. And none of them had worked. Finally we decided that if our kids were going to be educated, we had to do the educating ourselves.”

Wilks believed that the best education for the community’s Black students, considering the experiences they had at predominantly white high schools, would come from schools run by leaders in the Black community. Speaking to Ebony in 1971, Wilks emphasized the urgency for educational change based in East Palo Alto: “We had to do it. Black folks were learning neither in our black public schools run by white folks nor in the white ones, also run by white folks. We had to start it and so we did.”

The sustainable solution emerged in October 1966, when Wilks and the Mothers opened the Day School to provide reading support on Saturdays for public school students, with community leaders serving as administrators.

In 1968, the Mothers decided to expand their program by starting the full-time private institution Nairobi Elementary School, with Nairobi High School to follow in 1969. The term “Nairobi” had a deep political significance for the East Palo Alto community — in spring 1968, community resident Donald Reid introduced the idea to rename East Palo Alto as “Nairobi.” “Nairobi” would affirm the community’s Black heritage as an indisputably African name and would distinguish it from neighboring Palo Alto, which belonged to a different county. The measure failed in November, but other public services assumed the name “Nairobi.” For example, the local shopping center was renamed Nairobi Village Shopping Center.

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95 Day School E.P.A., 16.
96 “Learning is an All-Black Thing,” Ebony Magazine, September 1971.
97 Wilks, Gathering Together, 117.
99 Rickford, We Are an African People, 102.
100 Rickford, We Are an African People, 103.
The Nairobi Schools experience was geared towards a holistic and positive view of the students, whose education was steeped in Black history and culture. Mary Hoover, the Day School’s curriculum coordinator and a reading specialist, planned out a curriculum that would center a “skills-oriented” education. 101 Hoover later wrote that the school sought to maintain a balance between skills-based instruction and political education, distinct from other Black independent schools at the time which were more focused on political awareness. 102 The curriculum included classes that conformed to and diverted from the public school norm. The school had classes in traditional subjects like U.S. history, physics, and mathematics. Wilks also taught a class titled “N****ology,” which centered the struggle for Black nationalism around local problems facing the community. 103 This skills-oriented education was delivered in a context meant to be supportive to students who, according to Wilks, had not been adequately supported in the public education system. Through positive reinforcement, instructors were expected to remove the impediments that came from being labeled as “difficult” in public school. Teachers were instructed to “teach, not diagnose.” 104

The school stressed the importance of service to the East Palo Alto community. Day School principal Robert Hoover wrote that “part of the purpose of Day School is to develop young people who think, who care about their community.” 105 For example, as part of the “N****ology” course, students were instructed to identify issues like broken traffic lights and report them to the East Palo Alto Municipal Council. Throughout their individual reflections in Nairobi High’s 1970 yearbook, students repeatedly emphasized their commitment to creating community-level change, much like the Mothers who had established the Nairobi Schools. For example, Carol Holloway wrote that “she wanted to become a leader after I finish college and help our black communities like Gertrude

101 Day School E.P.A., 40.
103 Rickford, We Are an African People, 113.
104 Rickford, We Are an African People, 113.
105 Day School E.P.A., 43.
Wilks...” Wilks...”

Nairobi High School sought to foster community pride in its students.

As Nairobi established itself in East Palo Alto, Ravenswood grew increasingly segregated. In October 1969, the student population was 93.7 percent Black, an increase of 44 percent from 1964. Community members became increasingly frustrated with the inadequate education available at the school and increased local control over school proceedings seemed like the best means of creating concrete change. Community leaders like Wilks, however, believed that an independent school would provide a better education for students in East Palo Alto than the district could — State Superintendent of Schools Max Rafferty supported their efforts, endorsing the school in 1969. Wilks, who started one of the most ambitious integrationist operations in the region by pioneering the Sneak Out program in the mid-1960s, stated in March 1969 that she was “not optimistic about integration at present” and added that she believed “racism is at its peak.” Despite the board’s effort to keep the school open, many no longer believed that the district could do right by Ravenswood’s students.

A “new” school

In fall 1971, a new Ravenswood High School opened, and it shouldered all the hopes of the district for a successful desegregation effort. When the district board agreed to implement the voluntary desegregation program (before the removal of the mandatory component), the trustees decided that Ravenswood would become a “model school.” According to the district, this school would be innovative in its curriculum, give its students ample opportunities to pursue their individual academic goals, and, most importantly, achieve a racial balance that had eluded the school. Through white student transfers to the school and transfers from Ravenswood, the student body went from 94 percent to 51 percent Black. Reporter John Horgan made a sharp distinction between the “old” Ravenswood and the “new” Ravenswood. He wrote in the San Mateo

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106 Nairobi High, 1970.
Times that “all of the evils of the big-city ghetto high schools seemed to be thrust upon Ravenswood as it moved into the Seventies.” Horgan wrote that after conditions became “ungovernable,” students took advantage of the transfer program to leave Ravenswood and chronic truancy became even more prevalent. Now, however, Horgan cited that there was “change in the air.”

“Change” was certainly in the air at Ravenswood, but the district’s mission to desegregate the school had intended and unintended consequences. As a “model” school, Ravenswood’s academic offerings were intended to maintain a steady stream of transfer students from the other high schools. Yet, an integrated school did not guarantee an integrated school experience. When students came to Ravenswood, they were sorted into “houses,” diversified by grade and race. Each house included 100 students and four to six teachers who would supervise the groups. These houses, named after zodiac signs, would provide students with weekly opportunities to share personal and school-related problems, participate in activities with peers, and receive private counseling. However, when the school opened, neither teachers nor students knew how the houses should function and the experiment was quickly dissolved. Harabi Gani, the school newspaper, published an editorial piece that “teachers would sit around looking at students blankly and vice-versa.” The real importance of the houses was that they could encourage interracial contact. Harabi Gani staffers lamented that they “lost a vital avenue for human relations.” They stressed that without the houses, it was easy to avoid actual integration:

“By taking classes that have little interest to another ethnic group and spending free time secluded among close friends a student can effectively avoid any realistic meeting with students of another color. Regardless of how effective the houses were the contact between students they initiated was a healthy and necessary part of the success of this school.”

While the Harabi Gani staffers may have been particularly attentive to school affairs, their observations signaled a greater problem: both in the classroom and outside of it, students were often not integrated within Ravenswood. Alumna Linda Lipinski wrote that “most of [her] classes were close to 100% white.” She credited this to the subject matter: “... they were experimental literature and historical material geared to advanced students.” Lipinski argued that “the different degree of preparation was the largest contributor to ‘two schools’ within Ravenswood.” Lipinski and the Harabi Gani staff both underscored the internal persistence of segregated schooling at Ravenswood by using language that equated “white” with “advanced.” Even a teacher, Nelson Dake, echoed these sentiments; according to Cryer, Dake told the principal in November 1971 that “although there is desegregation in the school as a whole, the patterns of cultural differences still exist in some courses.” Dake continued: “As expected, whites predominate in such courses as mathematics and the sciences while many Blacks are still attempting to master reading skills.” While these individuals’ emphasis on “cultural difference” is questionable, the data confirmed their observations of segregated classrooms. In fall 1973, Ravenswood had a “minority” enrollment of 56 percent. 13 percent of classes had less than 20 percent minority enrollment and 18 percent had 80 percent or more minority enrollment. In fall 1974, when the minority enrollment was 65 percent, 8 percent of classes had less than 20 percent minority enrollment and 37 percent of classes had 80 percent or more minority enrollment. Desegregation within the school would prove to be more elusive than desegregation based on the school’s racial composition. For the East Bayshore community, the “new” Ravenswood did not promise an integrated academic experience.

Closure

At a board meeting on August 19, 1975, Chaffey announced his recommendation to close Ravenswood in 1976. He cited financial problems and decreasing enrollment numbers (which led to an

115 Robertson, The Conscience of a Community, 104.
increase in the minority student population from 51 percent in 1971 to 64.7 percent in 1974) at Ravenswood as central to his guidance. Chaffey stated that the “negative image of the East Palo Alto community as a depressed area... has worked against the success of the school,” also citing the high transfer rate from Ravenswood to other schools.

Chaffey emphasized the benefits of closing Ravenswood, arguing that doing so could break the “pattern of low achievement of the students entering the district from the Ravenswood elementary district.” To achieve racial balance, Chaffey recommended that the district redraw district lines and adopt a policy of open enrollment, which would permit students to attend any of the five remaining schools in the district granted that ceiling limits on minority enrollment and total enrollment at each school were not exceeded. With the closure, Chaffey stated that “effective July 1, 1976, the district can be fully integrated for the first time in the past 13 years.” However, the decision was controversial, because while the total number of white students that the district would transfer to integrate the remaining high schools exceeded the minority students who would transfer from the Ravenswood attendance area, Ravenswood would be the only school that would close to facilitate the district’s integration.

In their final report, the district task force that recommended Ravenswood’s closure included a summary of the district’s financial difficulties that pointed to larger economic and social trends. In the report, the committee members stated that because of declining enrollment numbers, state limits on district income, and lack of voter support for bond measures, the district was no longer able to sustain the costs of operating one or more of its high schools. Ultimately, the task force determined that closing Ravenswood would yield net savings of $8.6 million over 10 years, the highest savings that would result from closing any of the district schools.

The task force also argued that desegregation efforts at Ravenswood had already distributed students to other schools in the

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118 “Why Ravenswood was chosen for closure,” *Palo Alto Times*, August 20, 1975.
district. The report stated, in its summary of the criteria used to evaluate each school, that because only 450 out of the 1,350 students that lived in the Ravenswood attendance area would attend Ravenswood in the 1975-1976 school year, the school did not meet an “efficient enrollment” standard. More importantly, because most students living in the Ravenswood attendance area already attended other schools, the district would only have to re-assign the 450 students at Ravenswood to other schools and return 240 transfer students to their original high schools. The report stated that the need to redraw the attendance boundaries would be “held to a minimum” and that students in East Palo Alto would benefit from receiving “excellent educational opportunities” in other district schools. The report specifically mentioned that because so many students from Ravenswood took advantage of the voluntary desegregation program to attend other high schools in the district, closing Ravenswood would impact the lowest number of students. The report failed to recognize that these students had transferred not necessarily because they wanted Ravenswood to close, but because they were dissatisfied with the academic experience at Ravenswood. The report further overlooked students who wanted to keep Ravenswood open. The students zoned to Ravenswood would have to attend other schools regardless of whether or not they supported the closure.

The trustees accepted the task force recommendations. Jordan, who voted against the mandatory transfer program, stated that Ravenswood was the “most logical choice [for closure] because of the financial constraints.” According to the Palo Alto Times, Jordan also noted that the cost per student and the cost of repair were highest at Ravenswood. Trustee William Harrington stated that he supported the closure of Ravenswood “if the East Palo Alto community is left with at least as good an educational facility as it has now — such as a community college program.” Harrington’s comments were similar to those made in the report, which stated that the district should seek to lease all or part of the Ravenswood campus to other educational institutions, such as the San Mateo Community College District, Nairobi College, and the Nairobi

123 Sequoia Union High School District on School Closure, 22.
Schools. The task force also wrote that “the use should be self-supporting in order to eliminate ongoing costs to the district.” The trustees held similar concerns that seemed to reflect their financial predicament as well as questions around the future of the school.

Conversely, members of the East Palo Alto community immediately voiced their displeasure with the decision to close Ravenswood. Henry Anthony, chairman of the East Palo Alto Municipal Council, stated that the recommendation “shows the racism in the district.” He also protested the move by voicing his resistance to “forced busing”: “The neighborhood school concept is valid. This community doesn’t pay taxes to the district for forced busing of its children out of the community. It ought to be two-way.” Anthony’s support for two-way busing marked a major shift from 1965, when residents supported the school’s closure, and reflected the community’s loss of faith in the district. Anthony also mentioned his willingness to bring the matter to court; the Committee on the Ravenswood Issue, an advocacy group for Ravenswood and the Ravenswood City elementary school district, would later file suit in December against the district. The group, represented by Ravenswood City Superintendent Warren Hayman, spoke at the first community hearing on September 25 to criticize the closure. Hayman stated: “When an all white school board closes the only high school in an all black community, that’s tantamount to genocide. It’s criminal.” Community control activists in Harlem first used the term “genocide” to describe their failing public education system. Now, advocates for Ravenswood expressed similar sentiments regarding the school’s imminent closure.

Representatives of the Ravenswood student community also voiced their displeasure with the decision to close the school. Foster Curry, a Ravenswood student who attended the community hearings, told the Palo Alto Times: “The Board voted to close down our school and one of the reasons given was lack of local support. It’s kind of ironic that only Ravenswood was represented at all the

126 Sequoia Union High School District on School Closure, 20.
129 Rickford, We Are An African People, 24.
hearings.” Annette Lamoreaux, student body vice president and a member of the student advisory council, stated in a meeting with trustees that even though they “understand declining enrollment and financial problems,” there was a “sense of disbelief among the students.” Lamoreaux also stated that Ravenswood’s closure would result in “forced busing of blacks to white schools”: “The main complaint is that it puts the greatest burden on the black community (East Palo Alto). I live in San Carlos and I chose to go to Ravenswood, but East Palo Alto kids wouldn’t have a chance if Ravenswood closed.” Strong voices of opposition to Ravenswood’s closure came from the students who decided to graduate early instead of returning to their neighborhood schools or getting reassigned to new high schools. Harabi Gani found that 66 juniors were planning to graduate at the end of the school year, which was double the average (because of Ravenswood’s individualized curriculum, students could plan their schedules to graduate early).

Ravenswood community representatives filed suit on December 17, 1975 in United States district court, soon after the district voted to close Ravenswood on October 27. The plaintiffs, represented by attorney W. James Ware, argued that closing Ravenswood would create an unequal burden on Black students to desegregate the district. The plaintiffs sought to achieve a court order that would cease the plan for Ravenswood’s closure and prompt the district to develop a desegregation plan that would not place the complete burden of desegregation on the Ravenswood student community. Ware also wrote in the suit: “The impact of the closure and one-way busing will be harmful to the achievement, aspiration, self-esteem, race relations and opportunity for higher education for blacks.” In arguing that closing and busing students from Ravenswood would be a “discriminatory procedure,” Ware targeted the district’s claim that the effects of desegregation would be minimal on Black students. The plaintiffs did not argue that the Black students would receive an inferior education by attending the

130 Rickford, We Are An African People, 24.
134 “Lawsuit filed on Ravenswood closing,” San Mateo Times.
other high schools;\(^{136}\) they argued that students would be negatively impacted by losing the opportunity to attend a neighborhood school as their peers did. This argument targeted the assumption that integration would equalize educational opportunity for all students. Ware also argued that the district eroded the success of the Ravenswood desegregation program by lifting the mandatory enrollment ceiling.\(^{137}\)

District officials, including Chaffey, argued that since 900 Black students had already transferred from Ravenswood to other schools in the district (with 375 students still attending Ravenswood), reassigning the remaining 300 students to three high schools was the least burdensome option. Marion McDowell, Chaffey’s administrative assistant, argued in her testimony that if Carlmont (the other popular candidate for closure) was closed, 300 students or more would have to be bused to Ravenswood alone.\(^{138}\) Since so many students chose to leave Ravenswood, the district reiterated that it would be less impactful to re-assign the remaining students at Ravenswood.

On February 10, Conti ruled that the district was not in violation of the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.\(^{139}\) First, he wrote that no evidence showed that the district had taken a discriminatory decision in closing Ravenswood and the defendants provided extensive evidence to show that their decision depended on “the District’s financial problems, enrollment considerations, cost savings, and impact on students throughout the district” rather than racial factors (for example, a fear of community resistance if white students were bused to Ravenswood). Conti also found that because the district did not act in a manner that was “constitutionally suspect,” the case could not be subjected to the “most rigid scrutiny.” Conti argued that Ravenswood’s closure would integrate the district and ensure that Ravenswood students could receive robust educations at the other schools; his argument did not reflect the sentiments of Ravenswood students and families.

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who prioritized the continued operation and improvement of academics at Ravenswood.

With the closure of Ravenswood, the district could finally integrate its schools. After 1976, students who transferred to Ravenswood returned to their original high schools. Students in East Palo Alto attended Woodside and Carlmont, located 9 and 12 miles from the city respectively.\(^\text{140}\) Students in Belle Haven attended Menlo-Atherton High, the closest high school to the East Bayshore area. Officials lauded that the district could declare itself conclusively integrated. John Gomez, the district’s director of human relations, told the district Human Relations Commission that the school would start in September 1976 with “racial balance in a way that did not exist before.” The district projected that because of Ravenswood’s closure, each school would maintain a minority enrollment between 18 and 28 percent.

However, metrics for student success in the years after 1976 did not signal major improvements in the educational experience for Black students. In the 1978-1979 school year, Black students had the lowest pass rates in math, reading, and writing proficiency exams, they were suspended and referred to alternative schools at disproportionately higher rates, and they dropped out more often than other students.\(^\text{141}\) The district’s Human Relations Evaluation Commission reported similar disparities in dropout and suspension rates in 1981; a shocking 25 percent of Black students dropped out of Carlmont during the 1980-1981 school year.\(^\text{142}\) The integrated educational experience did not benefit Black students as the task force had hoped.

**Conclusion**

The Ravenswood case remains a clear example of how school attendance and school district boundaries can assume salient political characteristics. By rescinding the mandatory transfer requirement in 1971, the district enforced that their attendance boundaries were only surmountable through choice. The district’s actions strengthened the drive among leaders in East Palo Alto to strengthen institutions that would grant them an increased level of


\(^\text{141}\) Lowe, “Ravenswood High School,” 369.

\(^\text{142}\) Lowe, “Ravenswood High School,” 369.
local control over affairs at Ravenswood. Community leaders saw the need to change Ravenswood’s demographic composition to ensure racial balance in the other district schools as insufficient to guarantee an equal education for Ravenswood students. When integrated schools failed to educate their children or provide safe learning environments, some opted for independent schooling. While residential segregation complicated the district’s efforts to integrate their schools, it also led to institutions that, in composition and ideas, represented the predominantly Black East Bayshore student community in a district that often did not recognize their priorities.

Today, there is no traditional public high school in the East Bayshore community. The Ravenswood campus was demolished in 1996 for a city development. The district ended busing in 2014, so all students in the East Bayshore community who attend public school, and choose not to transfer to other high schools through the district’s open enrollment plan, now attend Menlo-Atherton High School. The Nairobi Schools remained bastions of community control until funding difficulties led to their closures in 1984. Two high schools now operate in East Palo Alto. East Palo Alto Academy is a public charter high school and Eastside College Preparatory is a private high school which, on its website, cites the academic struggles that Black students faced after Ravenswood’s closure as a catalyst for its founding. New schools that claim deep connections to the community have taken root.

This history introduces the question of what alternative paths the district and the East Palo Alto community could have pursued. Lowe argued that the district could have taken decisive action by closing Ravenswood earlier, shifting boundaries to ensure racial balance, or providing Ravenswood earlier with the resources it received in 1971 to attract voluntary transfer students. He stated that Black community members saw academic performance as the standard of educational justice rather than racial balance. I agree with Lowe’s assessment and would further argue that the

community control movement in East Palo Alto was a movement that sought to defy the struggles that Black students faced in the public school system. The district’s efforts to integrate Ravenswood and their other schools was required by Brown and federal agencies tasked with enforcing Brown’s mandate; it would be too convenient to state that the district could have maintained racially segregated schools. However, the district should have not placed the burden of desegregation so squarely on the shoulders of the Ravenswood community by closing the school campus. The district stated that Ravenswood’s closure would have the least impact because so many students from the attendance zone had transferred to different schools, but the district overlooked the particular significance of closing the only school with a majority-Black student body under their control. They overlooked that members of the Ravenswood community, already geographically and politically marginalized, began to see integration as an unnecessary condition for high-quality education. Leaders of the community control movement, in East Palo Alto and other localities, championed reforms and institutions that prioritized excellent education for their children within and beyond the public school system. For them and other community control advocates, the fight for equal education did not stop with school integration.
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Sweeping Back the Flood

The Hetch Hetchy Controversy and the Role of Gender Within the Conservation Versus Preservation Debate

H.J. Lloyd-Hughes

I. Introduction

In 1908, proposals to build a 212-foot concrete dam and flood the Hetch Hetchy Valley of Yosemite National Park sparked a debate that galvanized the nation. It was, and remains, a defining moment in American environmental history. The demands for damming Hetch Hetchy came from the City of San Francisco, which needed a new municipal water source to sustain a growing population. Between 1908 and 1913, a fierce debate ensued between the dam’s “conservationist” proponents, who believed that nature should be utilised in a sustainable fashion, and its “preservationist” opponents, who sought to protect wilderness and the beauty of the valley in its natural state. Although the role of gender within this history is not immediately clear, this essay seeks to expose just how ubiquitous gender was as a socio-political force within the Hetch Hetchy debate.

In order to establish the ways in which the Hetch Hetchy debate defined and reinforced binary conceptions of gender, this essay will first review the existing literature and historiography surrounding the Controversy and lay the groundwork for my argument relating to the importance of gender within this history. Secondly, this paper will consider relevant context regarding sex and gender to show that the Hetch Hetchy debate emerged at a point of heightened gender tumult and masculine insecurity. This unique point of gender uncertainty heavily influenced the conservation-preservation debate insofar that it embodied the gender binary through masculinizing conservationists and effeminizing preservationists. In respect of women, they also played a significant role within the debate, yet were subjected to less gendered scrutiny and could align more freely with either preservationism or conservationism. Despite this limited freedom, women’s roles within the debate subsequently helped to reinforce heteronormative separation within environmental reform by rooting, and justifying, involvement within traditional gender
norms. Gender, therefore, played a complex role within the Hetch Hetchy debate. On the one hand, it presented an opportunity for women to become politically engaged in questions of environmentalism, but on the other hand, it ultimately reinforced traditional gender norms through the binary application of gender to masculinize conservationists and effeminize preservationists.

The historiography surrounding Hetch Hetchy has been well established and is framed by the conservation-preservation debate. Gabriela Phend attests to the importance of this conservation-preservation framing in her master’s thesis on gendered rhetoric within the debate. She proposes three chronological stages to Hetch Hetchy’s gendered historiography. The first and earliest histories produced, unsurprisingly, contain very little consideration of gender. Instead, these histories outline the debate and position themselves within it through asserting personal bias. In totalizing the debate, these histories align to one side of the preservation versus conservation debate and disregard or devalue the other. 147 This kind of reductive history includes Roderick Nash’s chapter on the Hetch Hetchy Controversy in *Wilderness and the American Mind* (1967), labelled the “standard interpretation” by environmental historian Adam Rome. 148 Despite Nash’s interpretation being regarded as standard, it too is laden with historiographical bias, for he dichotomizes the Hetch Hetchy debate into ‘civilization versus wilderness,’ purporting that conservationist efforts were beneficial to the wider reform agenda and to the greater good of Progressive environmentalism.

The second set of historical writing is primarily political and examines the rhetoric simulated by Hetch Hetchy. 149 These histories, which are focused on politicized rhetoric, begin to incorporate considerations of women but from a women’s history perspective. They place women within the narrative of the Hetch Hetchy debate but contain little gender analysis, alternately focusing on key female

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figures.\textsuperscript{150} Carolyn Merchant’s \textit{Earthcare} (1995) testifies to this focus; it locates prominent women within the debate and establishes their significant influence “in the conservation of natural resources and the preservation of scenic landscapes.”\textsuperscript{151} Emphasizing the role of women within the debate is no grounds upon which to discredit Merchant’s work, but wider gender analyses require broader discussion of women’s involvement. These prolific individuals, such as Harriet Monroe, need to be grounded within the larger landscape of gender norms and societal expectations at the beginning of the 20th century. This second, political, “women’s history”, stage of Hetch Hetchy’s gendered historiography risks treating gender as an omittable appendix and not as part of its main body.

The most recent phase of Hetch Hetchy’s historiography has emerged in accordance with the evolution of gender history, producing revisionist histories which highlight the axis of gender within the debate.\textsuperscript{152} This evolution of gender history can be seen in Adam Rome’s \textit{Political Hermaphrodites}, which provides integrated gender analysis and recognizes that “historians have failed to realize that the [Hetch Hetchy] controversy also brought more attention to the charged issue of gender.”\textsuperscript{153} Rome’s discussion of gender includes concepts of masculinity, an unjustifiably absent avenue of gender analysis within the historiography. His overall argument is that environmental reform during the early twentieth century was shaped by men in political spheres wanting to protect and assert their masculinity. Such discussion shows an appreciation of the fundamental importance of gender, but also lacks analysis of women and effeminized men, such as John Muir. In this paper, then, I hope to contribute to this developing historical narrative by furthering gender analysis of the conservation-preservation debate that surrounded the Hetch Hetchy Controversy.

Furthermore, for all her appreciation of historiography, Phend overlooks the compelling work in Michael L. Smith’s \textit{Pacific Visions}, cited by Robert Righter as the “most insightful analysis of the

\textsuperscript{150} Phend, ‘Gendered and Racial Nostalgia’, p.6.
\textsuperscript{152} Phend, ‘Gendered and Racial Nostalgia’, p.6.
\textsuperscript{153} Rome, ‘Political Hermaphrodites’, p.450.
genderization of the Hetch Hetchy conflict”. Smith crucially recognizes how masculinity and femininity operated concurrently and exposes how gender could be applied changeably to both reinforce and undermine political arguments. This is a central component of this paper as I hope to add nuance to the retelling of environmental history by avoiding that which Richard White says has made environmental history “an endless rediscovery that humans have made nature female.” Heeding this, we must uncover women’s voices without essentializing them — hearing them within the main history of the Hetch Hetchy Controversy and not as an add-on. It will be posited, then, that gender had no singular role within the debate and was, in fact, omnipresent. Through recognizing this, analysis can go beyond dichotomous histories of Hetch Hetchy that have overlooked one of the most central divisions of all—binary conceptions of gender.

II. Feminism and the Frontier

The Hetch Hetchy Controversy was precipitated by a period of profound discord around gender and sexual ideology. This period was one of mounting feminism and female suffrage. Feminism has a clear relationship with female activism in the Hetch Hetchy conflict. Feminists dedicated themselves to environmental activism because environmental activism was an arena within which, unlike politics and business, women could be included. Despite women’s inclusion, we must recognize that, generally speaking, suffragists and female activists held a level of privilege that allowed them to challenge patriarchal power in the first place; they were largely, though not exclusively, white and middle-class.

When the Hetch Hetchy Dam question arose, feminists challenged an unequal gender hierarchy rooted in the history of Victorian “separate spheres.” Alexis de Tocqueville, writing in 1835, observed separate spheres doctrine within American identity,

stating “In no country has such constant care been taken as in America to trace two clearly distinct lines of action for the two sexes.”  
By the early twentieth century these separate spheres were becoming less sharply defined. Feminists recognized that separation and equality were antonymous. Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz paints a wider picture of prevailing division in relation to sexuality, arguing that various competing sexual cultures perpetuated deep divisions over sexuality across the nineteenth and into the twentieth century. Therefore, the Hetch Hetchy debate occurred when Victorianism’s norms were waning and there was growing disagreement over gender and sexual separate sphere ideology. Subsequently, the conservation-preservation was so fierce, and gendered, because it aimed to counter the level of fluidity afforded by this ambiguity by reaffirming traditional, heteronormative, gender relationships within environmentalism.

A second central piece of context came with the 1890 census, which announced the end of the frontier and marked a ‘crisis of masculinity’ for middle-class men. In 1893, Frederick Jackson Turner’s Frontier Thesis mourned the frontier’s closure and with it, the end of the first chapter of American history. It concluded that “at the end of a hundred years of life under the Constitution, the frontier has gone.” Turnerian ideology accentuated the role of the frontier

160 Victorianism here is used to mean a ‘Victorian culture’, approximately periodised by the reign of Queen Victoria (1837-1901). Gendered relations under Victorian doctrine were defined by separate spheres, i.e. men and women were biologically different and as such were socio-culturally prescribed different responsibilities and abided by distinct norms. This Victorian culture enjoyed a transatlantic influence due to the close economic and cultural ties between the U.S. and Britain. However, a key distinction to draw is that middle-class American Victorians, unlike those in Britain, did not have the cultural norms of an aristocratic class to contend meaning that, in many ways, Victorianism in America was less fettered and livelier.
as a delineation of American exceptionalism, echoing that of Tocqueville. Turner’s treatment of the frontier as preeminent to America’s identity also instilled ideals of masculinity that, along with the West, were heavily mythicized. In other words, even though Turner’s vision of the West was heavily problematic, colonial, and chauvinistic, such ideology was still heavily influential in idealizing the West as an untamable expanse of rugged wilderness—a cornucopia of masculine values. As William Deverell articulates, “White, Anglo-Saxon, cowboy and cavalryman, gunfighter and lawman, town builder and banker: the West was heroic, grand, tough, and ruggedly masculine.”

Yet the turn of the century saw, in relation to the West, a “Manifested Destiny”. The rugged West had been ‘civilized’, something which heavily undermined its ability to masculinize. As Michael Kimmel posits, it had become “safely unthreatening.” Proposals like O’Shaughnessy Dam in Hetch Hetchy epitomized the ‘civilization’ of the West. The end of the frontier made masculinity for middle-class men harder to prove, especially in an emerging, “feminized”, consumer culture. The solution, as will be seen, was the very masculinization of this “civilization” through utilitarianism. A masculinization that reinforced gender inequality.

III. Male Preservationism: Effeminization and the Loss of Rugged Manhood

The Hetch Hetchy Controversy encouraged heteronormative and hierarchical gender relations within environmentalism by effeminizing male preservationists. The preservationist cause was binarized as the feminine sphere of the debate. Perhaps the best illustration of this is Figure 1, a cartoon published in the San Francisco Call in 1909. It portrays preservationist figurehead, John Muir, as a domestic housewife dressed in a long-hemmed dress, apron, frilled collar, and flowery hat. He is using a broom to frantically, but frivolously, sweep back the “Hetch Hetchy Project”, depicted as a

forceful flood of progress. By mockingly effeminizing Muir, showing him as a woman and one performing a clearly domestic act, the 1909 cartoon contributed to a discourse of gendered rhetoric that reinforced traditional and inequitable gender relationships. This helped reaffirm societal division on the basis of the gender binary because as Rome argued, “some issues were harder to describe in masculine terms’ which caused ‘gender politics [to] narrow[ed] the reform agenda.” The conflation of preservationism with femininity meant that men, like Muir, crossed the gender line by advocating for preservation over conservation. Thus, gender was used to delegitimize preservationism and promoted gender inequality through this coalescence of femininity with inferiority.

Figure 1. “Sweeping Back the Flood”, The San Francisco Call, December 13, 1909.


The use of gender as a force through which to effeminize, and delegitimize, preservationists within local public discourse is further supported by an article published in the San Francisco Call in 1913 which said “If John Muir were not so old and had not shown such single purposed devotion to nature in his writings he would deserve to be spanked, no more, no less.”¹⁶⁷ This metaphorical “spanking” has deeply gendered connotations. Muir was figuratively degraded to that of a deviant child in need of discipline through a disgracing and humiliating act of physical violence. The vision of Muir being “spanked” not only infantilized him but also ridiculed him as the disciplined rather than the disciplinarian. In other words, Muir is rid of his masculinity, he is mocked for losing his power as a man by going against the gender hierarchy imbued by patriarchy. Though portraying him in this way, Muir is cast as submissive, weak and child-like. Though this is not an explicit form of feminization (though clear emasculation), feminist theory has long traced the infantilization of women as a way of disempowering, pacifying and even blurring them into the proverbial “women and children”.¹⁶⁸ Therefore, through infantilizing Muir, his manhood is further removed, clearly showing how gender, through means of feminization and emasculation, framed public discourse around the Hetch Hetchy Controversy. Lampooning Muir in this way also normalized this repudiation of challenges to gender hierarchies within environmental reform and helped draw a clearer gender line premised on the capitulation of women’s power.

Chief City Engineer Marsden Manson was vital to the generation of much of the damaging gendered rhetoric that effeminized preservationists. Manson attacked Muir by degrading his sanctification of the Hetch Hetchy Valley as fruitless sentimentalism. Manson, writing in 1909 for the California Weekly, launched a verbal

attack on the flowery language of aestheticism used by Muir. He dismissed preservationists as “admirers of verbal lingerie and frills” and made out they were blinded by Muir’s description of “‘veils, ‘fibres’, ‘downy feathers’, ‘fabrics’, ‘textures’, ‘patterns’, ‘embroideries’, ‘tissues’, ‘plumes’ [and] ‘iris ed robes.’” It is irrefutable that language used in Muir’s descriptions was semantically feminine, and stemmed from an understanding of masculinity that allowed for a level of androgyny.

Muir, however, was not alone in having a less binary view of gender and nature. For example, Edward Bigelow’s chapter entitled “Sissies and Tomboys” in The Spirit of Nature Study questioned gender norms in relation to nature. For instance, Bigelow questioned whether there was “any reason why a boy should not pick flowers and give a bouquet to a boy?... Any reason why he shouldn't see and exclaim over the beauties of a landscape as enthusiastically as a girl?” Manson’s gendered charge against Muir and preservationism left little room for Bigelow’s view of less defined gender norms. This is verified in Manson’s private correspondence where he made the injurious, homophobic, generalization that the preservationist cause consisted of “short-haired women and long-haired men.” The denunciation of Muir’s feminine language fueled a wider gendered discourse of division, one that fortified distinct norms based on female oppression—local newspapers cast the male figurehead of preservationism as gender traitor. These sources show how Muir was attacked on the basis of gender; the derision of his masculinity delegitimized him and, by extension, the preservationist cause at large.

The abasement of male preservationists is further supported through Figure 2 in that Muir’s masculinity once again reviled, once

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again centralizing the role of gender within this history. The provenance of this cartoon, drawn by artist Chopin circa 1913, is largely unknown. It shows a triumphant spectacle after the passage of the Hetch Hetchy Bill in 1913. The San Francisco conservationists are enjoying a joyride on a Hetch Hetchy water tank. In the background, Chief O’Shaughnessy paints a watercolor of a nature lover, aptly depicting them as a “Quince”—a sharp, sour fruit used for preservation. Once again, we see the humiliation of John Muir who is portrayed as Napoleon, a figure also heavily emasculated and commonly ridiculed for his failures. Muir lays slouched with a bulging gut and “underbrush” beard, defeated at the battle of Hetch Hetchy, his own “Water-loo”. This Napoleon-Muir is a failed man, drooped and unkempt, his “Ancient Order of Nature Fakirs” stands for nothing to these Progressive men on their successful conquest for utilitarianism. Behind him is a male “nature lover”, again heavily resembling Muir, being stretchered away by the “First Aid Corps removing the injured” with a “sad case of water on the brain”. This suggests that to be like Muir, a male nature lover, was to be mentally deficient or ill.

Though this cartoon’s provenance is undisclosed, it still speaks volumes to contemporary attitudes, insofar that it was commonplace within public discourse to delegitimize the efforts of male preservationists by attacking their authority on the basis of manhood (or lack thereof). This cartoon, through likening Muir to a disheveled Napoleon-figure and a mentally unfit nature lover, portrays not only preservationist failure but a failure rooted in a gendered confusion. Muir and preservationist men aligned with the ‘wrong side’ of the debate as prescribed by their gender. There is also an air of patronization to this degrading representation, as if to say it is no surprise that these preservationist gender traitors lost out to new, modern men of conservationism. Figure 2 further illuminates how gender was omnipresent within public discourse as a social force through which ationism would come to, completely wrote out women. preservationists were humiliated and disempowered. This source also, just as conservationism would come to, completely wrote out women.
IV. Male Conservationism: Masculinization and a New Utilitarian Manhood

The Hetch Hetchy Controversy imposed binary, heteronormative gender relations by masculinizing conservationist men. In other words, conservationism could be an extension of masculinity. This was achieved through monopolising the language of science and engineering. This is put well by Rome who says, “[conservationists] went out of their way to avoid the rhetoric used by women. They sought to sound rational, practical and — above all — unsentimental.” 176 Gifford Pinchot, pictured on the right in Figure 3, was a central individual in the Hetch Hetchy dispute as a frontman for conservationism. 177 He was appointed the first Chief of the United States Forest Service in 1905 by close acquaintance, President Theodore Roosevelt. John Muir was also “Pinchot’s friend and mentor”, 178 though the Hetch Hetchy dispute became so heated that it ruined their friendship, Pinchot was pitted against Muir and gender had a large part to play. The masculinization of conservationists is clear when contrasting conservationist Pinchot’s portrayals, with preservationist Muir’s ignominy.

Pinchot was in many ways the apogee of utilitarian manhood. Figure 4 is a portrait of him published in the September 2nd (1909) edition of the *San Francisco Call*.\(^{179}\) He is portrayed as a distinguished gentleman; white shirt, black bowtie, groomed moustache, prominent jawline and pointed gaze. Another article, from the *Sun* in 1913, said that “there is no more ardent and honorable conservationist than Mr. Gifford Pinchot.”\(^{180}\) Pinchot and conservation are clearly masculinised and legitimised;\(^{181}\) this is a


\(^{181}\) Phend, “Gendered and Racial Nostalgia”, p.60.
polar opposite to how Muir was represented. The contrast in public representation between Muir and Pinchot demonstrates how the debate shaped the nature of environmental reform: Pinchot versus Muir, conservation versus preservation, masculine versus feminine. There is a clear gendered definition that upheld the binarization of masculine and feminine. Such a binary worked to impose heteronormative standards that idealized and legitimised masculinity through distancing and detaching it from femininity, simultaneously invalidating and disempowering the feminine in the process. As such, preservationist men, such as John Muir, were abnormal gender apostates whereas conservationists like Gifford Pinchot were portrayed as prudent and presentable gentlemen. And, unsurprisingly, the masculine utilitarian conservationists played to this gendered affirmation.

Figure 4. "Pinchot Favors City's Fight for Pure Water", The San Francisco Call, September 2, 1909.

The idea that conservationists could play to its capacity to masculinise is clearly shown through none other than Teddy Roosevelt. In 1903 Muir and Roosevelt famously undertook a three-night camping trip in Yosemite Valley where the photograph in
Figure 5 was taken. The trip, and its symbolism, has been well-documented by author historians who credit it as a major moment in bringing about national policy in favour of preservation. However, the gendered dynamics of Muir’s and Roosevelt’s relationship, and their differing views over Hetch Hetchy, remain largely overlooked.

Figure 5. Roosevelt (left) and Muir (right) on Glacier Point, Yosemite Valley, 1903.

Muir wrote to Roosevelt multiple times begging him to protect Hetch Hetchy. In one letter, Muir attempted to invoke Roosevelt’s sentimental side by inviting him to imagine himself “in Hetch Hetchy on a sunny day in June standing waist-deep in grass and flowers while the great pines sway dreamily.” However, despite Muir’s compelling efforts, Roosevelt wrote back a week later saying, “I have been in the disagreeable position of seeming to interfere with

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the development of the State for the sake of keeping a valley, which apparently hardly anyone wanted to have kept, under national control.”  

This illustrates Roosevelt’s obligation to the people as a politician, seeing the needs of San Francisco as more important than preserving Hetch Hetchy Valley. However, it can also be analysed through a gendered lens in that Roosevelt sided with conservation over preservation as a way to shore-up his heavily masculine image. Roosevelt was renowned for performing masculinity in a hyper-macho and zealously virile sense. This has been largely established in both his domestic reform and imperial policy. He directly endorsed Turner’s thesis and the West’s exceptional ability to masculinize, with his own vision of masculinity that fetishized a level of primitivity and was problematically grounded in concepts of white colonization.

However, his ultimate approval in damming of Hetch Hetchy gets at a central tenet of his rugged masculine ideal: the ability to ‘tame’ and ‘civilise’ nature. Roosevelt thought that man should enjoy the revitalising and masculinising benefits of untamed wilderness but ultimately place himself above its primitivity through his ability to conquer and utilise it. This vision of masculinity is also concordant with sports like hunting and mountain climbing which also inculcated dominance over a natural landscape. This point is underscored by Shrepfer who says Roosevelt believed that “the primary criteria of civilization had been its “ability to conquer the wilderness and convert it to economic use.” The appreciation but ultimate exploitation of nature marks a definitively conservationist

185 Theodore Roosevelt to John Muir, September 16th, 1907, Online Archive of California <https://oac.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/kt4r29r64h/?order=3&brand=oac4>.


187 It must be noted that these sports were not exclusively male, see Susan R. Schrepfer, Nature’s Altars: Mountains, Gender and American Environmentalism (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2005), however within the Progressive Era women faced increased pressure to quit more extreme outdoor pursuits as they defined a masculine sublime, see Nancy C. Unger, Beyond Nature’s Housekeepers: American Women in Environmental History (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), p.101.

188 Susan R. Schrepfer, Nature’s Altars, p.159.
view that drove Roosevelt to excoriate men like Muir who wrote of the wilderness sentimentally and submissively. Rome states, Roosevelt “fronted an attack on men who wrote sentimentally… calling them “nature fakers.” The charge of nature-fakery was gender specific, with Roosevelt’s hall of shame including only men.”189 This attack helped to construct Roosevelt’s hypermasculine persona and gave huge weight to the conservationist ethic as being the masculine binary of the debate. 190 Conservationists were masculine providers, supplying San Francisco with a necessity to survive but they did so in a scientific and modern way, constructing a huge feat of human engineering that dominated the landscape of Hetch Hetchy Valley.

V. Women and Environmentalism: Legitimation through Traditional Femininity

Women, who were heavily involved in the Hetch Hetchy debate, could be both preservationists and conservationists without facing the same degree of gendered criticism. The reason for this relative paucity of reproof is societal, for women under the patriarchy were afforded less authority and significance and, by extension, were considered less of an powerful presence within environmental reform. In other words, heteronormativity inspired women to justify their position as either conservationist or preservationist as a natural expansion of their femininity which was damaging as it reaffirmed the binarization gender and applied traditional gender norms that perpetuated the marginalization of women.

Due to women’s marginalization allowing for a level of fluidity, insofar that they could align with either preservationism or conservationism, the divide can be seen instead as largely regional versus national. Though preservationism was defined as the ‘female’ side as the debate, women in and around the San Francisco Bay Area, unsurprisingly, advocated the dam’s construction out of demand for a clean water supply. Local female proponents, therefore, were impelled to adopt a distinctly feminine presence as to not undermine the prized masculinity of men who inhabited the ‘male’ side of conservationism.

190 Nancy C. Unger, Beyond Nature’s Housekeepers, p.100.
This relationship between women and conservationism is best articulated through the American Forestry Association (AFA), which was a beacon of what conservationism stood for: efficient, scientific and utilitarian. To begin with, the AFA advocated women’s contribution to the organisation and published women’s work in the association’s journal.\(^{191}\) However, from the early 1910s, the AFA decided it would be detrimental to their cause to continue cooperation with women. Rome cites the editors’ revilement of women when they said that “Much harm has been done in the course... of all branches of conservation, by immature thought arising from insufficient knowledge.”\(^ {192}\) At the time of Hetch Hetchy, forestry and conservation was undergoing a Progressive transformation that made it more specialised and scientific but also excluded women in the process.\(^ {193}\) Both Rome and Merchant attribute, in part, the AFA’s ostracization of women to the divisiveness of Hetch Hetchy, which left room for cross-gender coalition.\(^ {194}\)

Where women did align with male conservationists, they were confined to doing so in purely feminine ways that upheld traditional gender spheres. This is shown through the National Conservation Congresses which began in 1908 and saw women apply their conservation ideology through, what Merchant labels, a “trilogy of slogans—conservation of womanhood, the home, and the child.”\(^ {195}\)

The articulation of women’s presence within conservationism, at a local level, was heavily wrought up in concepts of traditional femininity that justified their role within environmental reform by prescribing traditional gender roles. This point is made in relation to Figure 7, a cartoon published in the \textit{San Francisco Call} on November 11\textsuperscript{th}, 1908, which depicts a woman held captive by the pipes of “exorbitant rates”\(^ {196}\). The pipes have been cast by a

\(^{191}\) Rome, ‘Political Hermaphrodites’, p.450.
\(^{192}\) Rome, ‘Political Hermaphrodites’, p.450.
\(^{193}\) Merchant, \textit{Earthcare}, p.131.
monstrous, beast-like, figure with copious amounts of hair and the monster holds a huge water bill to which the woman turns her head. This ‘damsel in distress’ holds a face of disgust and is “San Francisco”, the beast holds a trident underarm and is “Spring Valley Water Co.”. The Spring Valley Water Company is explicitly demonized, largely reflecting common-held contemporary feelings: the company held a monopoly over water rights and provision for San Francisco and was wrought with corruption.

Figure 7. “Look at Your Water Bill and Vote for Hetch Hetchy”, *The San Francisco Call*, November 11, 1908.

The article from which this cartoon is taken, explicitly presents women’s support for Hetch Hetchy dam in terms of maternal duty. It concludes; “LOOK AT YOUR WATER BILL, ‘collected under injunction’ and vote for San Francisco; vote to free yourselves from the clutches of the most impudent corporate thief in all America.

Vote for your homes and your children. Vote for Hetch Hetchy.”

This is unequivocal in its reinvigoration of traditional gender norms; women are right to oppose submission when their “homes and children” are at stake. It, once again, places their role in environmental reform within the maternal and domestic.

Further afield, women mainly advocated preservation. Preservationism was seen in many ways as the ‘natural’ position for women: sentimental, sympathetic and aesthetic. Women preservationists also called on their femininity, but there was less pressure to perform gender as opposed to female conservationists. Women could write affectionately and sentimentally about nature without facing the same castigation preservationist men were subject to. For example, Harriet Monroe, editor of *Poetry Magazine* and fervent preservationist, eloquently described Hetch Hetchy as “a garden of paradise” to the Senate hearing on November 13th, 1913. Monroe’s testimony represented five-hundred members of the Chicago Geographical Society and five-thousand members of the Saturday Walking Club. The role women’s clubs played in petitioning politicians to oppose the dam was immense. They were an efficacious political vehicle and strong preservationist ally. Hetch Hetchy drew the attention of 150 women’s clubs across the nation who petitioned the cause. Central to this was the role of the General Federation of Women’s Clubs, whose membership amounted to some 800,000 women who defended Hetch Hetchy. However, women’s clubs’ defence of Hetch Hetchy was largely articulated through traditional, and damaging, gendered assumptions.

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Female preservationists deepened the gender binary in relation to environmental reform by casting themselves as a counter to commercialism. Preservationists saw proponents of Hetch Hetchy as being plagued by capitalist interests. John Muir famously declared, “These temple destroyers, devotees of ravaging commercialism, seem to have a perfect contempt for Nature, and, instead of lifting their eyes to the God of the mountains, lift them to the Almighty Dollar. Dam Hetch Hetchy!”  

The spheres of unscrupulous business practice and profit were definitively masculine. Due to this, preservationist women said it fell to them to consider the future generations of the nation and wanted to save Hetch Hetchy as a beautiful natural playground for all. As Merchant puts it, “Man the moneymaker had left it to woman the moneysaver to preserve natural resources.” Mrs. Lydia Adams-Williams, who was a writer and lecturer on conservation, speaks to this in her article, “Conservation— Woman’s Work,” published in Forestry and Irrigation in 1908. She argued, “in great measure, will it fall to women, in her power to educate public sentiment, to save from rapacious waste and complete exhaustion the resources upon which depend the welfare of home, the children and the children’s children.” Adams-Williams represents a prevalent view, that preservationism came under a national concern for the provision of future generations due to male overindulgence in unregulated utilitarianism.

Opposition to the expansion of commercialism, by means of justification for female preservationism, is also evidenced by Mrs. Frank D. Lyon, President of the Civic Club of Binghamton, whose petition in the Congressional Record condemned “the irreparable loss threatened by the invasion of commercialism by the building of

a reservoir in the beautiful Hetch Hetchy.” 205  The Massachusetts State Federation of Women’s Clubs, representing 262 clubs, also passed a unanimous resolution in opposition of Hetch Hetchy arguing for the health benefits of Hetch Hetchy as a camping ground and residing to “defeat any bill which has for its object any such invasion of Hetch Hetchy... to any private or corporate enterprise.” 206 Therefore, it is obvious that there was a heavy focus on opposing commercialism and its evils in a way that centralised traditionally feminine concerns for the public health of future generations.

Women, then, even as opponents of the dam, are shown as national “municipal housekeepers” whose duty it was to consider the health of the country and its children. Thus, women engaged in the preservation of Hetch Hetchy also helped reimpose the gender binary by opposing the dam through means of traditional femininity that pushed them away from spheres of business and back into maternalism.

VI. Conclusion
In 1914 the construction of O’Shaughnessy Dam in Hetch Hetchy commenced. The Controversy is often spun whiggishly—a victory through defeat for environmentalism that set up a government agency for national parks in the Department of the Interior after the passage of the National Parks Act of 1916. However, the same cannot be said for gender relations. The Hetch Hetchy Controversy deeply divided environmental reform by imposing the gender binary, polarising conservationism as masculine and preservationism as feminine.

During a period of intense gender uncertainty, due to both mounting feminism and the closing of the frontier, the conservation-


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preservation debate worked to stabilise gender relationships within environmentalism by reimposing traditional separate-sphere ideology along a heteronormative binary. Hetch Hetchy created more concrete gender roles through effeminizing and emasculating preservationist men like John Muir whilst, on the other hand, affirming the masculinity of preservationists, like Gifford Pinchot, and their scientific, as opposed to sentimental, language.

Women faced less harsh gendered criticism and could align more freely with either conservationism or preservationism. Women’s positions were largely dictated geographically with conservationism dominating local attitudes and preservationism national ones. Despite these differences, however, women’s alignment with both conservationism and preservationism also upheld traditional female values—motherhood, health and concern for future generations. Women engaged in environmentalism, but their presence was articulated in a distinctly feminine way and sustained a patriarchal hierarchy.

O’Shaughnessy Dam symbolises a pinnacle of Progressive engineering, but the heavily gendered debate which ensued, was ultimately regressive. In an era of progress, we see traditional dynamics of patriarchal power strengthened; the authority of Progressive men was validated by conservation’s distinction from preservation. Polarising masculinity and femininity in this way deepened the gender binary, along with its inequities. It has been shown that gender played no singular role in the Hetch Hetchy debate, it was omnipresent in its capacity to both elevate and discriminate, justify and nullify. Ultimately, then, Hetch Hetchy Dam not only curbed the flowing waters of the Tuolumne River, but it also caused a debate which reinforced a concrete gender divide within environmentalism. Where San Francisco secured a new water source, environmental reform was left with little fluidity.
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"Marx Plus Qin Shi Huang"

*China’s Anti-Confucian, Pro-Legalist Movement in the 1970s*

Deshi Zhang

**Introduction:**

On August 5th, 1973, Chairman Mao Zedong of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) read his new poem “On ‘Feudal System’ – To Mr. Guo” to his wife Jiang Qing:

Friend, I advise you stop criticizing Qin Shi Huang

劝君少骂秦始皇

The Burning of Books and Burying of Scholars should be re-evaluated

焚坑事业要商量

Qin’s first emperor has been long dead, but his legacy remains

祖龙魂死秦犹在

And despite its reputation, Confucius’ philosophy is rubbish

孔学名高实秕糠

Qin’s political system lasted for hundreds of generations

百代都行秦政法

Your *Ten Critiques* are not good essays

十批不是好文章

Reread Liu Zongyuan’s ‘Feudal System’

熟读唐人《封建论》

Don’t retreat from Liu to the King Wen of Zhou

莫从子厚返文王

The poem, as its title suggested, was addressed to Guo Moruo, a senior intellectual within the Chinese Communist Party
(CCP). Guo had published his essay collection, *Ten Critiques*, back in 1945, when the Nationalist Party was still in control of China. In that book, Guo lashed out against the despotism of Qin Shi Huang and the Legalists, which he contrasted with the humanitarianism of Confucius. Qin Shi Huang had long been the quintessential symbol of despotism, largely due to his tyrannical act of “Burning of Books and Burying of Scholars”. Indeed, according to Guo’s later self-defense, the real target of his attack on Qin Shi Huang was Chiang Kai-shek, the head of Nationalist Party and the biggest adversary to the Chinese communists during the Chinese Civil War.¹

Despite Guo’s “good” intention, he still had to make formal apology to Chairman Mao. In early 1974, Guo wrote a response poem, titled “Spring Thunders”, in which he confessed: “The grave error of my book *Ten Critiques* is now as clear as fire”.²

It is hard to believe that Mao, who was well-versed in Chinese history, would not know the ill repute of Qin Shi Huang and thus the real intention behind Guo’s *Ten Critiques*. However, Mao still decided to criticize Guo and came to Qin Shi Huang’s defense. Later in September of 1973, Mao publicly told the visiting Egyptian Vice-president Hussein el-Shafei:

“The Chinese have always been divided into two factions, one faction who say Qin Shi Huang is good, and the other faction who say Qin Shi Huang is bad. I support Qin Shi Huang, but not Confucius.”³

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³ Shi Yun 史雲 and Li Danhui 李丹慧, *Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Shi Di 8 Juan* 中華人民共和國史第 8 卷 [History of the People’s Republic of China, Volume 8] (Hong Kong: Research Centre for Contemporary Chinese Culture, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2008), 33.
Following the instruction of Chairman Mao, ideological workers in the CCP initiated the “Criticize Lin Biao, Criticize Confucius” (批林批孔) Campaign in early 1974 and later started the “Study Legalism, Criticize Confucianism” (评法批儒) Campaign. Unlike the other political campaigns in the PRC, neither the “Criticize Lin Biao, Criticize Confucius” nor the “Study Legalism, Criticize Confucianism” Campaigns had an exact official document we can trace to as their starting point, nor an exact document pronouncing to their end. Instead, both campaigns relied heavily on propaganda articles in the party’s newspapers, such as People’s Daily, and direct orders from politburo members to operate.

English scholarship related to the Maoist anti-Confucian campaigns emerged as early as the mid-1970s. From 1974 to 1976, the Chinese government published hundreds of propaganda articles and pamphlets in English related to Lin Biao, Confucianism, and Legalism through the Foreign Languages Press and the magazine Peking Review. Initially in the mid-1970s, Western scholars found this anti-Confucian political trend quite difficult to understand. For example, historian Merle Goldman, with her sharp insights, noted that the anti-Confucian campaigns in 1974 was targeted toward the Confucian values of idealism and humanism, and thus “extremely puzzling”.

In the following decade, more scholarship on the Maoist anti-Confucian campaigns emerged. One exceptional piece was the book Critiques of Confucius in Contemporary China written by Louie Kam. In Kam’s brilliant analysis of the anti-Confucian campaigns in the 1970s, Maoist anti-Confucian campaigns were not only political, but philosophical as well.

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6 Kam Louie, Critiques of Confucius in Contemporary China (New York: St. Martin’s P., 1980).
In recent period, English scholarship on the anti-Confucian campaigns had mostly focused on the regional level. However, compared to studies about the early stage of the Cultural Revolution, English scholarship surrounding the “Criticize Lin Biao, Criticize Confucius” campaign and the “Study Legalism, Criticize Confucianism” campaign remains quite underdeveloped.

In addition to English, Chinese scholarship about the anti-Confucian campaigns during the Cultural Revolution slowly began to develop during the 1990s. The Cultural Revolution and contemporary Chinese history are still deemed sensitive or even dangerous to discuss in the PRC. Both the “Criticize Lin Biao, Criticize Confucius” Campaign and the “Study Legalism, Criticize Confucianism” Campaign were systematically propagated by the CCP across China and left a very memorable experience for nearly all Chinese people at the time. However, there is not a single Chinese scholarly book dedicated to the anti-Confucian trends in the 1970s. Regardless, there is an upward trend among Chinese scholars to view the anti-Confucian campaigns as a subject worthy of serious study: a number of master and doctoral theses have been written in the past decade that specifically dealt with those campaigns.

While they provided extremely valuable documents and fresh insights into this matter, sadly, some had to align themselves with the CCP’s official ideological guideline, confining the anti-Confucian campaigns to the framework of intra-party power struggle and shifting the responsibility of anti-Confucian campaigns from Mao to the “Gang of Four.”

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8 For example, recent landmark scholarship on the Cultural Revolution, such as Mao’s Last Revolution by Roderick MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals, The Cultural Revolution: A People’s History by Frank Dikötter, and China Under Mao: A Revolution Derailed by Andrew G. Walder, all to an extent, overlooked the significance of anti-Confucianism and state-sponsored Legalism in the late-stage Cultural Revolution.
Mao Zedong had launched the “Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution” back in 1966. In this sociopolitical movement that lasted for 10 years, “tradition” started out as something to be despised of. Radical students directed by Mao, who called themselves the “Red Guards”, went on to destroy the “Four Olds” of China (Old Customs, Old Culture, Old Habits, and Old Ideas). Interestingly, beginning in 1974, the mouthpieces of the Chinese Communist Party began to praise ancient Chinese political figures such as Shang Yang, Han Fei, and Qin Shi Huang as “progressives” while demonizing Confucius, Mencius, and their associates as “reactionaries” and “retrogressive”. In the later stage of the Cultural Revolution, we can see Mao and his allies drew a clear distinction between the “Confucian School” and the “Legalist School”. However, the fact that both schools developed during the same historical era, which is the Warring States period (476-221 BC) makes it an oversimplification to characterize the Cultural Revolution solely as “anti-tradition.”

Indeed, most academic discussions surrounding the Cultural Revolution have been about ideas such as revolution, communism, socialism, and Marxism-Leninism. It is my intention to bring Chinese Legalism into the picture, as it clearly played a significant role in the Cultural Revolution, especially in its later stage. In this paper, I would like to present several explanations on why Mao initiated the movement to attack Confucianism and promote Legalism. First, the attack on Confucianism was made to reinforce the legitimacy of the Cultural Revolution after Lin Biao had died. Second, Mao saw Chinese history as a continuing struggle between the Confucianists and the Legalists. He launched the campaign to promote Legalism in order to seal this historical case completely and simultaneously legitimate his style of governance. As a political movement, the Anti-Confucian, Pro-Legalist campaigns did not achieve its initial goals despite Mao’s own enthusiasm. The general public showed little to no interest in participating, due to their prior experience in the Cultural Revolution and the strictly top-down nature of this movement. Nevertheless, this movement did leave its mark on Chinese society and helped shape the governing ideology of today’s China.
Chapter 1

“Friend, I Advise You Stop Criticizing Qin Shi Huang”- The Fall of Lin Biao and the Start of Anti-Confucian, Pro-Legalist Campaigns in 1973

As mentioned in the introduction, the “Criticize Lin Biao, Criticize Confucius” Campaign was a starting point for the anti-Confucian, pro-Legalist trends in the late-stage Cultural Revolution. This chapter aims to provide historical context on the rise and fall of Lin Biao, the PRC’s second-in-command during the first five years of the Cultural Revolution. It also surveys the PRC’s political situation in late 1973, when the “Criticize Lin Biao, Criticize Confucius” campaign was first initiated. Since the Chinese Communist Party took power, a series of major policy mistakes made by Mao had plunged Chinese society into crisis by early 1970s. Worse still, the defection of Lin Biao during the Cultural Revolution had brought social divisions to a head, and Mao's authority was challenged. This chapter tries to argue that Mao launched the “Criticize Lin Biao, Criticize Confucius” Campaign as a proactive measure to defended the legitimacy of the Cultural Revolution.

At the midnight of September 12, 1971, a Hawker Siddeley Trident jet plane crashed near Öndörkhaan, Mongolia, killing all 9 passengers on the plane. Marshall Lin Biao, his wife Ye Qun, and his son Lin Liguo were among the 9 passengers who perished. Lin Biao, the CCP’s Vice-Chairman at the time, was one of Mao’s most important allies when the Cultural Revolution first started in 1966. Lin Biao had been a military commander since he was in his 20s, and he was credited with conquering Manchuria for the Chinese communists in 1948. During the late 1950s to the early 1960s, Lin threw his support behind Mao persistently, especially when Mao was at a vulnerable position.
During the Lushan Conference in 1959, Mao was challenged by Peng Dehuai, another prominent PRC general, over Mao’s reckless agricultural policies during the Great Leap Forward. Lin Biao was the first to defend Mao and lash out against Peng. Lin publicly accused Peng of being “an ambitionist, conspirator, and hypocrite” and declared: “Only Chairman Mao can be a great hero in China, no one else should want to be a hero.” Later in 1962, Lin came to Mao’s rescue again during the Seven Thousand Cadres Conference. In this conference, many party officials, led by Liu Shaoqi, reflected on the disastrous policy errors made during the Great Leap Forward. However, in Lin’s speech, he claimed that: “In times of difficulty, we should rely even more on and believe in the leadership of the party, the leadership of the Central Committee, and the leadership of Chairman Mao. If we listened to Chairman Mao’s words and appreciated Chairman Mao’s spirit, there would be fewer detours, and today’s difficulties would be much smaller.” Lin’s speech was the only one that received Mao’s praise during the entire Seven Thousand Cadres Conference. Later, Mao ordered Lin’s speech be printed and issued to the whole party.

For being such a reliable ally, Lin Biao was rewarded with the title “Chairman Mao’s close comrades-in-arms” (毛主席的亲密战友) since the start of the Cultural Revolution. In 1966, Lin was promoted to the position of Vice Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party. By 1969, Lin’s name was enshrined into the

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9 Great Leap Forward (1958 – 1962), was a social-economical campaign initiated by Mao to drastically boost China’s industrial and agricultural output. However, various radical polices used during the campaign, such as force-collectivization, eventually ended up causing a famine that killed at least 20 million Chinese.

10 Li Rui 李锐, Lushan Hui Yi Shi Lu: Mao Zedong Mi Shu Shou Ji 庐山会议实录: 毛泽东秘书手记 [Record of Lushan Conference: Notes from Mao Zedong’s Secretary] (Zhengzhou: Henan ren min chu ban she, 1994), 146.

11 Qian Yangli 钱庠理, Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Shi Di 5 Juan 中华人民共和国史第 5 卷 [History of the People’s Republic of China, Volume 5] (Hong Kong: Research Centre for Contemporary Chinese Culture, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2008), 123.
CCP’s constitution as “Comrade Mao Zedong’s close comrade-in-arms and successor”. However, the Mao-Lin alliance came to an end by 1971. Scholars have long since been investigating the root causes of the Mao-Lin split. We now know that some of the contributing factors include: a) Disagreement on abolishing the role of “Chairman of the People's Republic of China”, b) Lin’s conflict with Zhang Chunqiao, c) Lin’s effort to promote his son Lin Liguo in the military, and perhaps most importantly, d) Mao’s personal concern and insecurity about losing his political power to Lin Biao. It is well beyond the scope of this paper to discuss the truth behind the Mao-Lin split. However, as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, Lin Biao had decisively fallen out with Mao by midnight of September 12, 1971. Due to years of intense propaganda that portrayed Lin as Mao’s closest friend and humblest student, many people, especially soldiers in the People’s Liberation Army (PLA), simply couldn’t come to terms with the reality that Lin would betray Chairman Mao. When a representative from the central government came to a PLA platoon to report Lin’s “treasonous” crimes, one soldier cocked his rifle and threatened to shoot the “bastard who dared to smear Vice-Chairman Lin”.


Zhang Chunqiao (1917 – 2005) was one of the most prominent ideological workers and political theorists in the PRC during the Mao era. His works, such as "Abolishing Bourgeois Legal Rights", received direct praises from Mao. After Mao died, Zhang was arrested and labeled as one of the “Gang of Four” along with Mao’s wife Jiang Qing.

15 Shi and Li, History of the People’s Republic of China, Volume 8, 15.
To completely destroy Lin’s image and prove that Lin had always opposed Chairman Mao, the CCP decided to publish a document titled “Outline of Project 571” in November of 1971.\(^\text{16}\) The document is a half political manifesto and half coup d’état plan drafted by Lin Biao’s son Lin Liguo.\(^\text{17}\) It criticized many Maoist policies, including the Cultural Revolution and the “Down to the Countryside Movement”. It also denounced Maoist socialism as social-fascism. The document suggested that Mao must be removed from power through any means necessary (including assassination). For our discussion, what is crucial about the “Outline of Project 571” is that it depicted Mao as the “contemporary Qin Shi Huang” and “the biggest feudal tyrant in Chinese history who followed the way of Confucius and Mencius, borrowed the skin of Marxism-Leninism, and practiced the politics of Qin Shi Huang”.\(^\text{18}\)

Following Lin Biao’s death in Mongolia, Premier Zhou Enlai was put in charge of cleaning up the aftermath. Zhou initially portrayed Lin as an “ultra-leftist” and an “anarchist” who disrupted production and economic development in the name of revolutionary ideology. In August of 1972, Zhou gave a talk to a group of Chinese diplomats, in which Zhou emphasized the importance of “thoroughly refuting ultra-leftism”.\(^\text{19}\)

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\(^\text{16}\) “Zhonggongzhongyang Guanyu Yinfa Fanggeming Zhengbian Gangling 《571 Gongcheng Jiyao》 de Tongzhi” 中共中央关于印发反革命政变纲领《‘571 工程’纪要》的通知[Notice of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on Printing and Distributing the ‘Outline of Project 571’ for the Counter-Revolutionary Coup].

\(^\text{17}\) The authorship of “Outline of Project 571” is officially undeclared. However, most scholars agreed Lin Liguo was heavily involved in drafting the document. See: Stephen Uhalley and Jin Qiu, “The Lin Biao Incident: More Than Twenty Years Later,” *Pacific Affairs* 66, no. 3 (1993): 392.


same month, Zhou warned the editors of *People’s Daily*: “If extreme leftism was not refuted thoroughly [in your newspaper], mistakes would occur again.” In the meantime, Zhou started to bring back old cadres who lost their power during the Cultural Revolution. It is clear that Zhou was trying to use the death of Lin to reverse course on the Cultural Revolution, and this put Mao on high alert. In addition, because Lin was so closely associated with the Cultural Revolution, his death raised doubts both inside the CCP and among the general public about the legitimacy and the purpose of the Cultural Revolution. As associated with the Cultural Revolution, his death raised doubts both inside the CCP and among the general public about the legitimacy and the purpose of the Cultural Revolution. As someone who considered the Cultural Revolution as one of his greatest achievements (the other one being establishing the PRC), Mao grew worried.

To defend and revitalize the Cultural Revolution, Mao knew it was necessary to dissect Lin from “leftism”. In a small group politburo meeting in December of 1972, Mao indicated his position to Zhou: “Should we criticize the ultra-left or the ultra-right? Tone down the criticism on the ultra-left. …The essence of Lin Biao is ultra-rightism, revisionism, division, conspiracy, and treason against the party and the country.” However, for Mao, it was not enough to only label Lin as a “rightist”. To prove Lin was anything but a revolutionary, Mao decided to link Lin with a “conservative” historic figure: Confucius. After Lin’s death, Mao’s associates searched Lin’s residence and reported to Mao that Lin had “pro-Confucian thoughts”. Namely, Lin had a quote taken from *The Analects*, “restrain oneself to restore the rites” (克己复礼), hanging in his bedroom.

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20 Shi and Li, *History of the People’s Republic of China, Volume 8*, 68.
21 Shi and Li, 71.
Upon hearing the report, Mao became extremely interested in this new finding. In October of 1973, Mao secretly directed Peking University and Tsinghua University to form a joint "critic group" in order to produce more evidence that could further link Lin with Confucius. By January of 1974, a pamphlet titled "Lin Biao and the Doctrine of Confucius and Mencius" was produced by the "Peking University, Tsinghua University Great Critic Group". In the same month, Mao ordered this pamphlet to be issued to the whole party. Despite Mao's zeal, the connection between Lin and Confucius was not a straightforward one. In fact, many in the general public would later report that they found this Lin-Confucius combination very confusing. In Chapter 2, we will dive deeper on the reason why Mao decided to link Confucius with Lin.

Almost immediately, "Lin Biao and the Doctrine of Confucius and Mencius" was picked up by the CCP's propaganda department. In the light of previous discussion, we can conclude that relegating Lin Biao's image and thus defending the Cultural Revolution was the major reason why Mao initiated the anti-Confucian campaigns. Indeed, during much of 1974 to 1976, "Criticize Confucius" was often accompanied with "Criticize Lin" in newspapers or magazines. While "Confucianism" was targeted for attack, positive portrayals of "Legalism" drastically increased in the PRC even though they...

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were both “old ideas”. The denunciations in “Outline of Project 571” that associated Mao with Qin Shi Huang could well be the spark that led to Mao’s enthusiasm to defend Qin Shi Huang. In July of 1973, during a politburo meeting, Mao stated that “Supporting Confucius and opposing the Legalists, so did the Nationalists! So did Lin Biao!”25 There, Mao had linked two of his biggest enemies, the Nationalists and Lin Biao, with Confucius. The Legalists were seen by Mao as a counter to Confucius and thus a counter to the Nationalists and Lin Biao.

Nonetheless, the question remains: Why did Mao, a supposedly revolutionary communist, bring back dated concepts like “Confucius”, “Qin Shi Huang”, and “Legalism” during the Cultural Revolution? Why did Mao choose to associate Lin with Confucius when there were many other ways to purge Lin out of the party? The next chapter offers the explanation that by attacking Confucianism and promoting “Legalism”, Mao was trying to change the moral values in the Chinese society and thus legitimize his own politics.

Chapter 2:

“Burn the Books, Bury the Scholars!” – The Meaning of “Legalism”, “Confucianism”, and “Progress” in Late-Stage Maoism

Reading publications that came out during the anti-Confucian, pro-Legalist campaigns, we can notice a pattern regarding how “Confucianism” was depicted. Confucius, along with his companion Mencius, was often associated with terms such as “defender of slavery”, “reactionary”, “belonged to the trash bin of history”, and “liar”. On the contrary, “Legalism” was given a much positive outlook. The “Legalists”, such as Han Fei, Shang Yang, and Qin Shi Huang, were depicted with positive adjectives like “revolutionary”, “progressive”, and “decisive”. While this chapter aims to provide some basic historical context on “Legalism” and “Confucianism”, it is not my intention to evaluate their merits as political philosophy. Instead, this chapter tries to investigate the question: What did Mao and his propagandists mean by bringing “Confucianism” and “Legalism” under the spotlight during the late-stage Cultural Revolution?

Both Chinese Legalism and Confucianism were born after the decline of Zhou (周) dynasty. Since the eleventh century BC, the Zhou dynasty had successfully asserted authority over a number of vassal states in China proper, each of which had their own kings and nobles. The governing system of Zhou was more similar to European feudalism than the large, centralized Chinese

26 The English word “Confucianism” can mean different things, including the teaching of Confucius, Chinese classicalism, or even anything traditional Chinese. For this paper, “Confucianism” refers to Confucius’s personal philosophy, the same way it was used during the anti-Confucian campaigns.


28 While they were alive, neither Shang Yang, Han Fei, nor Qin Shi Huang had considered themselves as “Legalists”. The term “Legalism” (法家) was first coined by Han dynasty historian Sima Tan (司马谈 d.110 BC). While the identification of “Legalists” remains forever arbitrary, this paper follows the
empires that came later. However, the decline of Zhou started around 770 BC. During the Spring and Autumn period (771-476 BC) that followed, ambitious feudal lords began to assert their authority in China proper. As the lords fought for influence and power, people suffered from constant warfare. It was during this time that Confucius started to preach his ideas. In his own words, Confucius was “a transmitter and not a maker, trusting in and loving antiquity”. Confucius praised Zhou for “surveying the two dynasties that went before, its ways are refined and elegant. I (Confucius) follow Zhou.” Confucius’ love for Zhou was more than obvious. He once complained to his students: “How great is my decline! It has been so long since I dreamed about the duke of Zhou!”

Facing the great social crisis in his time, the solution Confucius gave was to return to the way of life under the Zhou dynasty, including returning to Zhou’s hierarchical order and social values.

Although Confucius was a hugely influential philosopher, his ideas were not widely appreciated by the power-hungry lords of his time. Following the Spring and Autumn period, the Warring States period saw even more intensive fighting between the lords and a total disintegration of the Zhou system. During this time, Shang Yang (商鞅, d.338 BC) served as the chief advisor in the state of Qin (秦). The solution Shang gave regarding years of infighting in China was to create the strongest militarized state possible that would conquer all of its opponents. Values to which Confucius held dear, such as self-cultivation, benevolence, and uprightness, were viewed

identification set by the CCP and identifies Han Fei, Shang Yang, and Qin Shi Huang as “Legalists”.


32 Confucius, The Analects, 48
as “parasites” by Shang. Rather than emphasizing morality, Shang made discipline central to his governing philosophy. Shang’s reforms, such as introducing new incentives to join the army, redistributing idle land to encourage agricultural production, and creating a centralized county-based governing system, are often considered the key elements regarding the rise of Qin as a superpower during the late Warring States period.

During the reign of Ying Zheng (嬴政 d.210 BC), the state of Qin conquered all the other states and brought China proper under its control in 221 BC. After the unification, the state of Qin became the Qin dynasty, and Ying Zheng became Qin Shi Huang ( 秦始皇, “the first emperor of Qin”). Qin Shi Huang was influenced by Han Fei ( 韩非 d.233 BC), another political consultant active during the Warring State period. According to the Records of the Grand Historian that after reading Han’s work, Qin Shi Huang said “If I could meet and travel with this author, I may die without regrets.” Similar to Shang Yang, Han Fei was a critic of the Zhou system. Han argued against returning to Zhou, saying: “The social customs of the ancient were vastly different from the present day. If a ruler wants to use lenient policies to govern the people in an era of drastic change, it is like driving a fierce horse without a rein and whip. This will produce unwise harm.” According to Han Fei, a wise ruler should forbid the circulation of classics and use rules and orders as the governing principle instead. The speeches of the ancient kings should be banned, and people should be looking up to the bureaucrats as teachers.

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34 Sima Qian, "Laozi Hanfei Liezhuan" 老子韓非列傳 [Biographies of Laozi and Han Fei], in Records of the Grand Historian, n.d.

35 Han Fei, "Wu Du" 五蠹 [The Five Vermin], in Han Fei Zi, n.d.

36 Han, "Wu Du".

Indeed, Qin Shi Huang followed Han Fei’s suggestion and ordered classical texts, such as *Classic of Poetry* and *Book of Documents*, to be burned. Those who dared to discuss classical texts in public would face execution. In 212 BC, Qin Shi Huang buried 460 scholars alive for breaking his rules. Given that he destroyed books and buried scholars, it is not surprising that Qin Shi Huang had a terrible reputation among Chinese intellectuals, who often do not wish to be buried alive.

While Mao was still a high school student, he exhibited great enthusiasm toward Shang Yang’s reform. In an assignment essay he wrote in 1912, Mao commended Shang as the greatest politician in China’s four thousand years of history. Specifically, Mao praised Shang for “enriching the state and strengthening the military.” Much like the Warring States period, China during the early twentieth century saw a breakdown of the old order. Although the 1911 revolution had made China the first republic in East Asia, the new political order was troubled by constant infighting between military strongmen. During the 1920s and 1930s, many Chinese elites viewed the strong disciplinary actions found in Legalism, or even in fascism, quite attractive in their goal of making China a strong country. Given the historical era in which Mao grew up, it is not unusual that he became fond of Legalism.

Although Mao’s approval of Legalism stayed consistent, his view on Qin Shi Huang did see a gradual progression. Back when Mao was a guerrilla fighter, he did not really differentiate Qin Shi Huang from other prominent Chinese emperors. In a poem he wrote in 1936 titled “Spring in a Pleasure Garden”, Mao characterizes Qin Shi Huang as “not well-bred in culture”. In his 1939 essay “The Chinese Revolution and the Communist Party of China,” Mao hailed the rebel leaders who rose against the Qin dynasty as revolutionary heroes. However, since the late 1950s,

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Mao started to take special notice of Qin Shi Huang, especially emphasizing Qin Shi Huang’s harsh measures. In a speech he gave to the CCP in 1958, Mao compared his party to Qin Shi Huang:

“What did Qin Shi Huang do? He only buried four hundred and sixty scholars. We buried forty-six thousand scholars. We suppressed all the counter-revolutionaries. Haven’t all the counter-revolutionary intellectuals been killed yet? .... We are a hundred times more than Qin Shi Huang. Liberals call us Qin Shi Huang-like dictators, and we happily admit to that. It is a pity that the liberals didn’t say enough, and we often need to add it.”  

During a politburo meeting in 1958, Mao gave his instruction on steel production, stating: “There must be command. We can not only rely on democracy. We need to combine Marx with Qin Shi Huang.”

By 1964, Mao’s view on Qin Shi Huang had became clearer. During a meeting with foreign guests, Mao said:

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40 Mao Zedong 毛泽东, "Zai Beidaihe Zhengzhiju Kuodahuiyi Shang de Jianghua (Er)" [Speech at the Enlarged Meeting of the Politburo at Beidaihe (Two)], in *Mao Zedong Sixiang Wansui*.  

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“Confucius has some good points, but he is not very good overall. I think we should be fair. Qin Shi Huang was much greater than Confucius. Qin Shi Huang was the first person to unify China. Not only did he politically unify China, but he also unified the Chinese writing system and various Chinese systems such as weights and measures. None of China’s emperors surpassed him, but he was scolded for thousands of years. He was scolded for two things: killing four hundred and sixty intellectuals and burning some books.”

Here, we can see how Mao built an antithesis between Qin Shi Huang and Confucius. Mao was clearly taking the side of Qin Shi Huang. In addition, Mao regarded himself as Qin Shi Huang to some extent. It is also quite obvious that Mao wanted to overturn the tainted image of Qin Shi Huang in Chinese history. Combining this with Mao’s talk with el-Shafei, we can deduce that in Mao’s view, the struggle between Qin Shi Huang and Confucius persisted throughout Chinese history. Mao believed that it was his task to completely seal this case in favor of Qin Shi Huang. In Mao’s view, since Lin Biao’s faction had criticized Qin Shi Huang, they must be on the side of Confucius. Thus, the motivation behind Mao’s association of Lin Biao and Confucius was to kill two birds with one stone—both by completely rooting out Lin Biao from Maoism and completely overturning the negative image associated with Qin Shi Huang.

During the anti-Confucian, pro-Legalist campaigns, Qin Shi Huang, along with other “Legalists”, was seen as someone who could take decisive actions against retrogressive enemies. In July of 1974, CCP’s leading ideological journal Red Flag published an article titled “Viewing the Book Burning of Qin Shi Huang from Yinqueshan Bamboo Slips”. In this article, Qin Shi Huang’s book-

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burning and scholar-burying were depicted as “resolute and decisive revolutionary measures” that “stroke[d] the restoration forces of the slave-owner class”. 42 In another Red Flag article titled “On Shang Yang” published in June 1974, author Liang Xiao praised Shang Yang for “cracking down hard on those diehards who disrupted progress” and “capturing 700 counter-revolutionaries who disrupted reforms and suppressing [murdering] them on the edge of the Weishui River”. 43 In Liang Xiao’s view, Shang was a great revolutionary who “practiced total dictatorship over the restoration forces of the slave-owner class with great fanfare and vigorously.” 44

The essence of Legalism during the pro-Legalist campaign is best illustrated in an article published in People’s Daily on January 15, 1975. The article, titled “In Defense of ‘Burning, Burying, Boiling, and Killing,’” argues that all extreme measures are justified as long as they serve a “revolutionary” purpose. In a quite disturbing tone, the author states:

“In fact, burning, burying, boiling, and killing are not only guiltless, but also meritorious. This merit lies in the fact that they [the extreme measures] promoted the Legalist political line of unification, revolution, and progress. The Legalists unified China, developed the economy and

44 Liang, "Lun Shang Yang", 22-29.
culture, and attacked the remnants of reactionary Confucian scholars. The Legalists prevented division, restoration, and regression. .... Qin Shi Huang’s book-burning was to stop the spread of retrogressive ideas, and his scholar-burying was to crack down on the Confucianists who engaged in counter-revolutionary activities.”

From here, we have the answer for what Legalism and progress meant during the late-stage Cultural Revolution. Much of the discussion about the Legalists during this period revolved around justifying the total dictatorship over enemies. The Legalists were progressive because they were unifiers and because they consolidated political power. The Legalists were worth praising because they, like Mao, did not hesitate to crack down hard on their enemies.

On the other hand, the attack on Confucianism during the late-stage Cultural Revolution was mainly focused on two ideas: “humaneness” (仁) and “restrain [ing] oneself to restore the rites” (克己复礼). As we will discuss more in Chapter 3, “restrain [ing] oneself to restore the rites” was mainly applied to political struggles at the time. Many of the philosophical attack against Confucius were based on his idea of “humaneness.” In a Red Flag article titled “Confucius’ Humaneness and Lin Biao’s Revisionism”, the author Yan Feng argues that humanness is “the ideological weapon of restoring capitalism.” According to Yan Feng, Confucius was a hypocrite who used the disguise of humaneness to “cover up the nature of class exploitation”. The article’s point is made clearer when it references one of Mao’s

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speeches made in 1942: “Since human beings split into classes, there has been no such thing called humane love. Many so-called saints and sages like to promote this thing, but no one has really implemented it. This is because it is impossible to implement humane love in a class society.” Thus, we can see that Confucianism was attacked during late-stage Cultural Revolution because it advocated for concepts like “humaneness” and “humane love”. In a Maoist view, those concepts were merely lies and obstacles to “progress” and “revolution.”

As mentioned in Chapter 1, Mao’s legitimacy was in crisis by 1973. Mao had regarded himself as a consistent revolutionary, and he did not shy away from practicing dictatorship. When he launched a movement to promote Legalism and criticize Confucianism in 1973, the deeper philosophical meaning behind it was to defend his own cruel actions: as long as the goal of “revolution” was achieved, all measures were legitimate. However, despite the fact that official propaganda channels were advocating for “burning, burying, boiling, and killing” counter-revolutionaries during the mid-1970s, Chinese society actually witnessed less violence and chaos during this period when compared to the early years of the Cultural Revolution.

By 1973, many Chinese people were experiencing a “revolutionary fatigue”. In the next chapter, I will examine the anti-Confucian, pro-Legalist Campaigns as a political movement. Especially, I make the observation that people did not become enthusiastic for this movement like the ideological masters had envisioned. On the contrary, the movement saw a stagnate bureaucratization that was reminiscent of the political atmosphere in China from 1973 to 1976.

47 Yan, “Kong Qiu de Renyi Daode Yu Lin Biao de Xiuzhengzhuyi Luxian”.
Chapter 3

“Cultural Revolution 2.0: Mao Could (Not) Advance” - The Form, Focus, and Dilemmas of the Anti-Confucian, Pro-Legalist Campaigns

In previous chapters, we discussed the origin and the philosophical meaning behind the anti-Confucian, pro-Legalist campaigns in the 1970s. The death of Lin Biao took a heavy toll on the legitimacy of the Cultural Revolution and Mao’s cult of personality. Sentiments like “How could the omniscient and omnipotent Chairman Mao not see Lin Biao for who he was?” spread across Chinese society. 49 As many senior cadres were brought back to power after Lin’s death, Mao grew worried about the prospect of the Cultural Revolution. This chapter examines the anti-Confucian, pro-Legalist campaigns in the 1970s as another political movement initiated by Mao. Scholars have long identified the “Criticize Lin Biao, Criticize Confucius” campaign as the “second Cultural Revolution”. 50 Borrowing from this framework, this chapter aims to address the following questions: What are the differences and similarities between the “first” and the “second” Cultural Revolution? What are the dilemmas and limitations of the anti-Confucian, pro-Legalist movement?

The early years of the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1968 was an extreme turbulent time for China. Following Chairman Mao’s order that “it is right to rebel” in July of 1966, various social groups, especially high school and university students, organized themselves into “rebel groups” to fight for political power. China quickly disintegrated into a quasi-civil war, with rival factions fighting each other with heavy tanks, developing small-scale nuclear weapon for “self-defense”, and eating their enemies. 51

49 MacFarquhar and Schoenhals, Mao’s Last Revolution, 338.
51 Factional struggle was especially fierce in the city of Chongqing, where tanks, self-propelled artillery, and anti-aircraft guns were utilized. Civilian-use nuclear weapons were developed by two rebel groups from the Changchun Institute of Geology. They successfully exploded two “radioactive self-defense bombs” in August 1967. MacFarquhar and Schoenhals, Mao’s Last Revolution, 217, 220.; Revolutionary cannibalism ran rampant in the province of Guangxi,
It was Mao’s plan to create total chaos and thus bringing a complete new order to China by launching the Cultural Revolution, hence the quote “archiving great order through great chaos”. However, in July of 1967, Mao himself was nearly captured and held hostage during a factional conflict in the city of Wuhan. After the “Wuhan Incident”, Mao decided to put a stop to the rebellion. In October 1967, Mao ordered all revolutionary organizations in China to consolidate into “revolutionary committees”, which were mostly controlled by the military. In late 1968, Mao accelerated the “Down to the Countryside Movement”, which exiled more than sixteen million rebellious students into China’s vast rural areas.

Given the lessons of the early Cultural Revolution, Mao soon realized that it was necessary to draw a concrete boundary around the “Criticize Lin, Criticize Confucius” Campaign. Initially, many rebel leaders active in the early stage of the Cultural Revolution interpreted the campaign as another call for a grassroot revolt against the bureaucracy. Governmental organs across China started to face significant challenges in early 1974. Regarding this situation, the central committee of the CCP issued a notice in April 1974 which stated: “The campaign to criticize Lin and Confucius is carried out under the unified leadership of the communist party committee.

where 75 people from the faction “Rebel Army” were eaten in Wuxian county alone in 1968. Yang, The World Turned Upside Down, 381.


53 MacFarquhar and Schoenhals, Mao’s Last Revolution, 211.

54 Yang, The World Turned Upside Down, 503.
Do not set up mass organizations such as combat teams.”

This notice also confined the anti-Confucian campaigns to the realm of ideology: “Criticizing Lin and Confucianism is to use Marxism to overcome revisionism in the field of superstructure.” Compared to the bottom-up social upheaval during the early Cultural Revolution, the “Criticize Lin, Criticize Confucius” campaign was a top-down, tightly controlled political movement. The daily operation of the anti-Confucian campaigns was entirely under the guidance of established party bureaucracy. As Mao moved into his late years, his confidence in riding along mass movements diminished. Instead of generating chaos like he did in 1966, Mao preferred controllability in 1974.

While confining the anti-Confucian movement had made it easier for Mao to control, its side effect was a decrease in popular enthusiasm. As mentioned before, the major traction for participating in the Cultural Revolution at its early stage was to gain political interest. After knowing the current political structure would not be changed by this new movement, experienced rebel leaders were less willing to invest their energy into it. In addition, after witnessing the early years of the Cultural Revolution, many people grew disillusioned about Maoist political campaigns in general. This reluctance was expressed by people in Qufu, Confucius’ hometown, who stated that: “Participating in political campaigns is like making pancake. Today your side is on top. Tomorrow you get flipped over. There is no point.” One factory


56 “Zhonggongzhongyang Guanyu Pilin Pikong Yundong Jige Wenti de Tongzhi”.

57 Li Xianming 李先明, “Wenhuadageming Houqi Qufu de Pilinpikong Yundong Jiqi Yingxiang” ‘文化大革命’后期曲阜的‘批林批孔’运动及其影响 [The ‘Criticism of Lin and Confucius’ Movement in Qufu in the Late Period
worker in Xiangtan, Mao’s hometown, expressed similar sentiment: “I suffered a lot during the Cultural Revolution. I must tuck my tail and avoid making any mistakes this time.”

Although party committees often openly boasted about how effective they were in instigating popular participation in the anti-Confucian movement, later accounts often told different stories. In Qufu, one People’s Commune officially held a “ten-thousand people mass meeting” to criticize Confucius and Lin Biao in 1974. According to an interview conducted 34 years later, only around a several hundred people actually showed up to that meeting, many of whom were the elderly or children. One village within that commune claimed that they sent 500 people to the meeting. As a matter of fact, that village only sent 3 people. Apart from the fear of political struggle, the confusing nature of the Confucius-Lin combination also discouraged many people from participating in the movement. For example, residents in Linyi, a long-time communist base in the Shandong province, expressed their doubts on the premise of the movement: “Confucius has been dead for more than two thousand years. How is he having anything to do with Lin Biao?”

59 Dong Yexu 董业勖, “A Study On Qufu’s ‘Criticizing Lin and Confucianism Campaign’ during the Cultural Revolution (in Chinese)”. (Master’s Thesis, Qufu, Qufu Normal University, 2010), 21.
60 Dong, “A Study On Qufu’s ‘Criticizing Lin and Confucianism Campaign’ during the Cultural Revolution”, 21.
Other people in Linyi noted that: “Lin is a big bad guy. How can he be associated with a sage like Confucius?” Popular support for the Criticize Confucius campaign dropped even lower after it transitioned into the Study Legalism campaign, which was mainly carried out by the academics.

Even though the dynamic of the anti-Confucian movement was different compared to the first three years of the Cultural Revolution, using propaganda to strike political enemies was an essential component to both political movements. In 1966 to 1968, the main targets of mass propagandistic criticism were revisionism and Liu Shaoqi. For example, one article which appeared on People’s Daily in 1967 was titled “Launch a General Offensive Against Liu Shaoqi’s Counter-Revolutionary Revisionist News Line”. We can find similar propaganda tactics deployed in the “Criticize Lin Biao, Criticize Confucius” campaign. In this new campaign, the main target for propagandistic attack was a Confucius quote that got discovered in Lin’s bedroom: “restrain oneself to restore the rites”. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Mao thought the legacy of the Cultural Revolution was in crisis after Lin’s death. The attack on revisionism in 1967 was used to purge moderate officials who did not follow Mao’s policies closely. Similarly, the attack on “restrain oneself to restore the rites” in 1974 was used to fight back any doubts on Cultural Revolution polices.

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63 Liu Shaoqi (1898-1969) was a veteran communist and the president of the PRC when the Cultural Revolution first started. As briefly mentioned in Chapter 1, Liu’s more pragmatic approach to governance, such as allowing peasants to keep some private land after collectivization in 1958, had infuriated Mao. Accused of being a revisionist and “China’s Khrushchev”, Liu was purged from the party in late 1966.

64 “Xiang zhongguo heluxiaofu de fangeming xiuzhengzhuyi xinwen luxian fadong zonggong” 向中国赫鲁晓夫的反
In much of the propaganda produced in early 1974, the phase “restore the rites” (复礼) was interpreted as “restoration” (复辟) and “restoring capitalism” (复辟资本主义). Under this framework, “restrain oneself to restore the rites” became Lin’s ideological guidance to overthrow the dictatorship of the proletariat and restore capitalism in China. The major crime that associated Lin with Confucius was “reversing the wheels of history”: Confucius wanted to restore the old system of Zhou, and Lin allegedly wanted to restore the old system of capitalism. The essences of criticizing “restrain oneself to restore the rites”, according to the propagandists, was to “consolidate and develop the great achievements of the Cultural Revolution and consolidate the dictatorship of the proletariat.” Clearly, the offense against Lin and Confucius had a practical meaning, which was to stop the reversal of Cultural Revolution polices. The intensive critiques against “restore the rites” took place during early 1974. Later, the focus of mass propaganda turned to criticizing Confucius’ idea of “humanness” and promoting the decisiveness of Legalism, as we discussed in Chapter 2.

The process of manufacturing propaganda in the anti-Confucian, pro-Legalist movement entails a unique Maoist vision of “mass criticism”. One prominent slogan in propaganda posters during the anti-Confucian campaigns was “Workers, peasants, and soldiers are the main force in criticizing Lin Biao and

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65 Lin wrote down this quote in 1969 as a gift to his wife, Ye Qun. One possible explanation behind this quote was that Ye Qun, like Mao’s wife Jiang Qing, was getting too involved in politics in Lin’s view. Thus, Lin tried to implicitly warn Ye to “restrain oneself” and retreat from politics. See Zheng, Zhang Chunqiao, 583.


67 People’s Daily Editorial Team, "Pi Kejifuli - Lin Biao Wangtu Fubi Zibenzhuyi de Fandong Gangling" 批“克己复礼”──林彪妄图复辟资本主义的反动纲领[Criticizing ‘Restrain Oneself to Restore the Rites’──Lin
Confucius.” 68 Looking at the authorship of the propaganda against Confucius, we can notice that many of the articles were attributed to critic groups based on local factories or People’s Communes. For example, the 3rd issue of Red Flag in 1974 featured articles written by the “Tianjin Tire Factory Workers’ Critic Group” and the “Dazhai Brigade Iron Girls Team”.69 The reason for organizing the grassroot critic groups lay behind Mao’s trepidation of a “revisionist comeback”. One essay published on the 7th issue of Red Flag in 1974 explained the rationale of grassroot critic groups quite clearly. The essay stated that the purpose of creating critic groups on a local level was to “firmly occupy the position of the superstructure using Mao Zedong Thought”.70 Failure to establish Marxist theoretical teams would lead to the revisionist mistake of emphasizing productivity over politics and eventually restoring capitalism. According to the essay, grand theoretical teams cannot be built without relying on and mobilizing the masses. Thus, “the task of consolidating the dictatorship of the proletariat must be assigned to every factory, village, institution, and school.”71

Although establishing proletariat-based “Marxist theoretical teams” was viewed by the authority as having great significance, the implementation and the effect of it were often lackluster. Solely relying on the proletariat to carry out ideological tasks was proved to be insufficient. One letter, written in November of 1974 from the Shaanxi province, complained that “The critiques against Confucius were really superficial. Our

68 This quote originated from an editorial on People’s Daily published on February 2, 1974, titled “Ba pilin pikong de douzheng jinxing daodi”把批林批孔的斗争进行到底 [Carry Out the Struggle against Lin and Confucius to the End].
69 Dazhai (大寨) was a “model commune” during the Cultural Revolution. Dazhai Brigade was a subdivision of the Dazhai People’s Commune. Iron Girls (铁姑娘) was another Cultural Revolution concept that refers to young women who rejected traditional femininity and embrace tough heavy labor instead.
71 Hong, “Geming Douzheng Xuyao Maxisizhuyi Lilun Duiwu”. 
comrades’ level was outrageously low. They said absurd things like ‘Confucius’ counter-revolutionary revisionism...’ They almost said that Confucius opposed Mao Zedong Thought.” \(^{72}\) In addition, many workers resented political study meetings, which occupied their precious free time. \(^{73}\) To supplement the proletariat, many critic groups hired and relied on “consultants”, who were often “bourgeois intellectuals”. Zhou Zhongling was a professor at the Nanjing University who specialized in the study of Han Fei. Professor Zhou described his experience in the Cultural Revolution as “I always served as the object of criticism during political struggle sessions. But when it comes to completing academical tasks, I became the main force.” \(^{74}\)

Professor Wang Zhongmin of Peking University was recruited as a consultant to annotate a “Legalist” work by Li Zhi (1527-1602). After noticing that the work by Li Zhi was forged, Professor Wang argued against the annotation project and refused to give in. Facing immense political pressure, Professor Wang refused to give in. Eventually, the pressure amounted to a breaking point, and Professor Wang committed suicide on April 16, 1975. \(^{75}\)

In this chapter, we see that as a political movement, the anti-Confucian, pro-Legalist campaigns embodied many Maoist elements, such as the emphasis on “the masses” and the fear of a revisionist comeback. However, the limitations of the movement are also directly associated with those Maoist elements. People did not become enthusiastic in criticizing Confucius because the campaign was so tightly controlled by the authority and its premise was so far-stretched. The vision of arming the proletariat with ideological weapons proved to be a blunder. As China moved

\(^{72}\) Zhao, The Age of Extraordinary, 891.
\(^{73}\) Dong, “Research on Xiangtan’s ‘Criticize Lin Criticize Confucian Movement,’” 24.
into the 1970s, Mao was stuck in a dilemma. In an effort to reinvigorate the Cultural Revolution, Mao found himself seemingly in control but unable to achieve any further progress. This stagnation indicated that in his later years, Mao could not make any substantial political or ideological advancements. On September 9th, 1976, Mao started another series of drastic changes in China, this time by leaving the world. In the conclusion part, I will discuss the fate of the anti-Confucian, pro-Legalist movement after 1976.

Conclusion:

“Tomorrow Never Knows” – The Anti-Confucian, Pro-Legalist Movement After 1976

On April 4th, 1976, millions of people in Beijing gathered in Tiananmen Square to commemorate the death of Premier Zhou Enlai. They took this opportunity to vent out their grievance against Mao’s close associates, including Jiang Qing and Zhang Chunqiao. One protest poster openly proclaimed: “China is no longer the China of the past. The feudal society of Qin Shi Huang is gone forever. …Let those ideologs who castrated Marxism-Leninism go to hell!” After more than 2 years of pro-Legalist propaganda in the PRC, Qin Shi Huang was still not revered like Mao wanted him to be. In September of 1976, Mao died. In October of 1976, Mao’s hand-picked successor Hua Guofeng staged a coup which arrested the “Gang of Four”, consisting of Mao’s wife Jiang Qing, worker rebel leader Wang Hongwen, and Cultural Revolution propagandists Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan. Although he had arrested Mao’s wife, Hua came up with the “Two Whatevers” policy, meaning “We uphold whatever policy decisions Chairman Mao made, and we follow whatever instructions Chairman Mao gave”.

Following the October coup, the anti-Confucian, pro-Legalist movement took a strange turn. Although they were on the frontline during the anti-Confucian campaigns in 1974, members of the “Gang of Four” were labeled as Confucianists after Hua took power. One journal article published in July of 1977 compared Wang Hongwen to Confucius, arguing both of them were parasites of the working class. Jiang Qing, who led the “Criticize Lin, Criticize Confucius” campaign in 1974, was accused of
sabotaging it.\textsuperscript{79} The pro-Legalist campaign, which was started directly under the guidance of Mao, became a “sinister scheme” plotted by the “Gang of Four” to bring Fascism to China.\textsuperscript{80}

Chairman Hua himself was ousted by a coalition of senior communist cadres by the late 1970s, and so did the “Two Whatevers” policy. After Deng Xiaoping took power, China began a period of “reform and opening up.” Had it been in 1974, allowing peasants to own small plots of private land would have been considered as “capitalism comeback.” In 2004, workers spending 12 hours a day in a factory owned by private capitalists was “Socialism with Chinese Characteristics.”\textsuperscript{81} As China became more connected with trade and markets, the CCP became less confident in using utopian communism to justify their autocratic politics. Instead, the CCP turned to tradition and nationalism. Inspired by the Singaporean dictator Lee Kuan Yew, Deng and his successors embraced the concept of “Asian values,” which suggested that East Asian countries were not compatible with “Western” concepts like democracy because of their “Confucian” values such as hierarchy and order.\textsuperscript{82}

\textsuperscript{76} Shi and Li,\textit{ History of the People’s Republic of China, Volume 8}, 634.
\textsuperscript{77} Shi and Li, 631.

The word “feudal” 封建 was used very loosely in the Chinese context. Its meaning ranges from faulty traditions (e.g. foot-binding) to the autocratic practices of the Chinese dynasties.


\textsuperscript{80} Qiao Xiangzhong 乔象幢, "Sirenbang Guchui Fajia Shi Weili Jianli Faxisi Zhengquann" ‘四人帮’鼓吹法家是为

\textsuperscript{81} Ching Kwan Lee, \textit{Against the Law: Labor Protests in China’s Rustbelt and Sunbelt} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 197.
The CCP re-invented Confucius, once depicted by the CCP themselves as a lying counter-revolutionary who belonged to the trash bin of history, into the national treasure of China. In 2004, the PRC government established the Confucius Institutes in around the world to spread Chinese culture and language.

Although Confucius’ image took a 180-degree turn, two years of anti-Confucian, pro-Legalist propaganda campaign was not completely in vain. As Professor Yu Yunguo suggested in 2005, very few historians in Chinese academia born in the 1940s and 1950s could escape from the toxic influence of the anti-Confucian, pro-Legalist campaigns. Legalism and its later combination with nationalism have profoundly impacted contemporary Chinese society. As the PRC embraced the “The Great Rejuvenation of the Chinese Ethnicity”, the Legalist model of “enriching the state and strengthening the military” became increasingly appealing. The current head of the PRC, Chairman Xi Jinping, praised Shang Yang’s reform and repeatedly quoted Han Fei in his speeches. At the same time, historical dramas depicting the rise of the great Qin dynasty became more and more popular in Chinese television and streaming services.

To conclude, the initiation of the anti-Confucian, pro-Legalist movement in late 1973 was closely related to the PRC’s political situation at the time. In the 1970s, Mao was worried about a “revisionist comeback” in the PRC. By launching the anti-Confucian, pro-Legalist movement, Chairman Mao wanted to fend off any doubts surrounding the Cultural Revolution due to

the death of Lin Biao. In addition to practical reasons, Mao started this movement to resolve a philosophical case in the Chinese history, that is the conflict between the “Confucianism” and “Legalism”. Mao wished to justify the cruel measures of Qin Shi Huang and the Legalists in order to legitimize his own ruthless actions against the “class enemies.”

As a political movement, the anti-Confucian, pro-Legalist campaigns aimed to provide the proletariat with ideological weapons to fend off any possible “revisionist attacks”. After Mao’s death in 1976, all of his worst nightmares came true. His closest associates were arrested, and China became more capitalistic and “Confucian” than he could ever imagine. However, the failure of the anti-Confucian, pro-Legalist movement does not equal the failure of Legalism and its militaristic ideology. Mao’s idea of a Confucian-Legalist struggle proved to be a false proposition, as both ideologies are being carried forward in contemporary China. Still led by the Chinese Communist Party, the description “Marx Plus Qin Shi Huang” still suits the People’s Republic of China today.
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