

THE WRITE STUFF

Volume 32, 2022

Department of Language and Literature
Cape Cod Community College
West Barnstable, MA 02668

Editor: Rachael Bancroft

Editorial Board

Patricia Allen

William Berry

Rebecca Griffin

Bruce Riley

Richard Norwood

Production Staff

Cindy Pavlos

Table of Contents

Voter Suppression in the United States	
Jordan White.....	4
Cryptocurrency and its Effects on the Environment	
Ellis Marcel.....	11
The Real Housewives of The Awakening	
Shanaz Petty	22
Drugs Should Be Decriminalized	
Hannah Williams.....	25
Modernism Analysis: Class Consciousness in “The Garden Party”	
Caitlin Grosso	30
Implicit Bias	
Andrew Galloway-Sandoval.....	33
To Sing of Prosperity and Race Within Ones Perspective of America	
Dylan Girouard.....	37
The Toleration-Persecution Cycle: From the Roman Empire to Iberia	
Erin Olding	40

Voter Suppression in the United States

Throughout the history of the United States up to the present day, voter suppression has been used to allow political minority groups without majority support of the people to retain power unjustly. This history has included examples of voter suppression, such as colonial and early U.S. voting laws, the post-15th Amendment Jim Crow voting restrictions, and the effective neutralization of the Voting Rights Act in 2013. Even in the present-day U.S., methods of voter suppression such as gerrymandering, voter roll purging, denial of voting locations, and voter ID laws continue to be used. This paper will discuss the history of voter suppression in the United States, the primary methods of voter suppression, and some of the intent and motivations behind the willful disregard of the intention of the American people.

The history of voter suppression in the United States began before the country was even established, with written laws preventing certain groups from voting. When colonists came to North America, they brought with them many customs of their motherland, including the first of these laws that barred specific people from being able to vote. This law required a man to own property before he would be allowed to participate in voting. When describing how the land-owning voting requirement affected these communities, Arp and Morton write that “As a consequence of property disenfranchisement, approximately 94% of the American population whether white, black, free, slave, or female, could not vote or hold public office.” This shows how a large majority of colonial society was barred from having any sway in creating the laws and policies that bound them. While this law prevented all people without property from voting, white men were still able to acquire land and earn the right to affect their communities. For black men and all women, the majority of whom could not own property, this law served to completely sever them from the political process (Arp and Morton). Even after owning property was no longer required to vote, there were several laws that blocked certain groups from obtaining their rights. After the 15th Amendment was ratified in 1870 and the 19th Amendment in 1920, black men and all women were no longer legally prevented from voting, but efforts continued to suppress their votes.

In the Jim Crow era following the passage of the 15th Amendment, black men were legally permitted to vote. To circumvent this new law, many new methods were used to indirectly suppress their ability to vote (Hench). The first of these methods was the concept of white-only primaries. Using white-only primaries created a process in which “the general election became a mere runoff between white-preferred candidates” (Hench). In this way, white supremacists found a method that removed any actual political weight from black voters while still begrudgingly complying with the laws that allowed them to physically cast votes. If a black voter came to the general election only to find two effectively identical candidates, neither of whom considered the voter’s interests, his or her vote was effectively suppressed. Other methods used were seemingly innocuous voting requirements that affected black voters disproportionately, namely the concept of poll taxes and literacy or comprehension tests. Poll taxes required those casting votes to pay a fee which would often be unaffordable to many black voters, very recently freed men, who were still struggling to assimilate into an economy and society actively hostile to them. Literacy or “understanding” tests created the same issue, as a huge majority of newly free black voters had never been given any opportunity to receive an education. These tests were more openly biased as additional clauses called “Grandfather” or “old soldier” clauses allowed the tests to be waived for those who had served in the United States or Confederate military, any of their descendants, anyone who had voted before 1867, or anyone whose father or grandfather had voted before 1867 (Hench). These waiver clauses were clearly aimed at whites specifically and allowed the disenfranchisement of black voters without also accidentally disenfranchising uneducated white voters. These methods were heavily used throughout the south as southern governments sought to do whatever they could to diminish the power of the black vote.

In 1965, at the height of the Civil Rights Movement, the Voting Rights Act was passed to address the trend of racially motivated voting laws in the south. The Voting Rights Act outlawed many voting laws deemed to have racist motivations and created a requirement for nine different states to obtain preclearance from the Justice Department or a federal court before they passed any laws or procedures related to voting (Liptak). The act was set to expire in 1970 but was renewed three times, each renewal decision motivated by research on the persistence of racial discrimination in voting (Liptak). In 2013, the Supreme Court voted to remove Section 4 of the Act, which specified which states were

required to obtain preclearance (Liptak). While the preclearance requirement remained, removing Section 4 effectively removed this requirement, as no state was required to abide by it. When describing their reasoning for effectively removing the preclearance requirement, the majority of the Supreme Court felt that racial discrimination was no longer a major threat to voting rights, and Chief Justice John G. Roberts reportedly stated that “Our Country has changed” (Liptak). This naïve and possibly malicious assumption was almost immediately proven false as numerous malicious voting laws were immediately introduced in the previously affected states, such as a new voter identification law in Texas that had previously been blocked by the Voting Rights Act (Liptak). Additionally, voter suppression has continued unabated since 2013, with hundreds of new voting laws being introduced in the South, all utilizing many different methods to suppress voters.

One method of voter suppression began with the formal founding of our nation: The Electoral College. The Electoral College is a system in which elections are won by states. All the votes in a state are counted in a statewide race, then the state as a whole counts towards the winning candidate. From the outset, this method was created to oppose the concept of a nationwide popular vote, which many early American leaders felt placed too much political power in the hands of the people (Codrington). Furthermore, the Electoral College had racial motivations. While the progressive North and slaveholding South had similar populations, approximately one third of the South’s population consisted of slaves without the right to vote (Codrington). In the Electoral College system, southern states could circumvent the disadvantage in numbers they would have in a popular-vote system. With the Electoral College, the slaveholding south would be able to continue imposing their values on the nation even without popular support. To this day, the Electoral College is used to suppress voters. When describing the modern suppression under the Electoral College, Codrington writes:

The current system has a distinct, adverse impact on black voters, diluting their political power. Because the concentration of black people is highest in the South, their preferred presidential candidate is virtually assured to lose their home states’ electoral votes. Despite black voting patterns to the contrary, five of the six states whose populations are 25 percent or more black have been reliably red in recent presidential elections. Three of those states have not voted for a Democrat

in more than four decades. Under the Electoral College, black votes are submerged.

These facts demonstrate how effectively the Electoral college suppresses votes to this day. Despite their large population in the South, black voters are forced to vote internally in their states, where the majority of voters often have values antithetical to their own.

Another method of voter suppression is the practice known as gerrymandering. Gerrymandering is one of the most egregious methods of voter suppression. It is the “intentional manipulation of the boundaries of geographic election districts in order to facilitate the election of candidates of one political party to a legislative body and impede the election of candidates of the other party or parties” (Engstrom 1). In this process of redefining election districts, the group manipulating the districts seeks to either “crack” or “pack” districts (Lowenthal 3). “Cracking” a district involves reworking district lines in order to spread opposition votes across multiple voting districts, ensuring the opposition does not have the population to compete in elections (Lowenthal 3). Conversely, “Packing” a district attempts to concentrate opposition voters into a lower number of districts in order to significantly reduce the number of opposition votes in the majority of other districts. Gerrymandering as a practice exists solely to manipulate elections and often causes political parties with fewer total votes to win elections. For example, in the 2012 House of Representatives elections across the nation, Democrat candidates won a total of approximately 1.5 million more votes, but Republicans still won 33 more seats (Engstrom 1). In Michigan specifically, Republican votes only totaled 47%, but Republicans obtained 64 % of the seats (Engstrom 5). Through the use of gerrymandering, the Republican party has been able to ignore the majority decision of the people and retain power.

Another method of voter suppression is the purging of voter registration lists, or voter rolls. While purportedly used to prevent ineligible people from voting, in the context of its practice of voter suppression, voter roll purging is often used in the manner of “clearing eligible voters from state registration lists in a manner that tends to discriminate by race and ethnicity” (Hardy 10). Voter purging removes eligible voters by “accident” who are then required to go through an arduous process of reregistering to vote (Hardy 11). The practice is highly effective at eliminating potential opposition voters, as it is almost always undetected until the potential voters go to the polls on election day, only to find that they have been purged from the rolls and will not be able to register in time to vote (Hardy 10). For example, in the 2018

Georgia governor election, the Republican candidate Brian Kemp won by only 55,000 votes (Hardy 11). Kemp, the Secretary of State before becoming governor, was found to have purged between 250,000 and 665,000 voters from rolls each year in which he ran in an election, and fewer than 100 in years in which he did not (Hardy 12). Additionally, Kemp was found to have purged over 890,000 eligible voters incorrectly, with Democratic counties having been purged at a rate of almost 400% more than Republican counties (*Suppressed* 00:10:38 – 00:12:00). This data shows indisputably how voter roll purges are wielded with the specific intent to suppress opposition voters.

Another method of voter suppression is the process of denying voting locations. This process involves moving or closing voting locations in areas with high opposition turnout. Closing voting locations in areas of high opposition has been proven to lower voter turnout as many voters are often unable or unwilling to find additional voting locations (Portillo et al. 12). Furthermore, by reducing the number of available voting locations, remaining voting locations will often become overburdened, greatly increasing lines and wait times to vote (Hardy 11). These closures will often target populations with large percentages of black voters. For example, in the 2018 Georgia governor election, voting locations were closed in predominantly black areas such as Lincoln Park, which is 95% black. In Randolph County, with a population that is 62% black, seven of the nine existing voting locations were closed (*Suppressed* 00:03:49 – 00:04:17). When describing the difference between areas that had not been targeted by arbitrary closures and those that had, Rich Demillo says, “In places like North Fulton County which are wealthy, there were more machines than anyone could ever use. In black neighborhoods, there were a quarter of the number of machines that were needed to service the population” (*Suppressed* 00:27:10 – 00:27:36). This demonstrates how targeted closures were used to bog down the voting process in areas with many black voters, with the intention of reducing overall voter turnout.

Another method of voter suppression is the implementation of Voter ID laws. Voter ID laws affect states with over half the U.S voting population and vary in intensity between requiring photo identification on hand to cast a vote and requesting voters to bring some form of identifying document when voting (Hajnal et al. 1). Voter ID laws exist purportedly to prevent voter fraud; however, with very few cases of voter fraud, these laws appear to serve a different purpose. In practice, Voter ID laws serve to prevent members of certain groups from voting, especially groups proven to be less likely to have ID, such as minorities,

the poor, and the young (Hajnal et al. 2). ID laws are used by political parties to create more barriers to voting for and reduce the number of opposition voters. For example, following the ruling which stripped the Voting Rights Act, Texas passed a strict voting ID law, previously blocked by the Department of Justice, that required voters to possess one of only five approved forms of government issued photo ID (Hardy 7). This law was justified using debunked claims of voting fraud for which no evidence was ever found (Hardy 7). Through the use of the new voting law, Texas was able to effectively reduce the number of voters from the groups less likely to own photo ID.

Voter suppression has always been associated with racial and political intent. From the earliest efforts to suppress voters, minority groups such as the poor, racial minorities, and women have been disproportionately targeted by voter suppression. Prior to the 15th and 19th Amendments, black people and white women were discriminated against, and their ability to vote was denied due to the belief that they did not deserve to participate in our democracy. In particular, black people were defined as less than human, based on white supremacists' beliefs that black people did not even truly exist as members of the nation. Following the 15th Amendment, when black men were given the right to vote, racist ideals of white supremacy fueled efforts to prevent black men from exerting any political power. Even in the modern day, racism is often a clear underlying motivation behind voter suppression. Black men and women, and other racial minorities are often still the primary targets of voter suppression. Despite the fact that voter suppression is often used to protect political power, these suppression tactics are often used by political groups with long histories of racist ideology and policy. These policies target the racial minorities who largely do not support them.

There is a long history of voter suppression in the United States from the Electoral College, to the early laws preventing certain groups from voting, to the Jim Crow era workarounds that effectively prevented voting. The 2013 gutting of the Voting Rights Act and the many acts of voter suppression that followed continue this tradition. These acts of voter suppression have included different methods such as manipulating voting districts through gerrymandering, reducing the number of eligible voters through voter roll purging, creating barriers to vote through Voter ID laws, and limiting voting locations. The racial and political intent behind voter suppression is evident, and historical and current use of voter suppression continues to perpetuate a political system in which the people's voice is silenced.

Works Cited

- Arp, William and Berlisha Morton. "A Political History and Analysis of Disenfranchisement and Restoration of the Black Vote in Louisiana." *The Western Journal of Black Studies*, vol. 29, no. 3, Fall 2005. *Gale In Context: U.S. History*.
- Codrington, Wilfred. "The Electoral College's Racist Origins." *The Atlantic*, 15 Nov. 2019, https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2019/11/electoral-college-racist-origins/601918/?fbclid=IwAR3KcGxAmykkDaUbFo9CtUEnCy-lla9N_G7e32oXIXLEYF-uLhOX_Dp24y8.
- Engstrom, Richard L. "Partisan Gerrymandering: Weeds in the Political Thicket." *Social Science Quarterly*, vol. 101, no. 1, Jan. 2020, pp. 23-36. *EBSCOhost*, doi: 10.1111/ssqu.12743.
- Hajnal, Zoltan et al. "Voter Identification Laws and the Suppression of Minority Votes." *Journal of Politics*, vol. 79, no. 2, Apr. 2017, pp. 363-379. *EBSCOhost*, doi: 10.1086/688343.
- Hardy, Lydia. "Voter Suppression Post-Shelby: Impacts and Issues of Voter Purge and Voter ID Laws." *Mercer Law Review*, vol. 71, no. 3, Spring 2020, pp. 857-878. *EBSCOhost*.
- Hench, Virginia E. "The Death of Voting Rights: The Legal Disenfranchisement of Minority Voters." *Case Western Reserve Law Review*, vol. 48, no. 4, Summer 1998, pp. 727. *EBSCOhost*.
- Liptak, Adam. "Supreme Court Invalidates Key Part of Voting Rights Act." *New York Times*, 25 June 2013. Adobe PDF File.
- Lowenthal, Alan S. "The Ills of Gerrymandering and Independent Redistricting Commissions as the Solution." *Harvard Journal on Legislation*, vol. 56, no. 1, Winter 2019, pp. 1-21. *EBSCOhost*.
- Portillo, Shannon et al. "The Disenfranchisement of Voters of Color: Redux." *Public Integrity*, vol. 23, no. 2, Apr. 2021, pp. 111-128. *EBSCOhost*, doi: 10.1080/10999922.2020.1796196.
- Suppressed: The Fight to Vote*. *YouTube*, uploaded by Brave New Films, 25 September 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=03DGjnIkTdl>

Cryptocurrency and its Effects on the Environment

Through the past decade, the world of finance has seen numerous changes. One of these changes was the introduction of cryptocurrency. The first cryptocurrency, Bitcoin¹, was originally confusing and misunderstood by most outsiders, and it quickly gained a bad reputation from being involved in scams, drug deals, and other kinds of criminal behavior. But as more and more people began learning about the technology, more saw its potential value. Within years, the worth of a bitcoin skyrocketed, and today it takes a significant place in public conversation.

Some countries even use bitcoins as legal tender. But as cryptocurrency grows more popular, its flaws come to light with greater vibrancy. This paper will discuss the most harmful of these flaws: that the infrastructure behind cryptocurrency is heavily contributing to environmental damages. Despite its potential to greatly improve various industries, the irresponsibility of the technology that cryptocurrency is built upon keeps it back from wide-spread adoption. Before cryptocurrency can be widely accepted into the real world of currencies, a solution must be found to limit its negative effects on the environment.

Cryptocurrency

The simple definition of cryptocurrency is that it is a form of cash that is completely digital (“Cryptocurrency”). It has no physical place holder, such as a coin. The fact is, people use forms of virtual currency every day. For example, we purchase products online. The difference between online shopping and cryptocurrency is that when we buy products online, we are drawing from credit or debit cards, which are then backed by a physical currency, like the U.S. dollar. Cryptocurrency avoids the need for a physical manifestation completely. By-passing the physical aspect of currency has been attractive since 1981 when banks in New York began experimenting with electronic banking (Sarreal). As financial platforms, such as PayPal, became more

¹ Bitcoin is capitalized when used as an idea. When used as a currency unit, it is lowercase.

prevalent, the idea of an entirely cashless currency sparked interest. Finally, the last piece fell into place. The recession of 2008 and the financial instability afterwards tested the public's trust in banks and the government. It was out of this environment that in 2008 Satoshi Nakamoto wrote and published a whitepaper titled "Bitcoin: A Peer-to-Peer Electronic Cash System." The paper proposed an electronic currency that was decentralized, which means that third parties were not required to regulate it, like how the government regulates U.S. currency. The next year, the first version of Bitcoin was announced, and people soon began trading in the digital coins ("History of Bitcoin").

In the early days of Bitcoin, it was mostly used out of curiosity. But, as it became more publicized, less innocent markets became interested in Bitcoin's potential advantages. Online marketplaces that sold illegal substances began using bitcoins as a payment option, sometimes exclusively. One of the most prominent of these marketplaces was the Silk Road. Rainer Bohme, a professor at the University of Innsbruck, Austria, wrote an article titled "Bitcoin: Economics, Technology, and Governance" in which he examines the early uses of Bitcoin. He writes, "...The turnover on the Silk Road anonymous online marketplace, the first to support bitcoin transactions exclusively, reached \$15 million per year just one year after it began operation" (222). These marketplaces that used bitcoins were making a lot of money, but most importantly, the cryptocurrency granted considerable anonymity to the users. Bitcoin was the ideal medium for by-passing the law (Bohme 222). In the years that followed, Bitcoin struggled to move past its bad reputation from these early days.

Bitcoin managed to become the first entirely digital currency, something that was sought after for years. But why did it take Nakamoto's proposition of Bitcoin to make it a reality? Up until 2008, the unsurpassable obstacle was the issue of "double spending." Double spending is the act of spending one bitcoin twice. When a customer wishes to purchase an item at a store, they give a specific amount of money to the seller, and in return receive the item. After this purchase, the customer is unable to go to a different store and purchase another item with that same money, as the money is now in the possession of the seller (Bohme 216). Although this is obvious, it is not so simple when the currency is made up of 1s and 0s. If a customer purchases an item online with a digital currency, there has to be a way to prove the money has truly "changed hands" (Haeringer 3). In Nakamoto's whitepaper, he proposes a solution to double spending, which relies on a technology called blockchain.

Blockchain is a universal ledger that holds records of every Bitcoin transaction ever made. When a customer uses bitcoins to purchase an item from a seller, the information that the customer has lost a certain amount of bitcoins is added to the blockchain. Therefore, if the customer attempts to make a new purchase with the bitcoins he already used, the blockchain's record will show that the customer does not have the required amount for the new purchase, and the transaction will not occur. This is how blockchain prevents double spending (Haeringer 10).

Blockchain solves the issue of double spending, but it also provides other benefits. Blockchain allows for extreme transparency within the system. All transactions made with bitcoins are recorded, and anyone can see these records. The private details of the people involved are kept hidden, but the general information about the transaction is public. Because of this, anybody can track an individual bitcoin's transaction history all the way back until the day it was minted. This transparency safeguards against corrupt activity and fraud, while maintaining privacy (Conway).

Another benefit of the blockchain is that it allows for decentralization. After the recession in 2008, many were suspicious of banks and the government's handling of problems such as inflation. Bitcoin was a possible alternative. Bitcoin is unique in that it is not run by any one organization or government. Instead, it is run by individual groups of people. Luke Conway is a writer for Investopedia, a financial advising website. In his article "Blockchain Explained," Conway thoroughly explains the blockchain and how it works. He writes, "Bitcoin consists of thousands of computers, but each computer or group of computers that hold its blockchain is in a different geographic location and they are all operated by separate individuals or groups of people." The computers housing and operating blockchain are not owned by one institution, but by many different companies and even individuals. These groups are also located in various different geographical locations. This is what makes Bitcoin decentralized, that there is no one power that can manipulate the cryptocurrency.

Mining

What does it mean to operate blockchain? In order to function as a record keeping device, blockchain requires someone to create and insert the records. The people who do this, called miners, keep the blockchain working and also protect it from fraud. The work of a miner consists of two main factors: 1) Forming the blockchain record and 2) Putting more bitcoins into circulation (Haeringer 6).

As previously explained, when a transaction is made using bitcoins, information about the exchange is added to the blockchain, certifying that it took place. It is the miner's job to make this process happen. A miner reviews all the transactions that take place in a specific period of time and records them in a block of code. The miner appends this block of code to a chain of previously created blocks that are records of past transactions. After the specific period of time elapses again, the miner will add another block to the chain. This chain of blocks is appropriately called the blockchain (Haeringer 5). Miners are rewarded payment for every block they complete. Whenever a user sends bitcoins to someone, there is a transaction fee. For every transaction that a miner records in a block of code, they receive the corresponding transaction fee as payment (Haeringer 6).

The second factor of mining is creating new coins and putting them into circulation. This is, in a way, a by-product of their previous task. Every time a miner completes a block, they are paid in transaction fees and in newly "minted" bitcoins. This is how new bitcoins are added to circulation. The original payment per block was 50 bitcoins, but this reward is halved roughly every 4 years. The current reward is 6.25 bitcoins. The reason the reward is halved regularly is because there is a set limit on the possible number of bitcoins that can exist. The limit of existing bitcoins will be reached around May 2140. Once all of the bitcoins are in circulation, no more will be released, and miners will get their payment from transaction fees alone (Haeringer 9). Miners keep blockchain running, but they also provide security. Without one organization in charge to regulate issues such as fraud, a different method of preventing illicit activity had to be constructed. The solution relies on a free market approach. When a miner constructs a block, they receive the financial reward, but only if they complete the block before any other competing miners do. Only one miner can receive a reward per block (Haeringer 6). Dr. Guillaume Haeringer, a professor at Baruch College, wrote a chapter in the book *Economic Analysis of the Digital Revolution*. In this chapter, titled "Bitcoin: A Revolution?" he writes, "One of the key aspects of Bitcoin is that there is a competition between miners to be the one constructing the next block" (6). The competition between miners for the reward money is what lets Bitcoin function. This is because a by-product of this mining competition is security.

In order to add a block to the blockchain, a miner must not only create the block, but also solve a special equation. This equation is extremely complicated and takes a large amount of time and energy.

The average time for a new block to be appended to the chain is about 10 minutes. Because of the required energy use, this method of mining is called proof-of-work mining (Haeringer 8). This commitment of time and energy acts as a deterrent to fraud. In order to commit fraud, one would have to add fraudulent information into a new block and then spend enough energy to solve their equation before the competition solved theirs (Haeringer 13). Even if they managed to do this, the fraudulent information in the block would not match with the information in the previous one. Every new block builds off the information in the block before it. Therefore, if a miner commits fraud, it would be obvious; the information in the previous block and the new fraudulent block would not match up (Conway).

Because mining is extremely competitive, miners will inevitably be pushed into finding more efficient ways to mine. Because the two costs of mining are time and energy, one of the most crucial methods of improving speed is upgrading to more efficient computers (de Vries). Central processing units (CPUs) were originally used for mining, until the end of 2009 when miners moved over to using graphic processing units, or GPUs. GPUs are typically used to render video on a computer, a job that requires repetition. Mining also takes a lot of repetition, and thus GPUs were more effective for mining. After a few more years, the mining community settled on the use of application-specific integrated circuits, or ASICs. ASICs are built to do one specific task and cannot be reprogrammed. Their creation for a single use makes them extremely efficient and perfect for mining (de Vries).

Another way miners can get ahead of the competition is by finding cheap electricity. This is an important issue for miners, as power costs take up between 60 to 80 percent of a miner's earnings (Umair). Irfan Umair, a writer for Vox, has written an article titled "Bitcoin Is an Energy Hog. Where Is All That Electricity Coming From?" in which he covers miners search for cheap energy. In this article he says, "The quest for the cheapest kilowatt has led miners to set up shop in remote regions of China and Mongolia. It sent miners to the sulfurous rock in Iceland to harvest geothermal power." The search for cheap electricity sends miners to diverse locations as well as to various types of power sources.

Environmental Effects

Cryptocurrencies have produced a lot of positive developments. Bitcoin paved the way for decentralized digital currency, and the technology of blockchain has already been used to improve industries such as finance, healthcare, and real estate (Conway). But despite all

this, the wish of cryptocurrency advocates for a universally accepted decentralized currency such as Bitcoin has many obstacles in its way. One of the greatest problems facing the acceptance and continued existence of cryptocurrency is the environmental damage that is caused by mining.

The very essence of mining is a competition to make more blocks. The creation of every single block requires a large supply of energy. But in order for mining to be a competition, there has to be a loser, and in this case, there are a lot of losers. This means that there are thousands of computers that are each using that same amount of energy, and only one of them actually receives compensation. The system is designed this way on purpose, to provide protection against fraud (Haeringer 10). As previously explained, the energy cost for mining discourages fraud. But the tradeoff for this security is the use of an exorbitant amount of power.

Bitcoin Energy Consumption



Source: BitcoinEnergyConsumption.com - Created with Datawrapper

Fig. 1. Bitcoin's energy consumption from: "Bitcoin Energy Consumption." *Digiconomist*, 2021, digiconomist.net/bitcoin-energy-consumption. Accessed 11 Nov. 2021.

According to a chart by *Digiconomist*, Bitcoin's estimated consumption of energy from 2018 to early 2021 has remained between 40 TWh to 80 TWh. But as 2021 progressed, the estimated energy consumption has shot up to over 160 TWh (see fig. 1). For comparison, countries such as Hungary use 40.3 TWh of electricity, while others such as Switzerland use 62.1 TWh (de Vries). In order to give the blockchain

system security, much of this energy is used by miners who lose the mining race, and thus receive no financial reward in return.

Mining results in a large amount of arguably wasted energy. But the use of this energy is not necessarily a problem, as much as where that energy comes from. Because miners follow the cheapest sources of electricity to get ahead of their competition, they cannot always be picky about whether those sources are environmentally friendly. In 2020, China banned cryptocurrency mining because of its heavy use of energy and its possible risks to the country's economy. Before this, 65% of Bitcoin mining took place in China (Cho, "Bitcoin's Impacts"). Miners flocked to China for their cheap electricity, which they had mostly because of the country's heavy use of coal. Because of China's ban on cryptocurrency mining, miners have begun moving to other countries which also provide cheap power. One of these new hot spots for mining is Kazakhstan, a country which heavily depends on fossil fuels (Cho, "Bitcoin's Impacts"). Due to the use of non-renewable energy, in 2018 Bitcoin had a carbon footprint of 19.0 to 29.6 million metric tons of CO₂ (de Vries).

Another environmental casualty from mining is an extensive amount of harmful waste in the form of electronics. The quantity of this waste, called e-waste, has aggressively increased as technology continues to take over every part of life. In 2016, the countries of the world threw away 49 million tons of e-waste, and now in 2021 that number is up to about 57 million tons (Cho, "What Can We Do About"). The upsurge in e-waste is a serious problem, as most contain damaging materials. Electronics typically contain mercury, beryllium, polluting PVC plastic, and lead, along with other toxic heavy metals. These materials can harm the environment, as well as cause health damage to people who handle them. Some of the problems these chemicals can cause are stillbirths, increased lead level in blood, and neurobehavioral disturbances (Cho, "What Can We Do About"). As of 2012, the US was one of the leading producers of e-waste, second only to China. The US produced 10 million tons of e-waste. Out of the e-waste that was supposed to be recycled, 40% of it was shipped away, mostly to developing countries (Cho, "What Can We Do About"). These countries do not have strict regulations regarding the treatment of e-waste, and often the workers handling it are not equipped with the proper attire to protect them against the toxic metals (Cho, "What Can We Do About").

Mining contributes to the e-waste problem by encouraging the replacement of old equipment. It is unclear how much of the world's produced e-waste is cryptocurrency's fault, but mining heavily

encourages the throwing away of old electronics. To stay competitive, miners must always have the most efficient computers. The product generally used for mining, the ASIC, is built to complete one specific type of task. Therefore, once a miner upgrades to the newest version, the old version is useless, and is added to the growing piles of e-waste (de Vries).

Bitcoin Electronic Waste Generation



Source: BitcoinElectronicWaste.com · Created with Datawrapper

Fig. 2. Bitcoin's production of electronic waste from: "Bitcoin Electronic Waste Monitor." *Digiconomist*, 13 Sept. 2021, digiconomist.net/bitcoin-electronic-waste-monitor/. Accessed 11 Nov. 2021.

This race for better equipment brought Bitcoin from producing 7 kt of e-waste at the beginning of 2018, up to 30 kt of e-waste in early 2021 (see fig. 2). Koomey's law observes that computer efficiency doubles every 1.5 years ("Bitcoin Electronic Waste"). This ensures that at least every 1.5 years mining equipment will become outdated and will need to be replaced, and since the creation of Bitcoin, this pattern has held true. Unless there are significant changes, Bitcoin's e-waste problem will continue to escalate ("Bitcoin Electronic Waste").

Proponents of cryptocurrency argue that the accusations against mining for its energy use are misplaced or incorrect. In a CNBC interview with Meltem Demirors, chief strategy officer of a management firm for digital assets called CoinShares, she spoke about how only high energy use does not make Bitcoin bad. She says, "What we have here is people trying to decide what is or is not a good use of

energy, and [Bitcoin] is incredibly transparent in its energy use while other industries are much more opaque.” She argues that while information on Bitcoin’s energy uses is easy to find, corporations such as banks use similar amounts of power and are more secretive about it. Nonetheless, it is Bitcoin that is accused of wasting energy. Demirors also claims that miners are “incentivized to use renewables” when searching for energy sources, because this saves money in the long run (Browne). Despite this, only 39% of energy used by miners comes from renewable sources, and most of this energy comes from sources that can be harmful in their own right, such as hydropower (Cho, “Bitcoin’s Impacts”).

As cryptocurrency’s prominence increases, more people are attempting to mitigate its environmental damages. In May 2021, a conference of North American cryptocurrency mining companies was convened. During the discussion they formed the Bitcoin Mining Counsel, an open forum used to promote energy source transparency and encourage responsible mining practices. On their website’s FAQ page they write, “You need to start somewhere. We have received an enormous amount of interest from miners around the world and expect our membership numbers to grow quickly.” They admit that making a significant impact will be difficult, but they are optimistic that with more miners joining the community improvements can be made.

The Crypto Climate Accord is another example of miners taking initiative to decrease their carbon footprints. The accord, which was inspired by the Paris Climate Agreement, has two objectives. The first is that by 2030 the signatories will eradicate carbon emissions from their energy use. The 150 miners who signed the accord consisted of companies and individuals. The second goal is the promotion of the adoption of blockchains run completely on renewable energy by 2025 (“Crypto Climate Accord”).

One possible solution is to replace proof-of-work mining altogether. Ethereum, a competing cryptocurrency to Bitcoin, is set to transition from the proof-of-work system to proof-of-stake (Cho, “Bitcoin’s Impacts”). Proof-of-stake replaces the cost of electricity with actual money, or in this case, Ethereum coins. Competitors stake their coins for an opportunity to have their new block be randomly selected, and then appended to the blockchain. The more one stakes, the higher their chances are that their block will be chosen, and that they will receive the reward money. If any proposed blocks have fraudulent information, the creator loses their stake and is banned from the operation. Although proof-of-stake provides a solution to energy costs

and environmental damages, many are concerned that it will result in less decentralized currencies, as those with more Ethereum will have greater advantages (Cho, "Bitcoin's Impacts").

Bitcoin has broken into completely new territory, a territory that has incredible potential value. Bitcoin was the first decentralized digital currency, and the technology of blockchain made that possible. Blockchain has been integrated into new industries since the creation of Bitcoin, and its abilities as a secure record keeping device are becoming more appreciated. But, for all of Bitcoin and blockchain's benefits, continuing on as the technologies have been is not an option. The intense use of energy, often sourced from fossil fuels, is increasing, and there are no signs of it slowing down. Along with Bitcoin's carbon footprint is a trail of e-waste, which will continue to escalate as long as proof-of-work mining is used to build blockchain. Campaigns aiming to limit cryptocurrency's non-renewable energy use have the right idea, but unless a solution to the e-waste problem is found, the only option for Bitcoin will be to alternate to other methods of blockchain building, such as proof-of-stake. Bitcoin was originally a motivator of innovation and original thinking, but it now must adapt in order to survive.

Works Cited

- "Bitcoin Electronic Waste Generation." *Digiconomist*, 13 Sept. 2021, digiconomist.net/bitcoin-electronic-waste-monitor/. Accessed 11 Nov. 2021.
- "Bitcoin Mining Council (BMC): FAQs." *Bitcoin Mining Council*, May 2021, bitcoinminingcouncil.com/. Accessed 11 Nov. 2021.
- Böhme, Rainer, et al. "Bitcoin: Economics, Technology, and Governance." *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, vol. 29, nos. Number 2, spring 2015, pp. 213-23. pdf.
- Browne, Ryan. "Bitcoin's Wild Ride Renews Worries about Its Massive Carbon Footprint." CNBC, 5 Feb. 2021, www.cnbc.com/2021/02/05/bitcoin-btc-surge-renews-worries-about-its-massive-carbon-footprint.html. Accessed 11 Nov. 2021.
- Cho, Renee. "Bitcoin's Impacts on Climate and the Environment." Columbia Climate School, 20 Sept. 2021, news.climate.columbia.edu/2021/09/20/bitcoins-impacts-on-climate-and-the-environment/. Accessed 11 Nov. 2021.

- . "What Can We Do about the Growing E-waste Problem?" Columbia Climate School, 27 Aug. 2018, news.climate.columbia.edu/2018/08/27/growing-e-waste-problem/. Accessed 11 Nov. 2021.
- Conway, Luke. "Blockchain Explained." Edited by Julius Mansa. *Investopedia*, edited by Caleb Silver and Anna Attkisson, Dotdash, 31 May 2021, www.investopedia.com/terms/b/blockchain.asp. Accessed 8 Oct. 2021.
- "Crypto Climate Accord." *Crypto Climate*, 8 Apr. 2021, cryptoclimate.org/accord/. Accessed 11 Nov. 2021.
- "Cryptocurrency." Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, Merriam-Webster, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/cryptocurrency. Accessed 1 Dec. 2021.
- De Vries, Alex. "Renewable Energy Will Not Solve Bitcoin's Sustainability Problem." *Joule*, vol. 3, no. 4, 17 Apr. 2019, www.cell.com/action/showPdf?pii=S2542-4351%2819%2930087-X. Accessed 10 Nov. 2021.
- Haeringer, Guillaume. "Bitcoin: A Revolution?" Economic Analysis of the Digital Revolution, edited by Juan José Ganuza and Gerard Llobet, Elsevier, 2018. SSRN, Elsevier, papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3133346. Accessed 10 Nov. 2021.
- "The History of Bitcoin." Genesis Mining, www.genesis-mining.com/the-history-of-bitcoin. Irfan, Umair. "Bitcoin Is an Energy Hog. Where Is All That Electricity Coming From?" *Vox*, 18 June 2019, www.vox.com/2019/6/18/18642645/bitcoin-energy-price-renewable-china. Accessed 10 Nov. 2021.
- Nakamoto, Satoshi. "Bitcoin: A Peer-to-Peer Electronic Cash System." Bitcoin.org, 31 Oct. 2008, bitcoin.org/bitcoin.pdf. Accessed 10 Nov. 2021.
- Sarreal, Ruth. "History of Online Banking: How Internet Banking Went Mainstream." *GO Banking Rates*, 21 May 2019, www.gobankingrates.com/banking/banks/history-online-banking/. Accessed 10 Nov. 2021.

The Real Housewives of The Awakening

In the novel *The Awakening*, written by Kate Chopin in 1899, we meet a woman, Madame Edna Pontellier, who is vacationing with her husband and two children at a resort owned by the Lebrun family in Grande Isle, Louisiana. Outwardly, the Pontelliers are an ideal couple who coexist among the affluent socialites of New Orleans. Behind closed doors, the relationship is not picture perfect. Edna finds that she is becoming restless with her life and feels stuck within the confines of her social status labels—namely, those of wife and mother. Edna slowly begins to rebel against societal norms and what is deemed “good wife” behavior, leaving her husband and friends shocked, worried, and confused. Among the worried and confused is her dear friend Madame Adele Ratignolle, who is a wholesome woman in all her feminine glory, the ideal wife and doting mother. Although some readers may quickly conclude that Edna and Adele are complete opposites and therefore have absolutely nothing in common, a more careful reader might conclude that their lives and personalities are parallel throughout the novel and their friendship both illuminates and complicates the novel’s theme of femininity and independence clashing with societal expectations. This matters because by examining both women not only as wives and mothers but as complicated people, we can gain a deeper clarity regarding their friendship and the decisions that these characters make that may confuse the modern reader and the contemporary reader as well.

When we delve into the characterization of both Edna Pontellier and Adele Ratignolle in the present day, even with our modern thinking, we cannot help but judge them, sometimes harshly. As mothers, the two women are very different. Although Edna loves her children, her impression of motherhood is that being a mom is a burdensome annoyance, and Edna does not hold the immense responsibility of caring for her children as her prime focus. This may cause the reader to criticize Edna as an uncivilized, heartless woman who is an unsympathetic character; in short, a “bad mom.” As Chopin writes, “She was fond of her children in an uneven, impulsive way. She would sometimes gather them passionately to her heart; she would sometimes forget them” (21). Edna is not a mother-woman, a description alluding to her unsuitability for motherhood. One could

argue that all it takes to be a “good” mother is to love one’s children and provide for them. Edna’s children have all they need for survival and then some; they are sheltered, well-fed, clothed, and educated. Edna provides all these things and makes up for the affection she lacks with child-care and sending her children to their grandmother’s house. The children are clearly cared for. Edna does not fixate all her attention on being a mother, and her mind begins to travel even farther away from them as she attempts to carve out her own sense of freedom within her life. The one place she tastes freedom is by the seashore, and eventually she feels true freedom only when she is alone, naked, and swimming in the ocean. She feels powerful.

Contradistinctively, Adele flourishes within her roles of motherhood and domestication. Adele takes all her domestic duties very seriously and devotes herself wholly to being the perfect idea of what society, especially the elite Creole culture, deems a mother should be—loving, caring, and never free from her children. As Chopin writes, “Edna had prevailed upon Madame Ratignolle to leave the children behind, though she could not induce her to relinquish a diminutive roll of needle-work, which Adele begged to be allowed to slip into the depths of her pocket” (16-17). Although Adele knows she is not going to be knitting or sewing on the beach, she cannot part with even one small piece of her domesticated life, not even for a private moment with a friend. She cannot be alone. Adele only feels true freedom when she is in the thick of raising children and tending to her household—her ocean where she feels powerful. Even Adele’s beauty is perfection, the woman seemingly has it all, if “all” is the goal to be attained. Although Edna is also described as beautiful, she does not have the ethereal quality that Adele holds. Adele is beyond motherhood and womanhood, almost having an angelic Saint-Mary-like quality, untouchable. As Chopin depicts her, “There are no words to describe her save the old ones that have served so often to picture the bygone heroine of romance and the fair lady of our dreams. There was nothing subtle or hidden about her charms; her beauty was all there, flaming and apparent” (11). For someone like Edna, we could assume that those qualities have been unattainable for her to mimic and perhaps would have caused a rift or resentment between the two women. Nonetheless, their friendship is sincere, and they are very fond of each other.

For most women struggling with the pressures of conformity, Adele’s presence in the novel could be a reason for Edna to submit; however, the housewife lifestyle that Adele thrives in only seems to repel Edna further away. In modern times, Edna might be considered a

“wine mom.” This term is explained in more detail by Ashely Fetters in her article “The Many Faces of the Wine Mom” written for *The Atlantic*: “A wine mom, alone, is someone who likes a drink to take the edge off of parenting, and who’s willing to poke fun at that fact” (Fetters). For Adele, there is no “edge” to being a parent. She is living in domesticated bliss.

Ironically, despite their differences, it is Adele who is the catalyst for Edna’s gradual awakening. While they relax on the beach, Adele, a motherly figure even in their friendship, simply asks Edna about her thoughts and feelings. This combination of the calming, tender, and loving presence of Adele combining with the sensuous sea, awakens Edna. She pours out her feelings and emotionally repressed memories. The sea speaks to Edna’s soul, which had been locked, and Adele is the key. As Chopin writes:

Edna did not reveal so much as all this to Madame Ratignolle that summer day when they sat with faces turned to the sea. But a good part of it escaped her. She had put her head down on Madame Ratignolle’s shoulder. She was flushed and felt intoxicated with the sound of her own voice and the unaccustomed taste of candor. It muddled her like wine, or like a first breath of freedom (21).

Therefore, Adele’s role in the novel is comparable to the role of the sea to arouse Edna and stir up all her emotions, both past and present, and set Edna on her course. Surely, this is not Adele’s intention, and consequently, this unusual friendship both illuminates and complicates the novel’s theme of femininity and independence. Edna’s character and her decisions throughout the novel clash with what societal expectations were at the time it was written—and this remains topical today. Although women have gained many rights and equality, many expectations of women have not changed much since 1899.

Edna and Adele’s lives parallel right up until their tragic ending. Edna lacks the ability to focus on others and mainly focuses on herself; Adele focuses only on others and not herself. Yet both characters head laterally, on their separate paths, towards the same conclusion. Thus, as we examine both characters, not only as mothers and wives but as people navigating within a strict societal lens, we can focus our attention on their motivations and not judge them harshly.

Work Cited

- Chopin, Kate. *The Awakening: An Authoritative Text, Biographical and Historical Contexts*, Criticism. 3rd ed., New York City, W.W. Norton et Company, 2018.
- Fetters, Ashley. "The Many Faces of the 'Wine Mom.'" *The Atlantic*, 23 May 2020, www.theatlantic.com/family/archive/2020/05/wine-moms-explained/612001/. Accessed 5 Nov. 2021.

Hannah Williams
ENL108

Drugs Should Be Decriminalized

An arrest for drug possession happens every twenty-five seconds within the United States ("Every Twenty-Five"). This country punishes and vilifies drug users instead of treating them like people with an illness who need help. The war on drugs has been happening for over fifty years and shows no signs of slowing down, as the nation is currently dealing with a heroin and opioid epidemic. Imprisonment is ineffective and expensive and disproportionately targets communities of color. The United States should decriminalize drugs to reduce jail population size and save money, prioritize treatment and health services over punishment, and reduce the racial disparity in the criminal justice system.

Decriminalizing drugs would reduce jail population size and produce tax revenue that could be put back into communities. In the article "The Budgetary Effects of Ending Drug Prohibition," Jeffrey Miron, director of undergraduate studies in Harvard's Economics Department claims, "...drug legalization could generate up to \$106.7 billion in annual budgetary gains for federal, state, and local governments. Those gains would come from two primary sources: decreases in drug enforcement spending and increases in tax revenue." Miron explains that there would be less of a need for money for police, surveillance, and prisons because crime rates and arrests would go down. He acknowledges that the gained tax revenue in states where marijuana has been legalized demonstrates a portion of how much added money that drug decriminalization would bring in. "Washington collected nearly \$70 million in marijuana tax revenues during the first year of legalization, almost exactly the estimate in the 2010 report once adjusted for inflation. In the fiscal year 2016, however, Washington

collected nearly triple that amount, and in the fiscal year 2017 tax revenues reached nearly \$320 million” (Miron). Miron believes that the majority of budgetary gains would come from legalizing other drugs such as cocaine and heroin. The money that the government is gaining from tax revenue can be allocated to education, housing, health services, and treatment for drug users. Additionally, decriminalizing drugs would lead to fewer people in prison and reduced prison costs. In the article “Mass Incarceration: The Whole Pie 2019,” Peter Wagner and Wendy Sawyer claim that “1 in 5 incarcerated people is locked up for a drug offense. 451,000 are incarcerated for nonviolent drug offenses on any given day.” Decriminalizing drugs will reduce the number of prisoners from drug charges and save the United States additional costs. Wagner and Sawyer claim, “Since 1971, the war on drugs has cost the United States an estimated \$1 trillion. In 2015, the federal government spent an estimated \$9.2 million every day to incarcerate people charged with drug-related offenses—that’s more than \$3.3 billion annually.” The cost of incarcerating would be reduced greatly if the United States opted to decriminalize drugs and the additional tax revenue could be put into health and public safety.

The United States should decriminalize drugs in order to prioritize treatment and health services over punishment. In the article “How Portugal is Solving its Opioid Problem,” Rebecca A. Clay explains the positive impact that decriminalizing drugs has had on health in Portugal. Clay believes “Shifting from a criminal approach to a public health one—the so-called Portugal model—has had dramatic results. According to a *New York Times* analysis, the number of heroin users in Portugal has dropped from about 100,000 before the law to just 25,000 today.” She explains that prior to the law, Portugal was on the verge of an epidemic themselves and that decriminalizing drugs has changed the focus away from crime and towards health. “Portugal now has the lowest drug-related death rate in Western Europe, with a mortality rate a tenth of Britain's and a fiftieth of the United States. The number of HIV diagnoses caused by injection drug use has plummeted by more than 90 percent.” She explains that the Portugal model views drug users as people with an illness who need help rather than criminals. The criminal justice costs reduced by decriminalizing drugs can be redirected to treatment and recovery for drugs users and addicts. The article “More Imprisonment Does Not Reduce State Drug Problems,” by Pew Charitable Trusts discovered there was no connection between prison terms and drug misuse. “To test this, Pew compared state drug imprisonment rates with three important measures of drug problems—

self-reported drug use (excluding marijuana), drug arrest, and overdose death—and found no statistically significant relationship between drug imprisonment and these indicators” (“More Imprisonment”). The research highlights that higher rates of drug imprisonment did not translate into lower rates of drug use, arrests, or overdose deaths. Prison is not a successful deterrent to drug use, and decriminalizing drugs will allow people to seek an effective method of rehabilitation and treatment rather than punishment. According to the study “Uses and Abuses of Drug Decriminalization in Portugal” by Hannah Laqueur, assistant professor in the Department of Emergency Medicine at the University of California Davis, the number of people seeking treatment was greater after the decriminalization laws. Laqueur explains, “In 1998, the first year of data collection on drug treatment centers, 23,654 drug users received some form of drug treatment. The number rose to 29,204 in 2000, the year before implementation of the Decriminalization Act; by 2008, the total number in treatment reached 38,532.” Decriminalizing drugs helps to combat the stigma around drug use and addiction which makes asking for help easier. When people aren’t afraid of prison, they are able to confront their problems and recover from drug use.

The United States should decriminalize drugs to reduce the racial disparity in the criminal justice system. The war on drugs targets communities of color and traps black and Latino people in a cycle of poverty and hopelessness. In the Ted Talk, “Why We Need to End The War on Drugs,” Ethan Nadelman, founder of the Drug Policy Alliance explains, “The reason some drugs are legal and others are not have almost nothing to do with science or health or the relative risk of drugs, and almost everything to do with who uses and who is perceived to use particular drugs”(5:19). These laws and policies on drugs were created and enforced to oppress people of color. He explains that while white people were the main consumers of drugs like cocaine, black people using it is what caused racist white people to make laws against it. He explains “The first cocaine prohibition laws were prompted by racist fears of black men sniffing that white powder and forgetting their proper place in Southern society. And the first marijuana prohibition laws, all about fears of Mexican migrants in the West and the Southwest”(5:20). The laws and rhetoric surrounding drugs are built on racism; the criminalization of drugs needs to end because it perpetuates profiling and discrimination in the criminal justice system. The United States needs to eliminate another excuse that police use to arrest and incarcerate black people. In the article, “Ending the War on Drugs: By

the Numbers,” Betsy Pearl explains the consequences that Richard Nixon’s 1971 call for a war on drugs has had on communities of color. She claims that “Black Americans are four times more likely to be arrested for marijuana charges than their white peers.” Black people face discrimination at every level of the criminal justice system: profiling and searching, arrests, and sentencing. White people are less likely to get arrested for drugs and more likely to receive less time behind bars for the same crimes. She states, “Black Americans are nearly six times more likely to be incarcerated for drug-related offenses than their White counterparts, despite equal substance usage rates.” White people are using the drugs at equal rates but their privilege within our society protects them from consequences. Getting rid of arrests and charges for drug possession would decrease the number of people of color in jails and prisons. She states “Almost 80 percent of people serving time for a federal drug offense are black or Latino. In-state prisons, people of color make up 60 percent of those serving time for drug charges.” The majority of people serving time in prison for drug offenses are people of color, yet they make up less of the population in the United States. Black and Latinx people are disproportionately affected by the criminalization of drugs.

The most common argument in opposition to decriminalizing drugs is that it would increase drug usage, but studies show that this isn’t true. “Portugal decriminalized drug possession in 2001. More than a decade later, drug use has remained about the same – but arrests, incarceration, disease, overdose and other harms are all down” (“Drug Decriminalization”). Drug use is already prevalent within our country, and we are dealing with an opioid epidemic; people who want drugs will find a way to get drugs, illegal or not. The Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis’ article “Decriminalizing Pot Doesn’t Lead to Increased Use by Young People” argues that the legalization of marijuana has not increased usage in youth. The author, Jim Dryden claims, “an analysis of marijuana use and arrests in five states that decriminalized marijuana between 2007 and 2015 indicates there was no corresponding rise in the drug’s use among young people, according to research led by Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis.” Younger people are not seeking out drugs more in states where it has been legalized. He explains that “Experts say this is due to a diminished ‘forbidden fruit’ effect and decreased access to marijuana as it moves from the unregulated streets – where there are no age requirements – to inside licensed dispensaries, where you need to be 21 to purchase marijuana.” Marijuana is still illegal for people under 21 and

thus, young people are not given additional access, and their usage remains the same. Decriminalizing drugs shows no real evidence of increased usage.

Drug use and trafficking is the most arrested offense in the U.S and it is not declining. The war on drugs has been happening since the 1970s and the United States is currently dealing with an opioid and heroin epidemic. The system we have is not working, so shouldn't we change it? Decriminalizing drugs would lower the crime rate and prison population, increase tax revenue that can be reallocated to communities, decrease the racial disparity in the criminal justice system, and change the focus from punishment to treatment. Oregon recently became the first state in the U.S to decriminalize drug possession, other states should follow in their footsteps.

Works Cited

- Clay, Rebecca A. "How Portugal Is Solving Its Opioid Problem." *Monitor on Psychology*, American Psychological Association, Oct. 2018, www.apa.org/monitor/2018/10/portugal-opioid
- Dryden, Jim. "Decriminalizing Pot Doesn't Lead to Increased Use by Young People." Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis, 26 Dec. 2018, medicine.wustl.edu/news/decriminalizing-pot-doesnt-lead-to-increased-use-by-young-people/.
- "Drug Decriminalization." Drug Policy Alliance, June 2021, drugpolicy.org/issues/drug-decriminalization.
- "Every Twenty-Five Seconds: The Human Toll of Criminalizing Drug Use in the United States." American Civil Liberties Union, 14 Oct. 2016, www.aclu.org/report/every-25-seconds-human-toll-criminalizing-drug-use-united-states.
- Laqueur, Hannah. "Uses and Abuses of Drug Decriminalization in Portugal: Law & Social Inquiry." *Cambridge Core*, Cambridge University Press, 27 Dec. 2018, www.cambridge.org/core/journals/law-and-social-inquiry/article/uses-and-abuses-of-drug-decriminalization-in-portugal/1F68DA5A8F0369F3FBA6B2B04E454BBE.
- "More Imprisonment Does Not Reduce State Drug Problems." The Pew Charitable Trusts, 8 Mar. 2018, www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/issue-briefs/2018/03/more-imprisonment-does-not-reduce-state-drug-problems.

- Miron, Jeffrey. "The Budgetary Effects of Ending Drug Prohibition." Cato Institute, 23 July 2018, www.cato.org/tax-budget-bulletin/budgetary-effects-ending-drug-prohibition.
- Nadelmann, Ethan, director. Why We Need To End The War on Drugs. *TED*, 12 Nov. 2014, www.ted.com/talks/ethan_nadelmann_why_we_need_to_end_the_war_on_drugs/transcript?language=en.
- Pearl, Betsy. "Ending the War on Drugs: By the Numbers." Center for American Progress, 27 June 2018, www.americanprogress.org/issues/criminal-justice/reports/2018/06/27/452819/ending-war-drugs-numbers/.
- Sawyer, Wendy, and Peter Wagner. "Mass Incarceration: The Whole Pie 2019." *Mass Incarceration: The Whole Pie 2019*. Prison Policy Initiative, 19 Mar. 2019, www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/pie2019.html.

Caitlin Grosso
ENL204

Modernism Analysis: Class Consciousness in "The Garden Party"

"The Garden Party" by Katherine Mansfield was initially published in 1922 as a three-part short story which later became a piece in a collection of other works. To summarize, the piece examines the dynamics that exist within social classes as well as the nuances that isolate labor from leisure. In other words, Mansfield's "The Garden Party" is a commentary on the inequalities, inequities, and imbalances of society in the early 20th century between the bourgeoisie (the upper-middle class) and the working class. It critiques how the labor of the poor class allows for the leisure of the bourgeoisie and the privileges that go hand in hand with having great breadths of time solely dedicated to relaxation and pleasure. The story features many characters in two distinct families and focuses on the epiphanies (or lack thereof) of a young upper-middle class woman, Laura Sheridan, as she navigates the busy day that accompanies the planning of a garden party at her estate. Mansfield utilizes a simplistic style of writing in conjunction with third person omniscient narration to illuminate her readers' own conclusions from the story; both devices allow for an ambiguous analysis of the characters and their consciousness of class.

This leads to salient questions that encompass the work's conclusion: Does Laura Sheridan ultimately develop class consciousness, and what larger theme does the story's enigmatic ending reveal? Laura Sheridan does not reach self-actualization regarding her epiphanies about social class; she obtains a new perspective on how laborers navigate their lives as well as a newfound feeling of empathy for the laboring class but ultimately revels in the comfortable ignorance that her social status provides her. The ending highlights the theme of labor versus leisure that runs adamantly throughout the story.

Laura displays a shallow understanding of what exactly distinguishes a laborer from a member of the upper middle class during interactions, thus showcasing her privilege and lack of genuine class consciousness. While this is proof that there is an attempt on her part to obtain a sense of class consciousness, and certainly more so in comparison to the rest of her bourgeois family, it reveals her ignorance of the daily struggles that laborers endure for the sake of her leisure and pleasure. Her fascination with the workmen who were hired to put up the marquee for the garden party causes her to become awestruck by their unrefined dialogue and mannerisms. These both serve as catalysts for Laura to assume that if she were to partake in similar speech patterns or behaviors, then she herself could be characterized as a "work-girl." In fact, Mansfield writes, "Just to prove how happy she was, just to show the tall fellow how at home she felt, and how she despised stupid conventions, Laura took a big bite of her bread-and-butter as she stared at the little drawing. She felt just like a work-girl" (Mansfield 5). This is juxtaposed with her earlier statement that discloses that "she didn't feel them. Not a bit, not an atom..." (Mansfield 5). She claims that she does not feel a distinction in class, yet she attempts to exude behavior that would be distinct from the upper middle class. The irony presented here underscores that her upbringing within the aestheticism that holds hands with the bourgeois social class has tainted her ability to undergo transformation in this regard, for in her attempts to do so she fails to understand that the laborer's charming "quirks" rest on a foundation that is only concerned with surviving in a society centered around materialistic and superficial needs. Of course, workmen are going to eat outside (under the beating sun as they put up a marquee for Laura to comfortably eat under during the party)—the class divisions when the story was written were so stark that the workmen would not even remotely have been allowed to enjoy a meal inside an upper-middle-class family's home. Furthermore, Laura fails to recognize that class is not a choice—Mansfield's commentary on

Laura's behavior, thoughts, and feelings reveal that she thinks she can essentially play dress-up with the different classes whenever she pleases, that being a workman is merely a fun, pleasurable pastime when it is in reality just work. This showcases her entitlement and privilege since she believes there are no barriers between the classes; she thinks, as a middle-class woman, that she is allowed to cross them as she sees fits. Her inability to distinguish between leisure and labor here also highlights the larger theme of the story.

Laura utilizes her hat as a means of justification to disregard her sympathy for the family of young Carter Scott who died when his horse reared and he was thrown on his head from the cart. She needs it to justify enjoying her garden party with her family, which showcases that she is willing to switch her fascination with the working class on and off at her discretion. Laura morally regresses and experiences a reverse epiphany as she is fed compliments about her beauty and hat. They dominate the early feelings of grief she had for the dead man. For example, Mansfield writes, "Ah, what happiness it is to be with people who all are happy, to press hands, press cheeks, smile into eyes" (Mansfield 19). In this moment, it has become much simpler for Laura to surrender to the refinement of her home, appearance, and party instead of delving into her sympathy for the man and his family. The hat is a distraction from her moral compass and serves as a justification for her to continue the party, which also could demonstrate that she views the act of expressing empathy for the working class as work and interacting with fellow bourgeois at her party as leisure. She continues to blur the lines between work and play.

Lastly, Laura's confrontation with death in the Scott family home allows her to live vicariously and superficially through the grieving relatives, causing her to unnecessarily insert aestheticism into the situation with the ironic apology for her hat as well as with her comment to Laurie thereafter. Mansfield writes, "But all the same you had to cry, and she couldn't go out of the room without saying something to him. Laura gave a loud childish sob. 'Forgive my hat,' she said" (Mansfield 26). Even in a time of dejection, Laura cannot think of anything genuine to say to this poor family other than to draw more attention to the superficial. Her comment is evidence that Laura believes she is doing charity work as the family leisurely enjoys the basket she has brought. She has to force herself to show emotion, which shows how far removed she is from the reality that this working family is experiencing.

Sympathy and class consciousness are two completely different phenomena. It isn't possible for Laura Sheridan to obtain class consciousness because of her social position and lack of experience with the struggles that the working class face daily. Laura's world merely expands and becomes more fascinating as she applies a rose-tinted glass to the harsh realities of laborers. To conclude, the comforts of Laura's lifestyle justify her ignorance and ability to turn a blind eye whenever she pleases. It also enables her to skim the surface of what characterizes a laborer as she is able to witness the leisure in labor—a luxury that the lower classes are not able to afford.

Work Cited

Mansfield, Katherine. "The Garden Party." *East of the Web Short Stories*, Perusall, British Literature II, Professor Rebecca Griffin, Spring, 2022, Cape Cod Community College, Electronic Google Doc uploaded to Perusall.

Andrew Galloway-Sandoval
ENL101

Implicit Bias

Implicit bias is the act of automatically, and more importantly unconsciously, concluding some idea that favors one person or thing, more than another. In a nation where diversity opens the window to many ideas, implicit bias can be extremely impactful. From an early age, people begin developing basic concepts that allow them to make sense of the world. These ideas only become stronger as they are reinforced by the communities they are from. Implicit bias is a major issue that continues to grow in the United States. But, when people give themselves a split second to stop and reflect on their actions, better decisions can be made. For society, these benefits could be critical as they have the potential to produce a more refined and civilized society.

Shankar Vedantam is the host and creator of *Hidden Brain*. In the podcast "The Mind of the Village," he explores ways implicit bias impacts society with the help of his guests. The first guest is Mahzarin Banaji, a psychology professor at Harvard. For the last thirty years she has focused some of her studies on how bias is hidden in the unconscious mind. She found asking people if they are biased difficult

because trying to do so directly leads to aversion, as many people do not recognize their own biases. Banaji believes “we are being driven to act in certain ways, not because we are explicitly prejudiced but because we may carry in our heads the thumbprint of the culture” (qtd. in Vedantam). This means the environment and culture someone is raised in instills beliefs and associations that make them act in certain ways. People are taught how to associate other people and things, and this can be dangerous. But we can measure the bias we carry, which can help curb its dangerous effects.

The most recognized way to measure implicit bias is the Implicit Association Test or the IAT, which was developed by Banaji and her colleagues. The IAT is a set of online tests that measure bias on topics, such as age, gender, weight, and of course race. It uses pictures of a subject, say black faces and white faces, and then words to associate with them that convey positive or negative emotions. First, the participant will group white with positive words and black with negative. Next, they will alternate so black is with good and white is with bad. Each round is consecutively played twice to get more accurate response times, and the test taker is instructed to make decisions as quickly as possible. After getting the response times, the IAT can measure bias based on the participants' hesitation. Banaji states, “the data show that we will slow down [...if] they are not habitual responses for us” (qtd. in Vedantam). The reason people's reactions are slowed down is the unnatural response this creates in the mind, which comes from the individual's nature. People usually do not explicitly say black goes with bad, but often American culture has hidden this idea in their minds. This is evident in American society and can lead to unfortunate results.

Psychology Professor Eric Hehman from Ryerson University talks about how the IAT allowed him to predict police behavior in communities. While researching police use of lethal force, problems emerged gathering information to statistically predict where minorities were being killed more by police. This is because police do not release any numbers on police killings, so he used data from news outlets who kept this information to find where killings were happening. He then used the IAT to predict how bias affects these communities since he suspected implicit rather than explicit bias was the main factor. The IAT requires residential information, so they could take these data points to map bias, especially in communities where it was stronger. Then, using the news outlets, they could look at where homicides occurred. Hehman found that communities showing higher levels of racial bias

have a strong connection to high rates of minority, especially black, groups being killed (Vedantam). But to know how to deal with these problems, society needs to understand implicit bias and its cruciality.

Jennifer L. Eberhardt is a psychologist at Stanford University who has contributed major research to help understand and curb implicit bias. In the TED Talk “How Racial Bias Works – and How to Disrupt It,” she discusses data and research her team has compiled and solutions they have found. Eberhardt mentions profiling and how this is a form of categorization, which is important because at its base, categorization is a helpful tool all humans use. She states, “categorization [...] allow[s] our brains to make judgments more quickly and efficiently [...] just as the categories we create allow us to make quick decisions, they also reinforce bias [...] they render our choices effortless, friction-free. Yet they exact a heavy toll” (Eberhardt). We need categorization to make sense of things. It is what helps us function. But, when people start assuming general ideas about others based on categorization, too often this leads to trouble. How do people stop and think about these things? Eberhardt says by adding friction.

Eberhardt discusses two organizations she assisted along with the help of her team. The first was the tech company Nextdoor. Nextdoor is a way for people to share thoughts as one would on Facebook but focuses on connecting people in the same neighborhood to make communities more friendly, safe, and interactive. Unfortunately, Nextdoor found people would accuse their black neighbors of being suspicious, often for no good reason other than because they are black. So, Eberhardt decided to try a new method with this platform. They used a questionnaire which first asked what the grounds for suspicion were, then asked for a description of physical features excluding skin color. The questions conclude with a definition of racial profiling. They did this because they came to realize that most people engaging in racial profiling do not know they are doing so because they simply do not know what profiling is. So, to solve this problem they took a common phrase seen in public places like airports, and slightly modified it. Nextdoor took the phrase ‘if you see something, say something,’ and created the phrase “if you see something suspicious, say something specific” (Eberhardt). Just by adding these steps to create friction, and by effectively communicating what are grounds for suspicion, they saw racial profiling curbed by 75% on their platform (Eberhardt).

Eberhardt and her team also worked with the Oakland Police Department to reduce the number of unnecessary stops. What they did

was quite simple; first, they encouraged officers to ask themselves why they are pulling someone over and if their reason is legitimate and intelligence led. She states, "It turns out we can add friction to more situations than we think" (Eberhardt). Giving officers questions to ask themselves, or adding friction, gave them a moment to think and reflect on whether their actions are justifiable. Traffic stops fell by 41% the following year and 43% for African Americans alone (Eberhardt). Just by having officers ask themselves simple questions, they saw tremendous results.

Implicit bias surrounds everyone in almost every aspect of life. The impact is evident as this issue prevails and causes tragedy after tragedy. If our nation continues to allow itself to suffer from this disease, we will continue seeing the consequences. Implicit bias is a limiting force which will never allow us to see our full potential. Therefore, friction is a necessity in the US.

Works Cited

- Eberhardt, Jennifer L. "How Racial Bias Works--And How to Disrupt It." *TED*. June 2020,
https://www.ted.com/talks/jennifer_l_eberhardt_how_racial_bias_works_and_how_to_disrupt_it?language=en.
- Vedantam, Shankar. "Radio Replay: The Mind of the Village." *Hidden Brain*, NPR, 09 March, 2018,
<https://www.npr.org/transcripts/591895426>.

To Sing of Prosperity and Race Within One's Perspective of America

Walt Whitman introspectively wrote a poem titled, "I Hear America Singing," which references the voices of America's laborers, workers, and caregivers singing in their prosperity. Whitman was a renowned poet of the American Romanticism era, and his poem "I Hear America Singing" was published in 1860 as part of his poetry collection *Leaves of Grass*. However, American poet and influential leader of the Harlem Renaissance era, Langston Hughes, responded critically to Whitman's poem. Hughes, in response to "I Hear America Singing" wrote his own poem "I, Too" on the premise of rhetorical discussion about race and racism. Hughes wrote and published "I, Too" in his first volume of poetry *The Weary Blues* in 1926, as a retort to Whitman's poem from Hughes' perspective. Hughes' poem describes a black servant breaking the status quo that is oppression and racism. Whitman, however, makes no reference to race whatsoever in his poem. Even though Whitman's poem does not mention race, is it still racially biased? Is there importance in Hughes' writing a response to include race when one could assume Whitman's poem spoke for all races? Whitman's poem is written from the oversaturated white male perspective, while Hughes demonstrates the importance of writing a response from the African American perspective. Hughes' perspective embraces the importance of and reasoning for racial inclusiveness, and his poem includes rhetoric that explains how the African American "America" is different from that of the prosperous white America that Whitman describes.

To establish a premise for Whitman's poem, it begins stating, "I hear America singing, the varied carols I hear," followed by lines including, "those of mechanics... / the carpenter singing... / the mason singing... / the boatman singing... / the shoemaker singing... / the wood-cutter's song" (Whitman). Whitman references these laborious workers singing of their work followed by cheerful and complimentary descriptivism of what their work entails. Whitman uses this poem to describe what he views as a hardworking and proud America where these laborers are singing of their work and are joyful about it. Whitman describes the jobs, but does not define who these workers are, or what their races are. Whitman emphasizes that their daily labors culminate with gathering at night, a "party of young fellows, robust, friendly. This

is the prosperity that Whitman speaks of. That, at the end of their day, these workers are allowed to enjoy themselves and the fruits of their labor. That of what they accomplish they are proud enough to “sing strong melodious songs” and relish in them (Whitman).

Whitman’s poem lacks any racial connotation. It speaks intensely of prosperity and happiness for America’s laborers. The poem ends with these three lines, “Each singing what belongs to him or her and none else, / The day what belongs to the day – at night the party of young fellows, robust, friendly, / singing with open mouths their strong melodious songs.” (Whitman). Within these lines is an indication of success, patriotism, and prosperity. Each American as referenced here is singing of the job that belongs to himself, most notably, the sense of pride that is gathered within the last line, “singing with open mouths their strong melodious songs” (Whitman). The average white American worker may have obtained the sense of pride and prosperity that Whitman ends his poem with. However, one must make the point that this poem was published in 1860, specifically one year before the civil war started. With the inclusion of the line “each singing what belongs to him or her and none else,” Whitman shows that his perspective is limited (Whitman). Slavery was still prevalent within parts of America; therefore, not all Americans could sing of what “belong to him or her and none else” (Whitman). From an African American perspective, such as Langston Hughes’, this poem is completely unrepresentative. Whitman views an America that is hardworking, successful, and an America that is happy with the results. However, from a person of color’s perspective, especially at the time, this perspective is mocking and diminishing.

Hughes immediately rebukes Whitman within the first line of his poem “I, Too” by writing within his first stanza, “I, too, sing America. / I am the darker brother. / They send me to eat in the kitchen / When company comes, / But I laugh, / And eat well, / And grow strong.” (Hughes). Straightaway, Hughes mentions that he is black by saying “I am the darker brother” and he too can sing the songs of America. Hughes is stating that even though he may be black, he is still able to enjoy the fruits of his labor. The reference to “They send me to eat in the kitchen / When company comes,” refers to a time when black Americans were shunned, forced to work in the background and never show their faces. However, even with such rejection, Hughes speaks of his own prosperity, that even through the hardships of slavery and servitude, he may “laugh / and eat well, / and grow strong” (Hughes). He allows himself to prosper in spite of the experiences of racial

mistreatment and denunciation. Hughes uses his personal perspective as an African American to speak about the importance of racial inclusiveness.

Hughes continues his poem speaking of a promising and triumphant future. He writes, "Tomorrow, / I'll be at the table / When company comes. / Nobody'll dare / Say to me, / "eat in the Kitchen," / Then" (Hughes). Hughes is stating that tomorrow when he is eating at the table, nobody will dare question it. Hughes is embracing the existence of a positive future with the absence of hate and racial segregation. Like Whitman, speaking of the America he saw as successful and prosperous, Hughes speaks of an America he would see as prosperous if tomorrow nobody would question why a person of color would be sitting at the dinner table, and not "in the back." Hughes does not feel properly represented in Whitman's poem. This directly results in Hughes' speaking profoundly of what his song of America sounds like. Hughes, in his writing, demonstrates and emphasizes the raw experience of Black Americans and people of color.

Hughes further embraces a prosperous tomorrow, as well as a sense of pride at the end of his poem. Hughes writes, "Besides, / They'll see how beautiful I am / and be ashamed- // I, too, am America." (Hughes). Speaking for all people of color, Hughes is directly saying that they, or America, will see how beautiful people of color really are, and to equalize this thought with the perception of white Americans. Not only are white people able to prosper, but people of color may also sing the songs of America and be beautiful. Hughes further mentions that America, and people who are racist, will be ashamed in this prosperous tomorrow, further stating that eventually people will realize the atrocity that is racism and feel shame. Hughes ends this statement not by repeating the first line, "I too, sing," but instead, "I, too, am America." (Hughes). Hughes insists that as an African American man, he has just as much place in America and its prosperity as everybody else. Even though, as an African American, Hughes faces racial animosity on a day-to-day basis, he can speak of a prosperous future in the generations to come. The significance of this is to portray hope and prosperity to people of color who have been infringed upon, racially, by society.

Whitman and Hughes speak strongly of the America each sees and sings of. However, evidence shows that both Whitman and Hughes speak strongly, and differently, of America from their inherited perspectives. Whitman, a white male who grew up in a Quaker household, writes of a joyous and successful America that sings within its prosperity. In comparison, Hughes as an African American man and

an icon and leader of the Harlem Renaissance era writes of an America where black Americans' rights are infringed upon and disregarded. However, Hughes also spoke of an America where there is hope for a prosperous tomorrow. The importance of Hughes' perspective is that he is able to convey not only the hardships but also the sense of pride that people of color experience and feel through the means of poetic rhetoric. At the time both these poems were written, people of color experienced profound difficulties that are still encountered today. There is reason to suggest that both Whitman's and Hughes' racial background and upbringing influenced their perspectives as well as their writing. Hughes saw the need for people of color to be properly represented within the America he saw, which is a place where people of color could not experience and sing the songs of prosperity that Whitman so strongly spoke about in his poem.

Works Cited

- Hughes, Langston. "I, Too." "Various Modernist Poets," Perusall, American Literature II, Professor Rebecca Griffin, Fall, 2021, Cape Cod Community College, Electronic Google Doc uploaded to Perusall.
- Whitman, Walt. "I Hear America Singing." Poetry Foundation, <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/46480/i-hear-america-singing>.

Erin Olding
HIS207

The Toleration-Persecution Cycle: From the Roman Empire to Iberia

In the Middle Ages, religious power struggles went hand in hand with political power struggles. More often than not, the leader of an empire, a kingdom, a caliphate, any type of "nation," incorporated spiritual belief into its rule; and in the cases of caliphates or holy empires, being religious was a requirement to rule. Being backed by God or gods legitimized one's claim to the throne. So, what happened if a subject believed differently from his or her leader? If the prosperity of the land depended on the beliefs of the people, dissenters would be punished—harshly. But it was not always advantageous to persecute a heretic or an infidel group if keeping them alive meant they could be taxed. However

leaderships handled the issue of nonbelievers, the cyclical pattern of toleration and persecution was apparent. Though it is a cliché, “history repeated itself” with this pattern. In the Roman Empire, Christianity went from a heretical cult to the official religion. In medieval Spain, Islam became the dominant religion by conquest, and subsequently fell out by conquest. The transitional periods between pagan-to-Christian Rome and Muslim-to-Christian Spain both featured religious tolerance that ended with persecution by zealots.

It is well known that Christianity in its youth was a “fringe cult” and Jesus’s crucifixion by the Roman government a staple Bible story. At that time, the Roman belief was that worship of the gods secured the prosperity of the state. Fealty to anything other than the established pantheon jeopardized the government’s power in real and imagined ways; any sort of unrest was blamed on the Christians’ not worshipping the gods, and if the Christians did not believe the emperor was divinely blessed, he had no legitimacy in the eyes of his people. So, Christians were actively persecuted until the Edict of Milan in 313. Many under Roman rule had converted to Christianity even while under threat of persecution (after all, martyrdom earned a fine seat in heaven); thus, stamping the religion out was virtually impossible and would have harmed a good portion of the empire’s populace. The Edict of Milan, with significantly agnostic word choices from Emperor Constantine I, legalized Christianity:

No one whatsoever should be denied the opportunity to give his heart to the observance of the Christian religion, of that religion which he should think best for himself, so that the Supreme Deity, to whose worship we freely yield our hearts may show in all things His usual favor and benevolence.²

Christianity was simply tolerated, not the state’s de facto religion as it would become. This is similar to later Muslim rule of

² Constantine I, “The Edict of Milan,” in *The Internet Medieval Source Book*, ed. Paul Halsall (New York: Fordham University, 1996), accessed March 9, 2022, <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/source/edict-milan.asp>.

Spain (al-Andalus), which, when it came to the minutiae of belief, left the *dhimmī* (Jews and Christians) to their own devices.³ However, wholesale toleration in Rome would not last long. After the religion's legalization, the Roman Empire tried to establish Christian dogma; at this, Constantine was not a Christian, believing his people should observe whatever religion they desired. All types of Christian beliefs were legal until the Council of Nicaea in 325, which shifted tolerance to persecution. The Nicene Creed established that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit of the holy trinity were simultaneously one and the same and three distinct parts. This belief, called Trinitarianism or Nicene Christianity, was now the only legal, tolerated form of Christianity. Arian Christianity, which believed the three parts were separate and Jesus came into existence at his conception rather than being eternal like his father, were now under the scrutiny—and persecution—of dogma. As the transitional period from the Edict of Milan to the Council of Nicaea culminated in the persecution of Arianism, toleration morphed into persecuting zeal.

Christianity became the official religion of the empire under Emperor Theodosius (379-395). Under his rule, non-Christians (and Arian Christians at that) were to “suffer in the first place the chastisement of divine condemnation and the second the punishment of our authority.”⁴ The empire's official adoption of Christianity was only the start of emperors' zealously using the Christian-colored law against heretics, much as emperors under the pantheon had previously done to Christians. Rome's Christianity had entered the persecution period of the tolerance-persecution cycle. Emperor Justinian I (527-565) enacted notably strict laws. In 529, two years into the emperor's reign, he ordered the closure of a

³ For example, three synagogues inhabited Fustat in the tenth century, two for the Rabbinic sect of Jews and one for the Karaite sect. Moreover, the construction of synagogues was almost never policed, despite laws limiting them. See Mark R. Cohen, “Jewish and Islamic Life in the Middle Ages: Through the Window of the Geiro Geniza,” in *History as Prelude: Muslims and Jews in the Medieval Mediterranean*, ed. Joseph V. Montville (Blue Ridge Summit: Lexington Books, 2011), accessed March 9, 2022, ProQuest Ebook Central, 13, 17.

⁴ Theodosius I, “Theodosian Code XVI.i.2,” in *The Internet Medieval Source Book*, ed. Paul Halsall (New York: Fordham University, 1997), accessed March 10, 2022, <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/source/theodcodeXVI.asp>.

prestigious school in Athens. They were commanded “that no-one [Athenian] should teach philosophy nor interpret the laws.”⁵ The Greeks’ prevailing schools of thought were intrinsically tied to the classical, pre-Christian world. The skepticism that characterized ancient Grecian philosophy did not mix with unquestioned, supreme Christian command. So, not only Christian heresy but also every aspect of paganism was persecuted by Justinian, including education.

It was not only polytheistic pagans that Justinian punished, but monotheists who worshiped the same God as well. Justinian did allow the Jewish faith to be practiced but severely limited it. This was not dissimilar to al-Andalusian rule, though some maintain that Muslim rulers of al-Andalus initially provided more equal treatment to the non-ruling religions than Rome did. Regarding Judaism, Justinian allowed only specifically curated Hebrew liturgical texts to be studied and banned one book (the Mishnah) entirely. Anyone who vocally admonished or simply disagreed with the tenets of Christianity was to be severely punished:

If any among them seek to introduce impious vanities, denying the resurrection or the judgment, or the work of God, or that angels are part of creation, we require them everywhere to be expelled forthwith; that no backslider raise his impious voice to contradict the evident purpose of God. Those who utter such sentiments shall be put to death, and thereby the Jewish people shall be purged of the errors which they introduced. ... Those who resist it [this law] or try to put any obstruction in its way, shall first suffer corporal punishment, and then be compelled to live in exile, forfeiting also their property, that

⁵ John Malalas, *Chronicle of John Malalas*, 264.

they flaunt not their impudence
against God and the empire.⁶

Paganism and Judaism were not issues in and of themselves; rather, any religion that was not orthodox Christianity was intolerable. From Constantine to the Byzantine Justinian, the Roman Empire followed the cycle of religious toleration to persecution, but the empire was long gone before it could cycle back to toleration.

While the details differ, the toleration-persecution cycle was also perpetuated in the Islamic caliphate. Optimistic as well as lackluster forms of toleration were exhibited in al-Andalus. On the positive side, al-Andalus was a hub of intellectualism, where thinkers of Muslim, Jewish, and Christian faiths sought knowledge together. Sciences, such as astronomy and mathematics, with arts, such as poetry and translation, were practiced by experts of any faith. A famous example of such an al-Andalusian scholar was Moses Maimonides, a Jewish doctor, philosopher, and author who thrived in the Mediterranean caliphate. “Maimonides also belonged to a literary and philosophical circle that included the qāḍī [an Islamic judge] and poet Ibn Sanā ‘al-Mulk [and] a *faqīh* [an Islamic jurist] named Ibn Ṣawla,” surrounding himself with equally educated people no matter their faith.⁷ Men of differing religions studied together on a wide variety of topics, including their peers’ religions. The sufi Muslim of noble birth Ḥasan ibn Hūd taught Jewish students with Maimonides’ *The Guide for the Perplexed*, a commentary that sought to harmonize scientific works by Aristotle with Rabbinic Judaism.⁸

However, toleration did not mean wholehearted acceptance; non-Muslims of the Abrahamic religions had to pay a tax (*jizya*). Often, affluent *dhimmī* would pool money for their

⁶ Justinian I, “Novella 146: On Jews,” in *The Internet Medieval Source Book*, ed. Paul Halsall (New York: Fordham University, 1998), accessed March 10, 2022, <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/source/novel146.asp>.

⁷ Thomas F. Glick, “Sharing Science: Jews, Muslims, and Practical Science in the Medieval Islamic World,” in *History as Prelude: Muslims and Jews in the Medieval Mediterranean*, ed. Joseph V. Montville (Blue Ridge Summit: Lexington Books, 2011), accessed March 10, 2022, ProQuest Ebook Central, 35.

⁸ Glick, “Sharing Science,” 35.

impoverished brethren, which speaks to the fact that there were *dhimmī* atop the social ladder at all⁹; there were even Jewish members of the Islamic government who unfortunately faced discrimination and violence, perhaps borne of envy.¹⁰ Despite these challenges, al-Andalus was still in the toleration phase of the cycle.

Clothing was to be separate to differentiate the religions, a practice of dehumanizing “othering” we can see in modern examples of discrimination. Clothes also identified who was who when it came to taxation. Christians were forced to wear a specific belt, called a *zunnār*, and anyone not wearing such identifiers—later including patches or the color of clothing—was to be punished by law.¹¹ Though penned centuries earlier (around the 700s or 800s), the Pact of Umar established the laws

that [Christians or Jews] will not imitate [Muslims] in [their] dress, either in the cap, turban, sandals, or parting of the hair...that [they] will keep to [their] own style of dress...[and] that [they] will wear girdles round [their] waists [or else Muslims] were at liberty to treat [Christians or Jews] as enemies and rebels.¹²

Centuries later in al-Andalus, Jewish “dress was largely a matter of personal preference and hardly distinguishable from that of Muslims,” and went unpunished, much to the chagrin of first-class Muslim citizens.¹³ Limiting rules established by the Pact of Umar

⁹ Cohen, “Jewish and Islamic Life in the Middle Ages,” 17.

¹⁰ The Jewish high official (*vizier*) Joseph ibn Naghrela was massacred along with other Jews in al-Andalus in 1066. See Cohen, “Jewish and Islamic Life in the Middle Ages,” 18.

¹¹ Cohen, “Jewish and Islamic Life in the Middle Ages,” 17.

¹² Umar, “Pact of Umar,” in *The Internet Medieval Source Book*, ed. Paul Halsall (New York: Fordham University, 1998), accessed March 31, 2022, <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/source/pact-umar.asp>.

¹³ Cohen, “Jewish and Islamic Life in the Middle Ages,” 17.

were also laxly enforced when it came to the heart of religious activity—houses of worship.

As with Justinian’s policy toward Judaism, Jews and Christians in al-Andalus were limited in their religious practices by the Muslim rulers. By law, new places of worship were not to be constructed, and old ones were to be kept up with old materials: (“[Christians and Jews] will not repair any of such buildings that may fall into ruins”).¹⁴ These laws were rarely enforced in al-Andalus. In the aftermath of a rare persecution period by anti-Semitic caliph al-Hākim, “Jews were permitted to restore their houses of worship despite the official prohibition of repair of dilapidated houses of worship with anything but old building materials.”¹⁵ More common than violent persecution was suppression by which the traditions and teachings of the *dhimmī* were silenced. Christian crosses and Palm Sunday palms, along with Jewish funeral processions, were prohibited public displays—during al-Hākim’s reign, mobs would attack these public activities, specifically Jewish funerals.¹⁶ Within houses of worship, however, the government did not interfere. Even so, nonviolent, public prohibitions of culture were still acts of discrimination. Despite these rules and regulations (enforced or otherwise), Jews and Christians had been relatively tolerated in the Islamic caliphate, only rarely persecuted in select incidents. Unfortunately, just as with the Roman Empire, the rulers’ attitudes changed.

In the 12th century, al-Andalusian territory was taken over by the Almohads, Muslims who were intolerant of the *dhimmī*. Their intolerance was in response to the encroachment of Christendom on dar al-Islam in Europe and North Africa, and the Almohad caliphate stamped out the Christian presence in these areas through forced conversions.¹⁷ This went completely against the original ethos of *jizya*, by which the *dhimmī* could keep their

¹⁴ Umar, “Pact of Umar.”

¹⁵ Cohen, “Jewish and Islamic Life in the Middle Ages,” 17-18.

¹⁶ Cohen, “Jewish and Islamic Life in the Middle Ages,” 18.

¹⁷ Cohen, “Jewish and Islamic Life in the Middle Ages,” 24. See also Ana Monteiro-Ferreira, “The Creation and Concept of Europe and the Ideological Germs of Racism,” *Journal of Pan African Studies* 11, no. 8 (June 2018): 51, *Gale In Context: World History*, accessed April 21, 2022, https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A562050415/WHIC?u=mmln_s_capec&sid=bookmark-WHIC&xid=2afa0f7f.

beliefs as long as they paid a tax. Attacks increased on the Jewish and Christian populations of al-Andalus, even causing Maimonides to flee to Egypt.¹⁸ Violent persecution did not just come from the ruling Muslims; the Reconquista of Spain—the Spanish “reconquest” of previously Christian lands—and the Crusades backed by the Roman Catholic Church were violent wars built upon a dogma of religious intolerance, resulting in religious persecutions by Christians.

By the middle of the 16th century, the Iberian Peninsula was dotted with Christian kingdoms and the Reconquista was effectively complete. In the middle of the reconquest period, Christian monarchies tolerated the culture of their Muslim minorities (and in one kingdom, its Muslim majority¹⁹). However, at the start of the 16th century, the Arabic language, clothing, and other customs pertaining to Islamic culture were forbidden by law.²⁰ The “peaceful evangelizing” promoted by missionaries, such as Hernando de Talavera, had failed to fully convert those who continued to practice Islam in private, and riots against forced conversions deepened the strife between kings and nobles who rallied public burnings of Muslim books.²¹ The intolerance of Islamic religion and culture was just the beginning of the persecution phase of the cycle. Eventually, the medieval Christian persecution of Muslims on the Iberian Peninsula evolved into the race-based slavery of the modern era.

The Reconquista provides an important historical context for the re-Christianized kingdoms of Spain and Portugal’s burgeoning slave trades. Previously, the losers of a military conflict would find themselves enslaved by the victors with little consideration of skin color or religion.²² Europeans had slaves that

¹⁸ Cohen, “Jewish and Islamic Life in the Middle Ages,” 18.

¹⁹ Albeit this majority were forcibly converted “Christians” known as moriscos, in the kingdom of Granada. See James S. Amelang, *Parallel Histories: Muslims and Jews in Inquisitorial Spain* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2013), accessed April 1, 2022, ProQuest Ebook Central, 19.

²⁰ Amelang, *Parallel Histories*, 14-15.

²¹ Amelang, *Parallel Histories*, 17, 19.

²² Monteiro-Ferreira, “Creation and Concept,” 51, 53-54.

were also European, often spoils of war from Christian infighting, like the Fourth Crusade's sack of Eastern Orthodox Constantinople.²³ On the flipside, there were cases of slaves in the Abbasid caliphate rising through military ranks; though not al-Andalusian, this still exemplified the treatment of slaves in a medieval Islamic domain.²⁴ Al-Andalus was ruled by Moors, both from the establishing Umayyad caliphate and later Almohad caliphate. The Moors were ethnically Berbers, therefore ethnically Africans. The successful Reconquista and the rhetoric of the Crusades to reclaim land from heretics combined

under the religious zeal of the Roman Catholic Church [to whom] the Moors were...dark-skinned *infidels*...portrayed as the embodiment of the devil and their enslavement justified precisely by associating them with everything negative.²⁵

Persecuting "infidel" Muslims was used as a justification for slavery, and the complexion of Berber Muslims became demonized. Furthering this justification were Prince Henry of Portugal's 13th century military campaigns in North Africa with "well-known anti-Muslim zeal;" he was later appointed Head of Portugal's Templar-successors, the Order of Christ, "reinforcing the anti-*infidels* spirit" of his militarism much like a Crusader.²⁶ Christendom spread south from Iberia to North Africa, and thus came the enslavement of peoples from conquered lands. Again, reinforcing Crusader rhetoric to focus on the heretical enemy, the enslavement of fellow Christians was outlawed.²⁷ Iberian kingdoms' slaves were the conquered, dark-skinned infidels. While these conquests were "justified" by secular rulers like princes,

²³ Monteiro-Ferreira, "Creation and Concept," 54.

²⁴ Monteiro-Ferreira, "Creation and Concept," 53.

²⁵ Monteiro-Ferreira, "Creation and Concept," 51.

²⁶ Monteiro-Ferreira, "Creation and Concept," 57.

²⁷ Monteiro-Ferreira, "Creation and Concept," 58.

further justification of intolerance and persecution came from churchmen.

Both during and after the time of the Reconquista, many Christian thinkers began to ponder and discuss the morality of slavery. Often, they harkened back to classical thinkers' opinions that Europeans (or Greek peoples) shouldn't be enslaved, only "inferior" outsiders,²⁸ another justification for making the enslavement of fellow light-skinned Europeans illegal. Since the time of Saint Augustine centuries before, Christian doctrine had conflated "enslavement with vice, [and] material slavery—even if it was the result of war—represented the just punishment inflicted by God to the sinners."²⁹ In the early modern era, after expeditions to the Americas and West Indies led to warring against and the enslavement of indigenous peoples by Europeans, church thinkers argued against violence toward those who had never heard of Christianity before. But those "who tried to prevent the expansion of Christianity," who had previously "unjustly occupied" Christian lands—in other words, the Muslims of African descent who ruled the Iberian Peninsula and al-Andalus for hundreds of years—had their brutal treatment justified.³⁰ Armed with the justifications of religion and skin color (and not simply the spoils of war), Europeans began a tumultuous history of inflicting terrible treatment on Africans—all beginning with Christian persecution of Muslims.

The inhumane treatment of enslaved Africans is well documented in United States history, but before the United States was even created, Christian kingdoms like Portugal delivered equally harsh treatment. Conquered and enslaved Africans were responsible for disposing of the city of Lisbon's waste, and the acid produced by chemical reactions would bleach their skin.³¹ It is not hard to imagine that after enslaving a specific group of people for centuries based on "race" and subjecting them to the most repugnant of tasks, like waste disposal, racism would develop and

²⁸ Monteiro-Ferreira, "Creation and Concept," 55.

²⁹ Monteiro-Ferreira, "Creation and Concept," 55.

³⁰ Monteiro-Ferreira, "Creation and Concept," 59.

³¹ Monteiro-Ferreira, "Creation and Concept," 53.

become entwined with European culture. Such a legacy can all be traced back to the cycle of inter-religious toleration and persecution prevalent throughout human history. The cycle occurred in al-Andalus when the tolerant Convivencia was replaced by the fervent persecution of Christians and Jews by the Almohads. So too did the cycle show itself when the tolerant Edict of Milan gave way to the persecution of Jews and pagans by Theodosius and Justinian. The toleration-persecution cycle has scarred history with wounds that have not yet healed. One can easily point to wars between the predominantly Muslim Palestine and Jewish Israel and racial tensions between African and white Americans in the United States, but dwelling on the conflicts born of persecution is ignoring the possibility of mutual toleration evident in toleration's being half the cycle itself. Just like the old saying "history repeats itself," whig history with its faith in human progress is a cliché—but even if this notion is naïve or implausible, periods of toleration and human progress have existed. Whether the toleration-persecution cycle will one day break will be analyzed by historians of the future.

Bibliography

- Amelang, James S. *Parallel Histories: Muslims and Jews in Inquisitorial Spain*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2013. Accessed April 1, 2022. ProQuest Ebook Central.
- Constantine I. "Edict of Milan." In *The Internet Medieval Source Book*, edited by Paul Halsall. New York: Fordham University, 1996. Accessed March 9, 2022.
<https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/source/edict-milan.asp>.
- Justinian I. "Novella 146: On Jews." In *The Internet Medieval Source Book*, edited by Paul Halsall. New York: Fordham University, 1998. Accessed March 10, 2022.
<https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/source/novel146.asp>.
- Malalas, John. *Chronicle of John Malalas*. 264.
- Monteiro-Ferreira, Ana. "The Creation and Concept of Europe and the Ideological Germs of Racism." *Journal of Pan African Studies* 11, no. 8 (June 2018): 51. *Gale In Context: World History*. Accessed April 21, 2022.
https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A562050415/WHIC?u=mlln_s_capecc&sid=bookmark-WHIC&xid=2afa0f7f.
- Montville, Joseph V., ed. *History as Prelude: Muslims and Jews in the Medieval Mediterranean*. Blue Ridge Summit: Lexington Books, 2011. Accessed March 2022. ProQuest Ebook Central.
- Theodosius I. "Theodosian Code XVI.i.2." In *The Internet Medieval Source Book*, edited by Paul Halsall. New York: Fordham University, 1997. Accessed March 10, 2022.
<https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/source/theodcodeXVI.asp>.
- Umar. "Pact of Umar." In *The Internet Medieval Source Book*, edited by Paul Halsall. New York: Fordham University, . Accessed March 31, 2022.
<https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/source/pact-umar.asp>.

If you would like to submit your academic writing for the next edition of

The Write Stuff –

Students can submit their work in three ways:

On campus, drop off a copy in North 204 (Frank Wilkens)

Email a submission to: writestuff@capecod.edu

Submit a submission electronically through the link below:

[Submit your work to the Write Stuff](#)