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Dear Readers,

It is a privilege to write to you as Editor-in-Chief of the University of Connecticut’s Undergraduate Political Review. In this tumultuous semester, we are proud to publish the twelfth edition of the journal. We are in our fifth year as an organization, and we are excited by the growth of our publication.

In addition to submissions from our staff writers, this semester’s edition contains articles by members of our Editorial Board. We have chosen to broadly focus on issues that promise to shape politics as the United States emerges from quarantine, and must navigate a post-pandemic world. In our Editorial essays, our team has outlined the urgency of equitable pandemic recovery, transitions to clean energy, the future of the climate movement, and the ever-present threat of nuclear proliferation.

The articles included in this edition were written by undergraduate students, and they have undergone a rigorous peer-review drafting process overseen by our student-run editorial team. We accepted submissions on a wide range of pressing political issues. We are proud that our writers grapple with topics ranging from Central Appalachia’s economic woes to the reproductive health disparities facing Black mothers.

This publication would not have been possible without the support of several people. I would first like to thank all of our editors and writers for their perseverance through this semester. Several students from our original pool of writers were unable to continue participating in our revision process because of the unique challenges experienced this Spring. Our writers who continued on through the process submitted excellent papers, despite navigating the effects of a global pandemic. We could not have published such quality research articles without a dedicated group of undergraduate students. I would also like to thank Dr. Oksan Bayulgen and the University of Connecticut’s Department of Political Science for their continued support. We are grateful to have a supportive environment in which to improve our writing, editing and analytical skills in political science. It is my pleasure to share that Kempton Campbell and Sofia DiNatale will act as Editor-in-Chief and Assistant Editor-in-Chief for the 2021-2022 year. It has been an honor to lead this publication, and I wish them the best of luck for the future.

Lastly, our readers should know that we accept new writers each semester. We encourage talented University of Connecticut students from all campuses to apply by emailing a resume and writing sample to uconnpoliticalreview@gmail.com.

Sincerely,

Shankara Narayanan | Editor-in-Chief
Class of 2021

Kempton Campbell

Introduction

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic nearly 31.5 million Americans have contracted the virus while nearly 564,000 Americans have died due to complications associated with the virus.¹ In his address on the one-year anniversary of the COVID-19 shutdown, President Joe Biden said, “That’s more deaths than in World War One, World War Two, the Vietnam War, and 9/11 combined. They were husbands, wives, sons and daughters, grandparents, friends, neighbors — young and old”.² On April 21, 2021, President Biden announced that the U.S. had administered 200 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines, a mile marker he set for his first 100 days in office after he reached his goal of 100 million vaccines in only his 59th day in office.³ Furthermore, as of April 23, 2021, 39% of Americans have received one shot while 25% of Americans have been fully vaccinated.⁴ This statistic, while impressive, does not account for racial and ethnic disparities in the distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine. The vaccination rates for Black and Hispanic populations have lagged behind the vaccine rates of White and Asian populations. The lack of vaccination sites within lower income areas and the lack of reliable internet access have both contributed to this disparity. Regardless of rationale, Black and Hispanic communities are getting vaccinated at lower rates compared to other racial and ethnic groups within the American population. The disparities in vaccination rates have severe future implications. Without policies which aim to prioritize the vaccination of Black and Hispanic communities, these populations will contract COVID-19 and die from the virus at much higher rates. Additionally, without policies that prioritize the vaccination of Black and Hispanic communities, disparities between these populations and others will continue to grow as a result of higher rates of poverty due to medical expenses and potential job loss. For these reasons, it is imperative that politicians, on every level of government, act to prioritize the vaccination of marginalized groups, specifically Black and Hispanic populations.

Background

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic the United States has relied on two administrations to handle the outbreak, diminish the infection and death rates, and distribute

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⁴ Ibid.
COVID-19 vaccinations. President Donald Trump and his administration relied heavily on the states to distribute the vaccine. Under President Trump’s administration, states would formulate their own plans for distribution and submit them to the federal government for approval. After approval the federal government would provide each state with a specific amount of vaccines and the state would decide how to distribute them. In contrast to President Trump’s administration, President Biden’s administration has played a much more active role in the distribution of COVID-19 vaccines. In his initial COVID-19 plan, President Biden outlined the creation of 100 federally run vaccine centers around the country. More recently, President Biden has announced that his administration is working on a program which provides U.S. workers with paid time off when they get vaccinated. Other policy steps taken by President Biden’s administration include the creation of thousands of community immunization sites, a $1.9 trillion stimulus package which included $400 billion for combating the pandemic, $50 billion for increased testing, $20 billion to boost vaccinations, and funding to hire 100,000 public health workers. Overall, the actions taken by both administrations starkly contrast one another.

Infection and Death Rates

Over the course of the worldwide pandemic, the U.S. Center for Disease Control (CDC) has tracked a wide range of data sets which pertain to the COVID-19 virus. Two of these data sets include the infection and death rates of various racial and ethnic groups within the United States. The CDC’s data sets show a staggering difference between the infection and death rates of minority groups in comparison to the U.S. population of White Americans. According to their database, the CDC found that Black Americans have 1.1x the infection rates and 1.9x the death rates of White Americans. Furthermore, Hispanic and Latino Americans have 2.0x the infection rates and 2.3x the death rates of White Americans. Lastly, American Indian or Alaskan Natives have 1.6x the rate of infections and 2.4x the rate of deaths when compared to White Americans. Meanwhile, the Asian population has had an almost equal infection (i.e., 0.7x) and death rate (i.e., 1.0x) when compared to White Americans. Given these discrepancies, a policy geared towards prioritizing the vaccination of Black, Hispanic, and American Indian populations is necessary for curbing the continued rise in infection and death rates among marginalized groups.

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9 Ibid.
11 Ibid.
One Dose and Full Vaccination Rates

Unfortunately, this type of policy prioritization has not been fully realized. In addition to the aforementioned datasets, the CDC has also compiled two data sets that track the vaccine rates of various racial and ethnic groups. An analysis of these data sets reveals that the populations which have the highest COVID-19 infection and death rates are also the populations which have the lowest vaccination rates. It should be noted that American Indian and Alaskan Natives are receiving vaccinations in proportion to the proportion of the population they make up.\textsuperscript{12}

If the distribution of vaccines were equitably dispersed among the population, then the amount of vaccines distributed to each racial and ethnic group would be equivalent to the percentage of the population they make up. In a truly equitable system, the Black population, which makes up 13.4\% of the total U.S. population, should account for 13.4\% of the population that has one dose and who are fully vaccinated.\textsuperscript{13} Instead, the current vaccine distribution has created a system in which the Black population accounts for roughly 8.6\% of the U.S. population that has one dose and 8.3\% of the U.S. population that is fully vaccinated.\textsuperscript{14}

Additionally, in an equitable system of vaccine distribution, the Hispanic and Latino populations, which account for 18.5\% of the U.S. population, should account for roughly 18.5\% of the population that has one dose and who are fully vaccinated.\textsuperscript{15} Rather, the current vaccine distribution has created a system in which the Hispanic and Latino populations account for 11.6\% of the U.S. population with one dose and 9.6\% of the U.S. population that is fully vaccinated.\textsuperscript{16}

While these percentage disparities seem miniscule, they account for millions of Black and Hispanic/Latino Americans who would have one dose or who would be fully vaccinated under a more equitable distribution system.

Potential Explanations

In order to address these disparities, it is important to assess their potential causes. Potential causes include: the lack of vaccination centers in lower income areas and the lack of reliable internet access which prevents minority groups from being able to sign up for a vaccine online. The first, and arguably one of the most detrimental causes to these disparities is the lack of vaccine distribution centers in and around Black and Hispanic communities. An analysis conducted by National Public Radio found that vaccination centers were largely missing from

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\textsuperscript{12} "COVID Data Tracker". 2020. \textit{Centers For Disease Control And Prevention}. https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#vaccination-demographic


\textsuperscript{14} "COVID Data Tracker". 2020. \textit{Centers For Disease Control And Prevention}. https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#vaccination-demographic


\textsuperscript{16} "COVID Data Tracker". 2020. \textit{Centers For Disease Control And Prevention}. https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#vaccination-demographic
predominantly Black and Hispanic communities in the South. Additionally, a study conducted by the University of Pittsburgh School of Pharmacy found that Black Americans generally faced longer driving distances to vaccine centers than White Americans. This is compounded by the fact that 14% of Americans of color don’t have access to a vehicle, as compared to 6% of White Americans. Furthermore, 23% of Black Americans and 15% of Hispanic and Latino Americans rely on public transportation. The lack of vaccination centers in and around lower income communities is amplified by the lack of transportation available to Black and Hispanic/Latino Americans, therefore causing a major barrier to vaccine access. Additionally, various news outlets have reported that even when vaccine centers are placed in Black and Hispanic communities, White Americans are those which have been serviced the most.

Another major factor preventing Black and Hispanic/Latino Americans from gaining access to vaccinations is the lack of internet access. COVID-19 vaccine registration systems have largely been hosted through online platforms, thereby causing a barrier to vaccine registration to members of the U.S. population without internet access. According to an April 2021 Pew Research report, 29% of Black households and 35% of Latino and Hispanic households do not have access to a wired broadband connection. This disparity makes it even harder for Black and Hispanic Americans to get COVID-19 vaccinations, therefore accounting for a portion of the vaccination distribution disparities.

While these two explanations may account for a portion of these disparities, it is imperative to point out that further research is required to build a more complete understanding of the causes of these disparities. Furthermore, it is important to note that the vaccine will not be administered to the entire population due to preferential vaccination refusal. Polling data suggests that roughly 25% of Americans will refuse a vaccination, therefore these disparities may be partially exaggerated.

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Implications

The disparities in vaccine distribution have detrimental future consequences to Black and Hispanic/Latino Americans. The lag in vaccines will undoubtedly lead to the continuation of higher infection and death rates among these populations. These infections and deaths will cause even more economic hardship as a result of medical expenses and unemployment caused by the inability to work if infected. These consequences will continue to perpetuate disparities among racial and ethnic groups in the United States. Such disparities include, among other consequences, an increased racial income gap and a rise in Black and Hispanic/Latino homelessness, unemployment, and debt. All of these consequences will add to the historic inequities experienced by Black and Hispanic/Latino Americans.

Course of Action

To create a more equitable vaccine distribution system under which racial and ethnic disparities cease to exist, local, state, and federal representatives should focus on prioritizing vaccine availability to Black and Hispanic/Latino Americans. Arizona and Montana are examples of states that have prioritized racial and ethnic minority groups in their vaccine distribution strategies. These states have passed key legislation which offers free transportation to vaccination sites, directs vaccines to vulnerable communities, and actively monitors and addresses barriers to vaccinations in vulnerable communities.24 State and local officials should use Arizona and Montana as examples to create a more equitable future for these minoritized populations. Furthermore, states should pass legislation which will provide outreach to racial and ethnic minority communities thereby allowing these populations to book vaccination programs without the use of the internet.

On the federal level, President Biden’s COVID-19 vaccine distribution plan specifically prioritizes an equitable “vaccination process to reach those in hard-to-reach, marginalized communities”.25 Furthermore, President Biden’s administration has dedicated billions of dollars in aid to directly combat the pandemic and to escalate COVID-19 testing and vaccination efforts.26 Politicians in the federal government should continue to actively address racial and ethnic disparities in vaccination rates around the U.S. with the goal of creating a more equitable system that diminishes the likelihood of increased future inequality.

Conclusion

From the initial outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic to the present day, minoritized groups have disproportionately been infected and have died from the virus. Unfortunately, this

disproportionality has been compounded by the inequitable distribution of COVID-19 vaccines. Black and Hispanic/Latino Americans are the two groups with the highest infection and death rates and the lowest vaccination rates. These disproportionalities have severe future economic consequences for Black and Hispanic/Latino Americans. Given this reality, politicians need to prioritize the vaccination of these marginalized populations in order to create a more equitable U.S. recovery.
The Transition to Clean Energy: Saving the Planet from the Detriments of Fossil Fuels

Sofia DiNatale

Adaptation and innovation have arguably been humanity’s essential survival strategy. They have introduced us to where we discover ourselves today; unprecedentedly prosperous, however, dwelling dangerously near the restriction of what the world can sustain. Drawing near the ‘boundaries’ of our planet makes our current state exclusive from all preceding times. For humanity to navigate through this century would require self-consciousness and awareness, or Earth will soon become uninhabitable. With this in mind, there are strides necessary to prevent the climate crisis from further advancing- one of these strides is the transition from fossil fuel resources to clean and green energy. There are many factors associated with combating the climate crisis, and it is beyond eliminating the use of plastic straws and water bottles. These include the COVID-19 pandemic, the actions of current and previous government actors, and society itself.

With the COVID-19 pandemic being one of the most extreme economic and energy shocks the world has experienced in decades, there have been evident changes in many aspects of the government, not limited to the energy sector. With its many disadvantages, there is evidence that the global public health crisis could speed the energy transition to clean and renewable energy. There was also an increase in awareness concerning global warming, climate change, ozone depletion, and other detrimental factors for the environment. During the pandemic, the interest in oil has declined as mobility holds 57% of worldwide oil demand.\(^{27}\) Air travel was at a dead end with just fundamental air activities for unforeseen supplies such as clinical benefits. Europe has seen a drop of 90% in air exercises, with worldwide air traffic declined by 60% by the end of Q1, 2020.\(^{28}\) Coronavirus preventive activities are relied upon to decrease the popularity of oil inferred items, like LPG, ethane, naphtha, and lingering fuel.

The most observable contributor to the acceleration of the energy transition is that many people began working from home, which implies reduced traffic congestion on the roads led to insight on clean energy choices as there were highly apparent emissions improvements. As part of COVID-19 recovery, various countries in Europe are encouraging and have encouraged citizens to purchase electric vehicles. The worldwide halt caused by lockdown catalyzed discussion and action for overlooked topics, such as renewable energy. Possibilities for people to not travel helped slow the spread of coronavirus while simultaneously impacting emissions positively. Due to the implications of the pandemic, there were “many historical firsts, such as oil futures trading in the negatives, U.S. renewable energy in the electricity mix surpassing coal and the largest year-over-year drop in global CO\(_2\) emissions.”\(^{29}\) In addition to the plateau of oil use and the rapid decline of coal use, there is also a forecast that CO\(_2\) emissions most likely have already peaked in 2019 and will continue to decline. The caveat here is that in order for the use of oil and coal to diminish, the COVID-19 economic stimulus packages will have to be invested

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\(^{28}\) Ibid.

and spent on renewable energy sources.\textsuperscript{30} Through relief packages, trillions of dollars have been expected to flow into the deployment of low and zero-carbon infrastructure, as well as research and development into technologies for said infrastructure.\textsuperscript{31} Additionally, installation costs have dropped, with some reports mentioning an 83 percent drop in electricity costs from new solar energy plants.\textsuperscript{32} The pandemic has enabled companies seeking to cut greenhouse gas emissions to achieve their goal quicker. COVID-19 has raised awareness towards the pressing matters of the environment, which means that if clean options exist at acceptable cost points, companies will choose to invest in renewable energies.

In the article, \textit{Will Covid-19 put the brakes on the energy transition?}, there were certain obstacles to overcome that were presented by the pandemic itself that were unveiled. Financially harmed companies would have to cut capital expenditures on projects which do not exclude renewable energy projects.\textsuperscript{33} Another challenge posed is that due to low gas and oil prices, the incentive to switch to renewable energy has lost its appeal because, ultimately, companies find money to be of precedent. Although the pandemic has raised awareness of the environment, the world is used to being based on fossil fuel generation capacity, and with that, a world where energy supply follows demand. The concern with renewable energy is that demand follows supply, as clean energy such as wind and solar are independent of other energy demands. The contrarian view here is that there is potential to increase demand opportunities for renewable energy, including closing existing electric resources which provides incentive for coal generators and plants to close, increasing demand by forcing an increase in demand. For example, if companies increase electric vehicle buildout through a national charging network, there is, in turn, an increase in demand. To accelerate the transition to clean energy, companies must invest and take risks in understanding the renewable energy market. Largescale investments are required for the government target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 49\% by 2030.\textsuperscript{34} If proper investments are made, the clean energy trajectory will be attainable with, surprisingly, the aid of the pandemic.

It is important to analyze how other countries, other than the United States, have been affected by the pandemic in conjunction with the energy transition. COVID-19 adversely affected many countries but to different extents. With the government's ability to respond to the virus, the severity of the outbreak; public health, and economic wise, influenced economic relief measures. Understanding the speed and trajectory of the energy transitions is dependent on stimulus decisions is crucial. In an article that inspects countries and the implications associated with them, it states that while “Europe is poised to continue moving in a green direction, some hard-hit countries in Latin America, South Asia, and Africa may be weakened so significantly by

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid.
COVID-19 that their ability to promote energy transitions will be severely constrained”.\textsuperscript{35} Despite this, the pace of energy transitions, specifically the adoption of renewables, is projected to increase in some Northeast and Southeast Asian countries because they have suffered very few disadvantageous health and economic impacts. These specific countries are in good financial standing to make the necessary investments in energy infrastructure, which forecasts that they will gain more by shifting to renewable energy generation due to the adoption of electric vehicles. Lastly, the stimulus measures and policy reforms will also hasten energy transitions, which is an aspect that many countries can take after.

BP World Energy Outlook 2019 indicated that renewable energy would become the largest among all by 2040, even exceeding the share of coal.\textsuperscript{36} It is essential to acknowledge that coal is no longer an economical source of fuel, as it has been in decline for years. Now, comes the question of what will accelerate the transition? Inspecting cost curves, which are the various costs of production is an important factor in accelerating the energy transition. New technologies that align with renewable energy have typically held downward curves, whereas ‘mature’ technologies have stabilized in cost innovation and will now, in turn, have higher costs. Renewable energy sources such as solar energy have become cost-competitive against traditional fossil fuels will be at an advantage and will further have an advantage if the margin of the cost curve increases more.\textsuperscript{37} Another factor to pay attention to is the financing of traditional technologies compared to newer technologies. Because more mature technologies have a higher development period with long cost recovery periods, companies are trending towards investing in the newer technologies. A third factor mentioned in an article regarding how the pandemic is impacting the energy transition is the possibilities offered by the new technologies in relation to renewable energy. There is evidence that renewables can bring about new products and innovations which leads to a dip in cost curves and more reliability.

There is evidence that despite efforts to derail the clean energy transition, Trump was ultimately unsuccessful in doing so during his term as the President of the United States. The America First Energy plan was implemented into the climate action sector of the House upon his inauguration in 2017. The plan promised to tackle “burdensome regulations on our energy industry,” reduce climate funding, and exit the Paris agreement.\textsuperscript{38} President Trump immediately took steps to unwind President Obama’s clean energy initiatives, to strip U.S. energy policy of environmental and climate concerns, and to focus solely on two priorities: producing low-cost energy (fossil fuel sources and natural gas) and creating American jobs. Despite these efforts, between 2018 and 2019, the country saw the single biggest decline in energy-related CO\textsuperscript{2} emissions of any country in the world, according to the International Energy Agency.\textsuperscript{39} Gregory Wetstone, president of the American Council on Renewable Energy, stated that “the renewables

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid.
sector has grown substantially throughout the four years of Trump, despite the significant headwinds his administration has sought to conjure, we saw record levels of investment in renewables in 2019, with $60 billion invested in wind, solar and related enabling technologies in the US.\[^{40}\]

With a more environmentally conscious administration in 2021, there are even more efforts towards sustainable energy in the few months following the inauguration of President Biden, which includes numerous executive orders. The Biden administration has been outlining policies geared towards infrastructure and funding, and more recently includes the American Jobs Plan. Multiple provisions in this plan involve investment to drive clean energy. First, is in the transmission sector, as it calls on Congress to invest $100 billion in targeted investment tax credit that incentivizes the “buildout of high-voltage capacity power lines and proposes a ten-year extension and phase down of an expanded direct-pay investment tax credit (ITC) and production tax credit (PTC) for clean energy generation and storage.”\[^{41}\] In terms of federal procurement, the plan plans to use the federal government’s purchasing power to purchase unremittingly clean power for federal buildings to drive clean energy deployment across the market. As mentioned, incentivizing electric vehicles is also crucial in the acceleration of the energy transition. The plan proposes $74 billion investment in the electric vehicle market, giving citizens incentives to buy American-made E.V.s. Infrastructure permitting, which is the notion that "proposed infrastructure projects must obtain various permits and environmental reviews to ensure they are designed and constructed in a manner that protects public health, safety, cultural resources, and the environment, and that the public is informed about their potential impacts"\[^{42}\]. The American Jobs Plan wants to use infrastructure permitting to expedite federal decisions while maximizing equity, health, and environmental benefits. Other important provisions of the plan include block grants that support clean energy, worker empowerment, and environmental and the Energy Efficiency and Clean Electricity Standard, requiring utility and grid operators to improve energy efficiency and promote carbon-pollution-free energy. Lastly, in terms of research and development, Congress is called to invest $35 billion in the full range of solutions needed to achieve technology breakthroughs that address the climate crisis and position America as the global leader in clean energy technology and clean energy jobs.\[^{43}\]

With proper investments and an aware government, the transition to clean energy is in the foreseeable future, with the aid of the pandemic. Our country has many opportunities to fully commit to a clean energy future. We have been given the tools, and now it is time to take action. The future of our environment is in the hands of our country and the world.

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\[^{43}\] Ibid.
Climate Action vs. Climate Justice: The History of the Climate Movement

Mohammed Hussain

In 1982, in North Carolina, the state government announced their decision to place a hazardous landfill in the predominantly poor, Black community of Warren County. With the support of the NAACP, the residents fought back, in what would be one of the first major instances of climate justice activism in the United States. While their protests ultimately failed to prevent the landfill from being sited, their actions marked the beginning of a greater movement against environmental injustice, leading to a series of groundbreaking studies such as *Toxic Wastes and Race*, which found race to be one of the most potent variables in predicting where hazardous waste plants in the US were sited.

Throughout the 1980s, outrage grew in poor, predominantly Black and brown communities, which had been deemed most suitable for hazardous facilities by polluting industries and environmental permitting agencies. These communities were chosen in part because they were least able to resist and organize against powerful state and corporate actors. Those living by pipelines or waste plants suffer higher rates of asthma and cancer, and often have their water supplies contaminated while the government claims, disingenuously, that the industries would lead to economic prosperity for the residents.

While the climate justice movement grew on a grassroots level in communities directly affected by climate change, the climate action movement grew in more formally established groups and NGOs. There is a crucial distinction to make here between these two groups. Climate action activists, historically overwhelmingly white and wealthy, were motivated less by the immediate effects of climate change, and more by the increasing number of studies at the time, which found that greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere were increasing at an unprecedented rate due to fossil fuels. The growing climate justice movement, on the other hand, explicitly differentiated itself from the climate action movement by opposing what the former believed was inaccessible, status quo, climate activism that failed to acknowledge the disproportionate impact of climate change on multiply-marginalized people. Mainstream climate groups tended to frame climate change as a scientific, distant issue while climate justice groups emphasized that, in their experience, environmental destruction was already very real.

Tensions between these groups continued to heighten over the course of the 1980s, culminating in a letter to the largest environmental groups, signed by 100 Black and Brown community leaders in 1990, articulating racist and exclusionary practices in the climate action

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46 Ibid.
48 Ibid.
The response by the climate action groups was weak, and in 1991, the climate justice movement established itself with the first annual National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit. The summit both marked a turning point for the climate justice movement as a whole, but also asserted it as a movement distinct from climate action. One year later, climate justice activists celebrated a monumental victory, with the creation of the Office of Environmental Equity within the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Disadvantaged American communities were not alone in their fight against corporate and state power. The wave of neoliberal globalism that occurred during the 1980’s sent multinational corporations into developing nations, where they promised economic prosperity, but instead created wasteful factories with inhumane working conditions that plagued the local environment. Indigenous communities around the world protested in reaction, demanding not only climate justice, but also economic and social justice. Climate justice groups in the US stood in solidarity with their fellow activists abroad, strengthening the global movement. It was also at this time that international leaders began to formalize institutions and coalitions to fight climate change, with the creation of the first United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 1992 and the first annual global Conference of Parties (COP) on climate change in 1995. However, while climate action groups were quick to applaud these actions, climate justice groups recognized the business-as-usual approach of these events, as well as their exclusivity, and rejected them.

It was not until 2007 that the mainstream climate change movement really took off. Up to this point, there were plenty of climate activist groups, but climate change as an issue still lacked the same mobilizing power and recognition that other social justice issues were able to provoke. The rise in recognition was largely a result of Vice President Al Gore’s passionate advocacy for climate change, and his famous documentary on climate change, An Inconvenient Truth. Increased mobilization for the movement was also triggered by successful efforts of the Energy Action Coalition (EAC), founded a couple of years earlier, in engaging primarily college student activists. Later that year, the Citizens Climate Lobby was also founded to coordinate political activism against climate change. Climate change’s rise in the national conversation continued into 2008: famous climate activist Bill McKibben founded the group 350.org, both

51 Ibid.
54 Ibid.
58 Ibid.
59 Ibid.
presidential nominees agreed climate change was a serious issue, and arguably the most environmentally conscious president ever, Barack Obama, was elected into office.\textsuperscript{60}

The year 2009 was transformative for climate justice. Climate justice groups around the country organized a day of mass action on November 30th, a move that was largely successful, resulting in nonviolent acts of civil disobedience in many different states.\textsuperscript{61} Two weeks later, during the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP) in Denmark, tens of thousands of people, mainly in the streets of Copenhagen, took to the streets in protest. These protests were largely in anger at the ineffectiveness of the COP meetings in the past, and at the anticipated weak, corporate-friendly, decisions that the current conference would produce. This suspicion was all but confirmed with the vague, non-binding agreements made by participating world leaders at the end of the summit.\textsuperscript{62}

Disappointment continued into the new decade, with Obama’s failures to address the climate crisis adequately. Climate action leaders began to realize the potential of the more radical approach associated with the climate justice movement; in 2011, 350, one of the faces of the traditional mainstream climate movements, pledged their support for a climate justice centered civil disobedience campaign in Washington D.C. against a new pipeline.\textsuperscript{63} The same year, 350 appointed Naomi Klein, veteran environmentalist, but more significantly, outspoken anti-capitalist and anti-corporate globalist, to its national board.\textsuperscript{64} In 2012, the group began their revolutionary “Fossil Free” campaign, urging students to pressure their universities to divest from the fossil fuel industry. This resulted in a massive increase in student climate activists, and shifted the mainstream movement even further towards a climate justice framework; this might not necessarily have been a goal of the campaign, but for students growing up in the age of the 2008 financial crisis, Occupy Wall Street, and deepening economic inequality, radical, left wing associated climate justice was more appealing than climate action.\textsuperscript{65}

However, for all efforts by the climate action movement to shift towards climate justice, deep divisions remained. Aside from 350, most climate action groups failed to deliver changes in their organizations that were genuinely rooted in climate justice and instead continued weak, superficial campaigns to make themselves more diverse and inclusive. This can perhaps be most exemplified by the response by most climate action groups to the proposed construction of Keystone XL (KXL) pipeline that would carry oil from Alberta to Texas. The KXL pipeline was clear evidence of the inextricable connections between climate change, corporate greed, and their disproportionate effects on POC, and an equally clear opportunity for climate action groups to address this intersectionality of the issue in their response.\textsuperscript{66} However, while climate justice

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{Ibid} Ibid.
\bibitem{Ibid} Ibid.
\end{thebibliography}
groups began a wave of civil disobedience and stood in solidarity with frontline indigenous communities, mainstream groups focused efforts on Washington. They spoke in scientific terms concerning the consequences of the pipeline, and the leaks and spills that might occur, while largely ignoring the humanitarian crisis posed by construction, and its roots in corporate greed.67

In 2013, the two climate movements, still mistrustful as ever of each other, made an effort to unite. The Building Equity and Alignment (BEA) Initiative was launched to create more equitable funding between climate justice and climate action groups.68 The Extreme Energy Extraction Collaborative, (EEEC) was created to bring activists from the two camps together to oppose harmful gas and coal extraction.69 Many climate action groups slowly and reluctantly began to challenge corporate power more than they had in the past, and to address fossil fuel companies directly rather than by way of the government. The People’s Climate March (PCM) in 2014, organized by global activist group, AVAAZ, 350, and many other climate justice groups, is considered a major success in the mission to bring together climate action and climate justice activists. As well as being the largest climate march in history, PCM differed from so many previous climate movement events in that frontline communities headlined the protests and climate justice groups were given a legitimate seat at the table in the planning. The Mobilization Support Team had the usual actors—groups like Sierra Club and 350—but also included Climate Justice Alliance, UPROSE, a host of unions, and other organizations with roots in social, economic, and racial justice.70 The successes of the movement carried 2015. In November, climate groups, both moderate and more radical, celebrated a major victory when Obama finally announced he would not approve the KXL pipeline.71 A month later good news continued after the 21st COP conference, delivered a somewhat concrete agreement between partnering nations, for the first time in its history, establishing what would come to be popularly known as the Paris agreement.72

While tensions remained between climate justice and climate action groups, the People’s Climate March, along with other success in the movement brought the two camps closer together than ever before. However, the 2016 Democratic primary election threatened to fracture this already fragile relationship. Climate groups had a big decision to make between endorsing Bernie Sanders, self-proclaimed democratic socialist, running on climate change as a major tenet of his campaign, or the more moderate—and to many, more electable—Hillary Clinton, who acknowledged climate change but did not address the issue to the degree that the Sanders’ campaign did. This difference in platforms is perhaps symbolized by Sanders’ staunch opposition to fracking in comparison to Clinton’s belief that it was a necessary practice, but one that needed “smart regulations”.73 The climate movement split in support for the two candidates, with older, larger, more established, climate groups like the League of Conservation Voters and

69 Ibid.
70 Ibid.
Sierra Club backing Clinton, and newer, more progressive, grassroots groups like Friends of the Earth Action, 350, and other climate justice affiliated groups backing Sanders. When Clinton eventually received the nomination, many climate justice activists looked on in anger, as they viewed her climate plans as too weak, her political record as too problematic, and her ties to Wall Street as too deep. However, once Donald Trump received the Republican nomination, the entire movement rallied against him, recognizing the danger of a candidate who had called climate change a “hoax” and promised to roll back EPA regulations and restart the KXL pipeline if elected. Climate justice groups begrudgingly came to Clinton's support.

The election of billionaire Republican Donald Trump, against all electoral odds, threw the entire climate movement into panic, anger, and grief. During his campaign, Trump barely mentioned climate change as an issue, and went as far as calling it a hoax perpetuated by China. All around the country, climate groups released statements of sadness and anger but vowed to fight harder for climate action and climate justice. True to his anti-climate promises, Trump nominated Scott Pruitt, climate change denier, to be the head of the EPA, Rex Tillerson, CEO of ExxonMobil, to be Secretary of State, and Rick Perry to be Secretary of Energy, each one of these individuals, having a history of climate denial or ties to the fossil fuel industry. Five months into office, Trump then announced America’s withdrawal from the 2016 Paris Agreement, sowing more despair in the climate movement.

While undoubtedly negative for the movement, the new presidency did offer the climate groups the chance to build and solidify their relationships with other social justice movements that also felt under threat from the new administration. Capitalizing on this opportunity, climate groups showed up in numbers at the momentous Women’s March in 2017, standing in solidarity with women, Black people, and the LGBTQ+ community. Like other social justice movements, the climate movement saw dramatic increases in popularity following Trump’s election. Major climate groups like Sierra Club, 350, and Greenpeace all enjoyed large increases in donations and membership, while Trump’s anti-climate stance brought the disapproval of even the most politically inactive citizens. This increase in popularity gave inspiration for the second People’s Climate March, an event planned similarly to the successful first PCM three years prior. The march took place in April of 2017, and was organized definitively under the banner of climate justice.

75 Ibid
79 Brian Kahn, “Climate Advocates Get a Huge Donation Trump Bump.” Climate Central, November 16, 2016
Today, the climate movement remains divided along the lines of the Sanders and Clinton camps, and climate justice activists remain weary climate action groups that have been slow to acknowledge and act on their weakness in building an inclusive and diverse movement. However, Trump’s election, Sander’s rise in popularity throughout the past five years, and the current racial reckoning have encouraged and pushed climate action groups to become more intersectional and adopt changes that diversify, include, and build solidarity with Black and Brown people. With the election of progressive candidate Joe Biden in 2021, the future looks a little brighter for the movement, and it looks as if climate justice principles will be fully integrated into the movement in the near future.
America’s Nuclear Weapons: The Pinnacle of Deterrence or Destruction?

Marianna Kalander

Since its origin after WWII, the U.S.’s nuclear weapons and nuclear arsenal has had tremendous impacts on the political and military landscape. The arguments of possession and utilization of these weapons is a double-sided coin, in which many plead that the weapons are no longer necessary, and rather induce immense fear and anxiety, while others argue that the weapons serve important purposes of safety. These arguments have manifested in forms of public policies, national organizations, and various actions taken by political leaders. However, it seems that how the country would look without nuclear weapons will continue to be an open-ended question.

To understand how dynamic nuclear weapons have become, one must look at their complicated history. For one, nuclear weapons have always been politicized. With rumors circulating on the war front that Nazi Germany may build a nuclear bomb, the U.S. government launched a top-secret program, the Manhattan Project, to build their own bomb in 1942. The project grew, eventually having facility sites across the country and working scientists who were both American and refugees from fascistic countries. However, the project was so secretive that most of the scientists and personnel did not know the true reasoning behind their work. In fact, “Vice-President Truman had never heard of the Manhattan Project until he became President Truman”.81 After three years of work, the U.S. introduced their first set of nuclear weapons through the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. Clearly, the purpose of the bomb went from beating Nazi Germany in a race to now a prominent war weapon. Not only did these bombings propel Japan to officially surrender from WWII, “it’s estimated roughly 70,000 to 135,000 people died in Hiroshima and 60,000 to 80,000 people died in Nagasaki, both from acute exposure to the blasts and from long-term side effects of radiation.”82 The devastation of these bombings would have long-term implications as well. Now, the U.S. had credibility on their side, and would adopt the strategy of deterrence to intimidate enemies from any future attacks. Specifically, deterrence was predominantly used during the Cold War. As we know, no actual war ever ensued, but many situations, if not mediated, could have led to one. A commonly known incident is the Cuban Missile Crisis. With the U.S. discovering that the Soviet Union was building nuclear missile sites in Cuba, President Kennedy implemented naval blockades. Every U.S. action taken had to be meticulously planned, as one wrong move could be seen as an act of war, and would yield a humanity-destroying nuclear war. Thus, “the leaders of both superpowers publicly agreed to a deal in which the Soviets would dismantle the weapon sites in exchange for a pledge from the United States not to invade Cuba”.83 Both countries having nuclear weapons raised stakes and tensions very high in this situation.

Today, and ever since 1945, the U.S. has not had to deploy any nuclear weapons. However, our nuclear stockpile is large in quantity and diversity. Specifically, the U.S. has

“approximately 3,800 stockpiled warheads and 2,000 retired warheads awaiting dismantlement, for a total of 5,800 warheads as of early 2020”.  

This is only second on the list of countries with nuclear weapons, behind Russia’s 6375. Having these weapons always leaves the possibility of them being utilized. This leads into the argument, which can be heard about since the Manhattan Project, about the necessity of nuclear weapons in general.

Ever since the start of the Manhattan Project, hesitant voices can be heard about aspects of nuclear weapons, from their overall necessity to how they will be controlled by the United States. For example, after the U.S. successfully tested one of its first bombs just a few weeks before the bombings on Japan, a petition circulated amongst the scientists to try to prevent the bombs from being used as a war weapon. One scientist, who was interviewed many years later in 2014, stated, “I remember the petition to not to use the bomb as a weapon came around just after the Trinity test”. Thus, some of the scientists who helped create the bombs in the first place were hesitant of their use—although they were in the dark about the plans for Japan. From there, through history, knowing how deadly and intense nuclear weapons are, many people, including many U.S. Presidents, took vows to slowly decrease America’s nuclear stockpile. For example, President Obama proclaimed once in a speech, “But among those nations like my own that hold nuclear stockpiles, we must have the courage to escape the logic of fear and pursue a world without them”. Presidents, like Obama, have made pledges to lead into a nuclear-free world, but obviously have not been successful.

In conjunction to that, it can be argued that many Americans would favor the abolishment of nuclear weapons. Many fear that nuclear weapons can lead to a deadly nuclear war and bring the end to humanity, in which these weapons bring about immense fear and anxiety. Specifically, in a poll done by the Pew Research Center, 73% saw the spread of nuclear weapons as a major threat compared to 23% who thought it was only a minor threat and 3% who did not think it was a threat. Simply knowing that nuclear weapons exist in the U.S. and around the world and can bring about a nuclear war at any moment leads many people to be fearful of America’s future. Especially with recent conflicts with North Korea and Iran’s nuclear efforts and stockpiles, people fear that America’s destruction could be even more possible.

The complete other side of the argument of nuclear weapon possession and utilization is that these weapons are necessary for America’s overall safety. For one, possessing these weapons has allowed the U.S. to successfully practice the strategy of deterrence. Specifically, “nuclear weapons represent the ultimate defense of the nation, a deterrent against any and all

85 Ibid.
potential adversaries." These weapons allow the U.S. to flex their capability and credibility, with the bombings of Japan in 1945 as evidence. For example, both the U.S. and Soviet Union having nuclear weapons led to both sides being deterred from taking physical action against one another, as both knew the destructive nuclear war that would ensue. Thus, in general, the biggest support to this argument is that the U.S. has never experienced an enemy nuclear attack or had to deploy these weapons (which could potentially lead to a war) since 1945. Americans may be anxious and fearful, but at least they are safe.

Coupled with the idea of safety comes the argument that if the U.S. began to deplete their nuclear arsenal, then it could be vulnerable to enemy attack. Just because the U.S. makes efforts to decrease their nuclear numbers does not mean that other nuclear states would follow suit. In addition, trying to convince other nuclear states to follow suit could be a large enough challenge in and of itself. Thus, the U.S. eventually having no nuclear weapons in a world where other countries do, could do more harm than good. It could lead to enemy attacks that would yield America unprotected, unable to fight back, and essentially destroyed. Having nuclear weapons would at least give the U.S. a fighting chance if war broke out.

Many actions have been taken in effort to slowly diminish, or at least contain, the number of nuclear weapons across the world. For example, a landmark action was the adoption of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which opened in 1968 and was extended indefinitely in 1995. In summary, the 191 countries, including the likes of the U.S. and Russia, that signed onto the NPT commit to “prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and weapons technology, to promote cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and to further the goal of achieving nuclear disarmament and general and complete disarmament.” The large number of countries that have signed onto the treaty sends an international signal that the hope for a nuclear free world is not just an American dream. Measures to ensure compliance are also put into place, such as inspections conducted by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

Now, the NPT has been successful in some regards. The treaty has been successful in aspects of non-proliferation - as many countries that had the capabilities to get nuclear weapons did not, which was a large fear of President Kennedy at the time of the treaty's creation. Specifically, “while nuclear proliferation continues, and nine countries are known to possess nuclear weapons, the fear once expressed by John F. Kennedy that at least a couple dozen countries could have the bomb by the 21st century has not panned out.” However, on the flip side, the treaty has not been successful in disarmament, as nuclear weapons are still present. Complete disarmament around the world would take a lot of resources and cooperation, which is

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91 Ibid.
easier said than done. In all, the NPT lays the foundation for a nuclear-free world, in which other work must be done to lead to total disarmament.

Similarly, another effort to control nuclear weapons came via the Iran Nuclear Deal, which was created to stymie Iran’s nuclear activities. Specifically, the deal was created as a result of fear by many international powers of Iran’s extensive nuclear capabilities. This deal included Iran and a group of nations referred to as the P5+1, which are the U.S., UK, France, Russia, China and Germany, where “Iran agreed to limit its sensitive nuclear activities and allow in international inspectors in return for the lifting of crippling economic sanctions.”93 The P5+1 nations would lift economic sanctions on Iran as long as Iran limited their nuclear activities. The U.S. was a participant in this deal until 2018, when President Trump withdrew and re-imposed sanctions on Iran. Now, President Biden has begun talks of re-entering the U.S. back into this deal, further progressing the hope of containing nuclear activities.

Finally, a large movement starting in 2008, called Global Zero, has surfaced with the strict goal of eliminating nuclear weapons completely from the world. More extreme than the specific clauses of the NPT, the Global Zero movement wants to see nuclear weapons gone permanently, rather than contained and slowly decreased. Voicing how nuclear weapons make the world actually unsafe, the movement has grown to “include a global network of world leaders, senior military commanders, and national security experts that spans the political spectrum and transcends borders and conflict zones.”94 The movement has roadmaps to reduce the world stockpile to zero by 2030, in which it is thought that even one nuclear weapon is one too many.

When America introduced the first atomic bomb in 1945, the political and military world would be changed forever. A weapon now existed that could easily destroy large amounts of land and civilians. Even before the weapons were first used, debates arose about the necessity and use of these weapons, which can still be seen today. On one side, many argue that the weapons bring the world on the brink of destruction, and bring an immense amount of fear, while others argue the importance of the weapons for deterrence and overall safety. Treaties and organizations have been created to support a nuclear free world, but have not accomplished the goal entirely.

Darkness Falls Upon America's Backyard: Evaluating Central Appalachia’s Woes

Jack Bergantino

The United States prides itself on being a nation that offers equity and opportunity to its citizens. However, in recent decades, regions of relative wealth and poverty have come to define the American landscape. While coastal communities have fared well with consistently declining rates of unemployment and increasing rates of college graduation, Central Appalachia, which comprises parts of Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia, continues to falter with diverging employment and income levels relative to other areas of the country.

Appalachia is comprised of 420 counties across 13 states, spanning from southern New York to northern Mississippi. Twenty-five million Americans live within the region, 42% of which is considered rural. In 1963, at Appalachian governors' request, President John F. Kennedy formed the President's Appalachian Regional Commission to assess the region's needs. Citing 1960 U.S. Census data, the Commission published a report that nearly one-third of the area's population lived under the poverty line compared with about 1 in 5 nationwide. Indeed, the 1964 PARC report provided the basis for establishing the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) in 1965. The ARC, one of the most extensive place-based regional development programs, has since invested over $4.5 billion into Appalachian communities with the principal goal of achieving socioeconomic parity with the rest of the nation. Federal, state, and local funding has matched this funding by more than $10 billion.

Despite these significant expenditures, Appalachia still lags behind the rest of the nation. The divergence is particularly acute in the Central region, which contains Appalachia's most mountainous terrain. The area historically relied upon extractive industries, including logging and coal mining, as important income sources. In fact, 33.8% of West Virginians in 1990 were employed in logging and mining, declining to 18.6% by 2020. Appalachian coal production and employment have faced decades of steady declines from a zenith in the 1940s, penalizing the pockets of the region (primarily concentrated in eastern Kentucky and southwestern West Virginia) that relied upon the coal industry for employment. These declines became even more pronounced following the coal bust in the 1980s: rural central Appalachia's per capita household median income is now just three-quarters of the greater region's income and just over...
half of the nation's. Whereas Appalachia's overall poverty rate decreased by 3 percent (on par with the country), the central sub-region endured a 2 percent increase from 2012 to 2017.

How can a region with plentiful natural resources experience such acute levels of poverty? One might expect that abundant raw resources would elevate an area's wealth level, encouraging investment and economic growth. The "resource curse," a phrase coined by Richard Auty in 1993, describes an area where resource wealth undermines that area's population's economic well-being. Sachs and Warner note that economies with abundant natural resources generally grow slower than economies with scarce resources. To test this theory, they analyze the relationship between resource intensity and growth. Sachs and Warner compare economies with high and low ratios of natural resource exports to GDP over nineteen years (1970-1989). Their evidence yields a significant negative relationship between resource intensity and growth, even after controlling for exogenous variables that may affect growth (e.g., per capita income). Acemoglu and Robinson offer further insight into this paradox by arguing that either inclusive or exclusive economic institutions can spur economic growth. Inclusive economic institutions encourage the relatively free entry of business, secure property rights laws, and "opportunity" for most citizens. Such opportunities include a relatively-level playing field to ensure that one interest does not crowd out the others. On the other hand, exclusive economic institutions are designed by powerful entities with the goal of extracting resources from other economic agents. They further claim that these inclusive or exclusive economic institutions form symbiotic synergies with either pluralist (e.g., Norway) or absolutist political systems (e.g., Venezuela).

The developmental economic literature has increasingly considered economic complexity, resulting from interactions between multiple economic agents, as an essential driver of development. Hidalgo and Hausmann assess country product associations by analyzing import/export data; they find a robust negative relationship between the number of products exported by a country and the ubiquity of those products (the number of countries exporting the same product). Their analysis also yields a strong positive correlation between export complexity and income per capita as well as future growth propensity. Although Central Appalachia no longer produces as much coal as it once did, the coal industry's past predominance as a major extractive agent can contextualize the region's present-day woes. According to the literature, areas that historically rely on a few extractive industries as a primary source of income constrain the on-the-job skills that area-residents acquire.

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104 Ibid.
106 Ibid.
108 Ibid, 20-50
110 Ibid.
On the other hand, an area with economic complexity affords workers a broader range of knowledge and, thus, employment opportunities: scholars draw a statistically significant positive relationship between cognitive ability and economic complexity. Moreover, other research identifies a positive correlation between industry diversity and economic resilience in congruence with these findings, suggesting a community is likelier to overcome an economic shock if it produces a more diverse array of goods.

Coal mining has a particularly rich history in West Virginia, the only state located entirely within Appalachia. The state is second only to Wyoming in coal production and accounts for 12% of total coal production in the United States. The construction of railroads between 1880 and 1920 unbridled a period of significant transformation within Central Appalachia, transitioning the economic landscape from agrarian to capitalist modes of production. During the early twentieth century, absentee-owned lumber companies advantaged from easy access to the railroad, killing most of West Virginia’s virgin forests. With the exhaustion of Central Appalachia’s timber resources, coal mining became the primary economic activity by 1920. The coal and railroad companies subsequently won land and mineral rights to 80% of southern West Virginia during the following decade. Rasmussen argues that this "insecurity in landownership" differentiated early-twentieth-century farmers from farmers elsewhere in the heartland. The farms in southern West Virginia, Eastern Kentucky, and southwest Virginia were often replaced with company-owned coal camps. Unlike other parts of Appalachia and the Midwest, most miners—79% in southern West Virginia and 64% in Eastern Kentucky/southwest Virginia—lived in such company towns by 1910. In addition to supplying miners with homes, the companies created all the necessary institutions to run the town. Mine operators thus orchestrated the general store, church, post office, and entertainment establishments. This relationship continued into the late twentieth century. The Appalachian Land Task Force found that "for many Appalachian people, coal camp life is not a bygone era. Facing no alternative, people remain, often dependent upon the will and wishes of the company landlord. In staying, they face insecurities of tenure, dilapidated housing, and fear of the company's power.”

116 Ibid.
118 Ronald Eller, Miners, Millhands, and Mountainers: Industrialization of the Appalachian South, 1880-1930 (Tennessee: University of Tennessee Press, 1982)
However, despite the industry’s long-time association with the Appalachian region, coal mine employment has declined since the mid-twentieth century.\footnote{Production of Coal and Coke in West Virginia 1863 – 2012,” West Virginia Office of Miner’s Health Safety and Training, March 14, 2020, https://minesafety.wv.gov/historicprod.htm} Much like in other sectors, mine owners replaced employees with mechanized equipment, such as longwall mining machines, beginning in the 1950s. Whereas 125,669 West Virginians were employed as miners in 1948, only 19,432 of the population remained miners by 2013. Eastern Kentucky and southern West Virginia, an area once home to most Appalachian company towns, is now Appalachia’s most distressed region.\footnote{“About the Appalachia Region,” ARC.gov, Appalachian Regional Commission, March 14, 2021, https://www.arc.gov/about-the-appalachian-region/} For example, McDowell County is one of the most impoverished counties in the country; in 1950, the area once boasted a population of nearly 100,000 residents, dwindling to less than 20,000 residents by 2019.\footnote{Rose Rudd, et. al., “Increases in Drug and Opioid Overdose Deaths United States, 2000–2014,” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, January 1, 2016, https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview} McDowell County, a rural, mountainous area, is located in the coalfields of southern West Virginia. Welch, the largest town in the County, is only accessible by a two-lane state roadway, like every other area-town. Coal mining has long been the primary source of economic activity in the County, with about 19.62% of the working population still employed as coal miners in 2012.\footnote{“Production of Coal and Coke in West Virginia 1863 – 2012,” West Virginia Office of Miner’s Health Safety and Training, March 14, 2020, https://minesafety.wv.gov/historicprod.htm} The industry's importance to the area's economic landscape can be traced to the 1880s. Pocahontas Fuel Company and U.S. Steel, recognizing southern West Virginia’s high-quality coal, established mines and mining towns in the area by acquiring land and mineral rights to thousands of acres. By the 1980s, energy and steel companies owned 86% of County land with mineral resources. In 2011, four companies controlled the land rights to more than 50% of all private land in McDowell County, offering some credence to the absentee ownership "resource curse" hypothesis.\footnote{“Who Owns West Virginia [PDF],” West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy, 2013} Economic hardship and social upheaval have come to define McDowell County; despite that, some residents remain resolute in their commitment to the County's economic development, claiming a strong sense of regional identity. Marsha Timpson, the executive director of a local community service non-profit, states, "Our coal forged the steel that built the nation. . .I am very connected to these mountains. This will always be home."\footnote{Elaine Sheldon, Hollow, Jeff Soyk (2013; Tribeca Film Institute New Media Fund, 2013) video.} She likens Central Appalachia to America's backyard, the area where one accomplishes necessary but, at times, unpleasant hard-work. However, not all residents look favorably upon the region's coal industry. Ellis Ray Williams, a retired educator and principal, recounts his advisor at West Virginia University telling him to avoid settling in Welch because the economy relied on one industry. Williams believes that the region's politicians have capitalized too long on supporting coal mining without incentivizing the development of auxiliary industries. He concludes that this mindset facilitates a "brain drain" in southern Appalachia, where most young adults who leave the County for college do not return because of the lack of jobs outside coal mining.\footnote{Ibid.} Indeed, the economic research firm, Chmura, developed an Economic Diversity Index (ranging from a high of 1 to a low of...
180) to assess the range of economic activity on a county-level.\textsuperscript{128} McDowell County's 126.45 index value is among the lowest in West Virginia; the area places in the bottom 7th percentile for relative industrial diversity (where the dominant industry is natural resource extraction) and bottom 6th percentile for relative occupational diversity.\textsuperscript{129}

While coal-mining is no longer a viable source of income for most communities in Central Appalachia, the industry’s significance to the economy and, to a smaller extent, the region’s culture can still be traced to present-day. Indeed, Central Appalachia’s plight is not unique. The increasing popularity of renewable energy in the United States will have a profound impact on fossil-fuel towns across the country, from the shale fields of Pennsylvania to the oil fields of Texas. As such, policy-makers must consider strategic place-based initiatives to help these areas transition; otherwise, they too may face the same fate as left-behind Central Appalachia.

\textsuperscript{129} Ibid.
“Point of Order, Madam Chairman”: The Increasing Importance of the Senate Parliamentarian

Christian Chlebowski

When highly politicized bills reach the floor of the United States Senate, eyes and ears in the media and the public hone in on the actions and speeches of duly elected congresspeople in an effort to analyze their stances and predict their votes. Doing so, however, glances over one of the most important members of the chamber— one person who holds the power to advance or reject aspects of party agendas. During debates over the Republican’s 2017 attempt to repeal the Affordable Care Act and the Democrat’s 2021 attempt to raise the minimum wage, for example, the Senate parliamentarian made rulings that essentially limited the actions and options for the respective parties. Throughout the recent history of the U.S. Senate, the importance of the parliamentarian, and the power the position holds, has increased with the expansion of partisanship, and, while the Senate parliamentarian lacks the fame and spotlight of the Senators she shares the Senate chamber with, the position itself is perhaps more important than theirs.

To investigate this relationship between the parliamentarian and partisanship, it is important to investigate three time periods of the United States Senate: from 1789 to 1935, when there was no such figure and presiding officers had full discretion over rulings, from 1935 to the late 20th century, when the parliamentarian was less frequently called on to moderate a partisan debate, and from then up to the present, where expanded partisanship has increased the vitality of the parliamentarian. Further, an analysis of Senatorial actions during these time periods reveals why the parliamentarian is the most important role in the chamber. Following this historical analysis, an investigation into current attitudes and perceptions will lead to an expanded discussion on the importance of the nonpartisan nature of the position, as well as potential future ramifications and impacts.

When the Senate first convened in March of 1789, the rostrum staff consisted of only a doorkeeper, secretary, chaplain, and two clerks, and although new positions were added over time, no parliamentarian served the United States Senate in an official capacity during the body's first 146 years. During this time period, conflicts over Senatorial actions and legislation were fairly common as the nation expanded and dealt with many significant issues. For instance, during the presidency of John Quincy Adams, John Randolph, a Virginian senator, frequently took to the floor to issue diatribes against the opposing parties’ legislative proposals and their politicians, including Adams, Vice-President John C. Calhoun, who was also an Adams opponent, refused to take action limiting these speeches. After much outrage on behalf of

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Adams’ party, Calhoun argued against the vice president taking action in the Senate, saying “Mark the consequences! If the Vice-President should belong to the same party or interest which brought the President into power, or if he be dependent of him for his political standing or advancement, you will virtually place the control over the freedom of debate in the hands of the Executive.”

This statement reinforced the nature of the Senate as a place of dialogue and unlimited debate, with the presiding officer urged to refrain from participating in actions. The unwillingness of the vice president to involve himself in the proceedings was his prerogative, although without the wit and understanding of a dedicated staffer to ensure order and adherence to precedent, his decision clearly led to debate and frustration amongst members.

A parliamentarian was not yet needed, however, because the Senate was much less busy during this time period. Not only was the legislative calendar much shorter, but the Senators themselves had fewer duties and responsibilities during this formative period. Ultimately, this meant that Senators had a detailed grasp of procedures and precedent, and were able to make decisions in accordance with the Standing Rules without the expertise of another individual. While partisanship was high at this time, as indicated by Vice President Calhoun in the example described above, the fact that participation among Senators themselves was high meant that both party interests were represented without an “arbitrator.” Essentially, a parliamentarian was not yet necessary because the chamber’s members held the required procedural knowledge and were more present to articulate precedent during Senate deliberations and actions.

That being said, the situation greatly changed as the body developed. With time, precedents became more deeply entrenched. This had the benefit of regulating the actions of the Senate, but the disadvantage of an increase in procedural knowledge necessary of Senators in order for work to be accomplished. During the 19th and 20th centuries, few Senators had this parliamentary knowledge. In one exchange from the 45th Congress, newly elected Senator Angus Cameron failed to adequately respond to a parliamentary inquiry from Senator Augustus Merrimon, leading to an extended debate and ultimately forcing the return of the president pro tempore to settle the dispute. This increasing complexity, while not necessarily tied to a rise in partisanship, was foundational for the creation of the role of the Senate parliamentarian.

While Senate procedure was complicated in the late 19th century, it became exceedingly complex with the proposal of Roosevelt’s New Deal, which “expanded opportunities for procedural confusion and legislative mischief.” This, in addition to the reduced time Senators began spending on the floor as they gained additional responsibilities, led to a decline in individual member awareness of procedure, and ultimately the hiring of the first Senate

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137 Ibid.
With this appointment, the partisanship and arbitrariness of procedural rulings began to decline as order and precedent were more routinely applied.

When Floyd Riddick joined the Office of the Parliamentarian in the early 1950s, he spent his first year doing nothing and reading the precedents compiled by Charles Watkins, the first Senate parliamentarian. Clearly, understanding and internalizing these rules and procedures of Senatorial function became important to the role of Senate parliamentarian, as Watkins, Riddick, and every parliamentarian since has established their understanding of precedence before taking the rostrum for the first time. The core purpose of this, according to Riddick, is to ensure that the parliamentarian knows the inside and out of rules, because “when you’re working at the desk you don’t have time to consult a textbook, or what have you. Sometimes the situation is such that unless you get them to call for a quorum, or something to give you a chance to check something out, you just don’t have time to go back and find out exactly what the precedent on that is.” The time period beginning with the appointment of the first parliamentarian, therefore, is one in which precedent was applied much more routinely than in the pre-position sessions. Fittingly, this period also saw a decrease in partisan rulings of the chair.

The nonpartisan position of Senate parliamentarian stipulates that nonpartisan rulings on Senatorial actions are handed down, and that generally was the case during these mid-to-late twentieth century sessions. According to Riddick, who spent many years working in the Office of the Parliamentarian, “I was very seldom questioned. I might say, at this point, that I served over a period of twenty-five years at the desk, and only one ruling was overturned by vote of the Senate. The Chair never failed to follow my advice except in one instance.” The fact that only one ruling was reversed while Riddick served exemplifies just how effective this position is at ensuring precedent was adhered in the chamber. That being said, the sheer span of rulings that the parliamentarian is responsible for recommending meant that the position saw a massive increase in power. It can clearly be seen therefore, that the influence of the parliamentarian grew substantially during this time period from 1935 through the late 20th century, as the power to shape legislation’s progression through the chamber was essentially consolidated under this position. Ever since this point in time, however, the importance of the parliamentarian’s rulings has become even more important as partisanship has reached record highs.

It is imperative to note that, while the parliamentarian provides guidance on how to proceed on various Senatorial actions, the Chair has no obligation to sustain or implement the parliamentarian’s recommendations. This is what Riddick refers to when he says that he had one ruling overturned; essentially, only one time during his tenure did the Chair or the Senate body decide to operate against his ruling. During the pre-parliamentarian period, literature and research suggests that rulings by the Chair were partisan and not always in accordance with precedence. This same research also indicates that the period beginning with the appointment of the first parliamentarian and carrying up through the end of the 20th century, around 1980, saw

141 Ibid
142 Ibid
the parliamentarian’s rulings mostly upheld. Since that point, however, the parliamentarian’s rulings have become more important—and more frequently debated and overturned according to party goals.

Madonna, Lynch, and Williamson’s 2019 analysis of the role of the parliamentarian found that the number of “points of order,” or parliamentary inquiries, made of the Chair saw a large uptick around the 94th Congress, beginning in 1975.143 While this doesn’t necessarily indicate an increase in the partisan content of the questions, it does indicate a greater desire of the Senate to challenge precedent. There are three major instances in the past decade when parliamentary inquiries have been raised, all of which represent perfect case studies that can be used to investigate this possible willingness to put partisanship above precedence: the Democrats’ 2013 utilization of the “nuclear option” to eliminate the three-fifths rule on executive branch nominations and federal judicial appointments, the Republicans’ 2017 utilization of the “nuclear option” to eliminate the three-fifths rule on Supreme Court nominations, and the Democrats’ 2021 effort to include the minimum wage in the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021. In the first two cases, the advice of the parliamentarian was overturned, and in the third, the parliamentarian’s advice was upheld.

Until 2013, the Standing Rules of the Senate indicated that a three-fifths vote was required to advance executive branch nominations and federal judicial appointments. In that year, gridlock and severe opposition to Obama nominations led then-majority leader Harry Reid to invoke the “nuclear option” to eliminate the filibuster.144 Essentially, the “nuclear option” is implemented when a point of order is raised that the cloture vote is by majority vote; when the parliamentarian advises the Chair to rule against the point of order, the ruling is overturned by appeal.145 A similar procedure was utilized in 2017 by Republicans under then-majority leader Mitch McConnell to eliminate the filibuster on Supreme Court nominations. In both of these examples, the parliamentarian's recommendation was overturned by the Senate’s majority party in order to promote their partisan agenda. The 2013 parliamentarian recommendation was overturned along partisan lines, 48–52, with all Republicans and three Democrats voting in favor of the parliamentarian’s recommendation.146 The 2017 rules change was also agreed to along partisan lines, 48-52, with all Democrats voting in favor of the parliamentarian’s recommendation.147 In both of these votes, a “yea” was in favor of the parliamentarian’s ruling and a “nay” was in opposition (favoring a change in precedent). The fact that precedent was changed by both parties when they were in the majority, both times in response to gridlock,

reflects on the “new” partisan nature of the Senate. At the same time, however, it is also important to note that both of these actions went contrary to the advice of Elizabeth MacDonough, the current parliamentarian. These two cases, therefore, indicate a willingness by America’s major political parties to buck precedence in an effort to achieve their legislative goals, especially in the years since the end of the 20th century. That being said, there are instances in which the majority party of the Senate does uphold the parliamentarian’s recommendation, even when the ruling is contrary to their desire. Case in point: the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021.

America saw two major “happenings” in the beginning of 2021: the continuation of the Coronavirus pandemic and the transition of power in Washington, D.C. to a unified Democratic government. The primary implication of this was the Democratic desire to pass a large stimulus plan that the Republicans largely blocked during the end of 2020. This came in the form of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, which initially contained a stipulation that the federal minimum wage be gradually increased to $15. In order to “fast-track” the bill, the Democrats proposed the bill under budget reconciliation, which avoids the possibility of a filibuster by enabling agreement by a majority vote. This does have parliamentary ramifications, however, namely in the form of the Byrd Rule, which is a series of requirements for budget reconciliation. On February 25, 2021, MacDonough ruled that the $15 minimum wage didn’t meet these requirements, and that it must be struck from the bill if it were to be passed as a budget reconciliation.

The result of this recommendation was immediate pushback from progressive Democrats. Representative Ilhan Omar called for MacDonough to be fired. Others called for Vice President Harris to ignore the advice and overrule her. While that ultimately did not happen, this pushback indicates the willingness of parties to ignore precedent in considering the business of the Senate. Further, while this may seem an isolated incident, recommendations of the parliamentarian that are contrary to the majority party’s wishes have led to reprimands and disciplinary actions. Because the position serves at the discretion of the majority leader, the parliamentarian can be fired without cause. This happened in 1987, when then-parliamentarian Robert Dove was fired by the Democrats when they took control of the chamber.

153 Ibid
154 Ibid
155 Ibid
1995, his successor was fired when the Republicans took control of the chamber; Dove was fired again in 2001 when a string of rulings against the Republicans angered them. Therefore, not only does the case study of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 reinforce the knowledge that parties have an increased willingness to subvert the recommendations of the parliamentarian in order to accomplish their partisan goals, but the string of firings and replacements in the late 20th century and early 21st century further emphasize this point.

In summary, the time period from the late 20th century up through the present reveals the increased role of the parliamentarian in the behaviors of the Senate, as their rulings have often frustrated partisan motives in such ways leading to either an overturning of their recommendations and essentially a change in precedent, as is the case in the 2013 and 2017 case studies, or by taking action against the person holding the position of Senate parliamentarian, as was discussed in the 2021 case study.

While the Senate parliamentarian lacks the fame and spotlight of the Senators she shares the Senate chamber with, the position itself is perhaps more important than theirs. Without the parliamentarian, few, if any, Senators would be able to effectively and properly lead the chamber through its behaviors. Further, precedence would collapse and partisan behaviors would truly take over all Senatorial actions, as was the case in the Senate’s beginning years. Clearly, this position is one of, if not the, most important, unrecognized, and oft-unappreciated positions in the Senate.

In a study by James Wallner on the position of the parliamentarian, he declared that “the parliamentarian effectively presides over the chamber. When the presiding officer is required to respond to a parliamentary inquiry or make a ruling on a point of order, it is the parliamentarian who whispers the appropriate procedure to the Chair.” This is perhaps the clearest evidence of the superiority of the parliamentarian over the Senators in terms of power yielded. Because no Senator during the modern Senate era has adequate knowledge of procedure, the parliamentarian exercises control of the chamber. This is neither inherently good nor bad— but it does create an increasingly fractured environment for the current and future office-holders. As has been repeatedly seen in the most recent Congresses alone, oversight of this role has expanded significantly. An analysis of Google Trends from 2004 through the present reveals that the parliamentarian largely flew under the radar during the early 21st century, with slight upticks when the Affordable Care Act was under debate in the chamber. From 2014 up through the present day, however, search popularity was in constant flux, indicating an increased attention to the position and the rulings accompanying it. This indicates that, moving into the future, the news media is likely to increase coverage of the rulings made by the Senate parliamentarian, which will politicize the position much more than it already is. Appointments to the position are destined to become as scrutinized as other high-status positions, including Cabinet secretaries and Supreme Court justices.

159 https://trends.google.com/trends/explore?date=all&geo=US&q=senate%20parliamentarian
While this seems like an issue for pundits and correspondents to grapple with, for, indeed, it is often these news personalities who ensure the public is aware of what is, and isn’t, happening in our government and world, this is a much greater problem—one that every American must wrestle with. Think of the chaos every new presidential administration faces when it fights to confirm cabinet nominees, and the battles constantly accompanying nomination of a candidate to the Supreme Court—these are highly contentious, highly politicized battles that often shut down Congress, especially the Senate, for days, weeks, and occasionally even months. Unlike these nominees and these Senatorial actions, the parliamentarian does not by herself shape policy or law for the future; she simply dictates the way in which Senators must go about enacting their preferred legislation. Indeed, scrutiny and analysis of the position only really arises when a controversial decision is made or a high-priority party strategy is shot down. This indicates that the average American, while they might not be aware of who the parliamentarian is, is highly impacted by her rulings. Why should we care, however? The answer to that lies in the fact that the position is a nonpartisan position, and, should parties have a vendetta against a parliamentarian, they have the ability to remove the officeholder. Because the Senate was designed as a deliberative chamber, removing nonpartisan officers enables a majority to push through their legislation without care for precedence or deliberation. Therefore, the answer to why this position, and awareness of it, is important is simple: the average citizen must be aware of the importance of this nonpartisan position in order to protect their rights.

It’s a given that the parliamentarian will rule against a party’s wishes from time to time, but, as Senator James Doolittle discussed, one negative ruling might be followed by a positive ruling.\textsuperscript{160} Ultimately, while a party may “to-day be with the temporary majority...the time is coming when the same rule that they prescribe now, may be prescribed to them, under circumstances when it may be not easy for them to bear it .”\textsuperscript{161} If the majority appoints a parliamentarian of their “party,” precedence will essentially be abolished and the minority’s right to a voice in the legislative process is wiped from existence. While initially beneficial to the majority, such action has devastating ramifications should that party become the minority. It is in the best interest of citizens of both parties, therefore, to retain the nonpartisan nature of this position. Given these recent developments with regard to interest and focus on the role of the Senate parliamentarian, it is fitting both to investigate the history of the position and to analyze the potential future trajectory of the role. Ultimately, the only time period (other than the current one) in which these behaviors and extremely partisan attitudes were reflected was in the pre-parliamentarian time period from the first Senate up through 1935, when it was up to individual Senators (when serving as the presiding officer) or the Vice President to make a decision regarding points of order. In this earlier time period, precedent was only observed as much as an individual Senator knew of them, which enabled partisan rulings. With the expansion of Senatorial duties and the vast increase in precedents, however, procedural knowledge among Senators decreased, leading to the appointment of the first Senate parliamentarian who had the responsibility of advising the Chair on running the Senate chamber. This middle time period beginning in 1935 and running up through the end of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century witnessed an acknowledgement of precedence and few instances of partisan bias in rulings. With the end of


\textsuperscript{161} Congressional Globe, 35th Congress, February 25, 1859. https://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=llcg.
the last century, however, partisan goals began leading to increased gridlock in the Senate and further motivation for individual parties to ignore the recommendations of the parliamentarian in order to further their agenda. All in all, these three time periods provide a fascinating lens through which an investigation of the Senate’s behaviors and functions can be observed. Next time, therefore, that a piece of major legislation is making its way through the chamber, don’t count out the parliamentarian. They may not employ the spotlight as much as Senators do, but they have massive amounts of power in determining the true agenda of the Senate chamber.
Plague Politics: Insights of Pandemics Past

James Cokorinos

The COVID-19 pandemic has wrought mass suffering across the globe, and from its early days it has drawn comparisons to world health crises of the past, including HIV/AIDS\textsuperscript{162}, the 1918 Influenza\textsuperscript{163}, and even the Black Death\textsuperscript{164}. With our elected leaders failing to rein in the virus, it makes sense that we would look to history for guidance, and perhaps hope for the future. In our search for wisdom in the legacies of past pandemics, we must first familiarize ourselves with some relevant historical context.

The Black Death is widely considered the largest and most consequential pandemic in recorded human history. As its name suggests, it is the most fatal pandemic on record\textsuperscript{165}, appearing as early as 1346 and as recently as this year\textsuperscript{166}—although its heyday was over by 1353. The Black Death was preceded by several similar plagues, none of which were quite able to match the magnitude of the Black Death, but all of which left their mark on history. The Antonine Plague (c. 165 CE) severely weakened the Roman Empire\textsuperscript{167}, and is credited by some historians with jump-starting the spread of Christianity\textsuperscript{168}, when it turned out that people living in such bleak times were readily persuaded by the promise of life after death. The Plague of Justinian (c. 541 CE) dealt a crippling blow to the Byzantine Empire\textsuperscript{169}, and served in many ways as a grim trial-run for the plague-pandemic that would follow—in fact, researchers have found that the Plague of Justinian was caused by the same bacterium (Yersinia Pestis) as the Black Death\textsuperscript{170}. Despite this, these events hardly hold a candle to the consequences of the Black Plague, whose impact was so grave and widespread that I cannot hope to capture it in these brief


paragraphs. In just a few short years, the Black Death was able to set in motion historical processes that brought us the downfall of feudalism in Europe, ages of religious discrimination and genocide, the explosion of print books, and even the word “quarantine” itself (one which we are by now painfully familiar with)—all of which will be discussed below. Certainly, such a momentous historical event must bear some insight, some wisdom that may help guide us through the depths of today’s global pandemic. I hope to reveal these lessons of the past, whatever they are, in the work before you now.

For all their similarities, The Black Death was distinct from its predecessors in several important ways. For one, it spread quickly—consuming Europe at a pace of several miles per day (compared to 20th century variants of the plague that rarely covered this distance in a year)\(^1\). In addition to its rapid spread, the plague was also incredibly deadly. Those who contracted the Black Death faced a dreadful prognosis, with 80% of those infected dying within just eight days\(^2\). Estimates of a death toll range from 75 to 200 million, and it is conventionally understood that the plague killed one-third of Europe’s entire population. Some accounts have suggested this proportion was even higher, with medievalist Philip Daileader positing that the percentage who perished is closer to 50%\(^3\), and historian Ole Benedictow concluding that the correct proportion might be as high as 60%\(^4\). Several major European cities, including the likes of Paris, Florence, London, and Hamburg, saw their populations cut in half in only a few years\(^5\). Some regions would not see their populations return to pre-plague levels for a century and a half. Amid the devastation, several local governments tried a variety of different mitigation methods, almost all of which were miserable failures. The disease swept in so rapidly and with such severity that doctors had little opportunity to consider the causes of the disease, and without the benefits of modern medical practice, doctors could offer almost no insight into the origins or nature of the plague. In many cases, conventional care actually accelerated the spread of the disease, with techniques like bloodletting proving to be seriously counterproductive. Certainly, these doctors were constrained by their time, but their inadequacy ultimately allowed the nature of the disease to become a political, rather than a scientific issue. That is, when doctors failed to provide an explanation for the causes of the virus, political figures stepped in with their own explanations. This process took different forms in different geographical regions, but always bore gruesome, destructive consequences. Even locales that can be said to have “effectively” battled the spread of disease were far from perfect—for example, Milan stands out for its distinctly low mortality rate and death count, which it achieved through a practice of entombing in brick the houses of all citizens suspected of carrying the disease\(^6\). Obviously, these draconian measures should hardly elicit celebration—instead we can only be grateful that today’s quarantines have not been so extreme.

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Despite this rather barbaric system, the leadership of Milan hardly matches the insidious programs enacted across the rest of Europe at the time. As I’ve alluded to above, uncertainty about the causes of the plague gave way to countless mystical, pseudoscientific, and often discriminatory explanations for the disease peddled by political and religious leaders (which we recognize were not terribly far removed from one another at that time)\textsuperscript{177}. These ranged from theories of miasma (transmission of illness through “foul air”)\textsuperscript{178} to all manner of religious interpretation—the prevailing understanding being that the mass suffering was induced by a higher power in order to punish humanity for some grave sin.

More prevalent than any of these theories, however, was the myth that Jewish people were responsible for the Plague. Across Europe, Jews were labeled the most likely culprit, typically accused of “poisoning the water supply” of gentile neighbors and bringing about mass death as some sort of cultish plot\textsuperscript{179}. As a result, Jews faced extraordinary persecution, with thousands of Jews in communities across Europe being murdered as part of several dozen pogroms in cities including Barcelona, Flanders, Strasbourg, Frankfurt, and Brussels. More than 500 Jewish communities across Europe and Asia were destroyed, and Jews—many of whom already lived in ghettos segregated from the religious majority—saw their communities terrorized and looted, sometimes even before the plague had arrived. By several accounts, many Jews chose to take their own lives upon learning of these purges so that they could avoid persecution themselves\textsuperscript{180}. So long as bubonic plagues occurred and recurred in the region (and they did several times over until the 20\textsuperscript{th} century), Jews have been scapegoated and targeted for hatred and discrimination. While genocide is far from realization today, we can observe similar currents in modern times as a reaction to the COVID-19 pandemic. Namely, parallels between the scapegoating of Jewish people in the 14\textsuperscript{th} century and Asian people today stand out\textsuperscript{181}. The idea that Asians are worthy of hateful ire because the novel coronavirus seems to have originated in Wuhan is reminiscent of the “well-poisoning” accusations of the Jews—particularly so when we consider the relatively popular conspiracy theory that COVID-19 is not a natural disease but instead a bioweapon deployed by the Chinese government\textsuperscript{182}. In addition to the disinformation propagated about the roots and spread of the virus that assign undue responsibility to ordinary Asian people on the basis of their race, we may also observe the trivialization of this sort of bigotry, and in fact an insistence on it. “Cancel Culture!” is the cry of anyone asked to hide their bigotry a little bit better, as derogatory terms like \textit{Wuhan Flu} and \textit{Chinavirus} take hold in


mainstream American political discourse. Further connections reveal themselves when examining public attitudes toward disease mortality in other communities. Jewish people in the Black Plague endured lower death rates compared to other populations—likely due to their diligent focus on personal hygiene per religious tradition—but this was considered proof of their culpability. Nearly identical arguments are common today, with China’s low national death rate being held up as evidence that they “poisoned the well.”

Some historians theorize the Black Death as being instrumental in the development of printing, playing a critical role in the literary explosion that arrived in Europe in the 15th century. These scholars posit that the mass fabric left over in the clothing of the deceased provided the materials for a large influx of “rag stock” paper—cheaply made and strong enough for early printing presses. With this sudden injection of inexpensive, usable paper, some accounts credit the Black Death with a major contribution to the Printing Revolution, although this history is far from settled. Many historians dispute the theory, contending that there is not ample evidence to support it. In writing this article, I spoke with UConn professor Dr. Susan Einbinder, who told me that although the theory has a place in historical discourse, it has deficiencies beyond what should be considered reasonable doubt. The explosion in printing did not come about in Europe until more than 120 years after the most significant outbreaks of the Black Death, and Dr. Einbinder suggests that historical evidence points to other factors making much more significant contributions to the growth of printing than did the Black Death. Right now, modern economists are scrambling to assess the impact of COVID-19 on the world’s economy and make predictions about the future. They should be happy to know that as disruptive as they believe the COVID-19 pandemic has been, it does not represent a shift nearly as revolutionary as the one brought about by the Black Death. The Black Death by most accounts ended feudality in the West. Its economic impact around the world truly cannot be overstated.

Naturally, the crews on the ships that carried the disease to Europe did not last long, and the dwindling number of sailors created all sorts of problems for seafaring trade, but this was only the beginning. The disease was so rampant and so deadly that a significant mass of the European labor pool perished, resulting in a sudden, precipitous increase in the demand for labor. As each region began to recover, the surviving serfs and peasantry found themselves in incredibly prosperous conditions. Not only could surviving serfs begin choosing where they worked and bargaining with their employers on some level, many landowning lords died and left large estates that their former serfs could demand ownership over. European nobility quickly grasped to maintain as much of their power and status as possible, by creating laws that fixed prices, wages,

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and increased taxation\textsuperscript{188}. These policies, where implemented, only generated unrest among their constituents, who had tasted freedom and were not about to start making concessions. As a result, numerous locales saw riots and organized rebellion, each with varying levels of success (the Peasants’ Revolt in England and the Harelle in France are notable examples of these uprisings). Given this rising social pressure, and the massive material changes from the sheer devastation brought about by the Black Death, the dissolution of feudal economic relations in Europe became inevitable. The medieval gentry, in kind, hastened once more to hang onto any power they could, manifesting in most places in the expansion of “sumptuary laws.”\textsuperscript{189} Sumptuary laws are those which place restrictions on what could be bought and by whom, particularly with regard to luxury items. Such policies quickly became popular as a way of cementing the social status of the nobility—perhaps the lower classes may provide for themselves, engage in entrepreneurial endeavors, and be entitled to a larger “share of the pie” than before, but luxury purchases (including fine clothing, jewelry, and some foods) were exclusively reserved for those of noble lineage. In most cases these restrictions have also withered away with time, but they are noteworthy as the dying breaths of feudal power in Europe.

In addition to hopes of sage ancestral wisdom, we also study our history in the hopes that it will help us deduce what comes next—perhaps a deep look into our past will refine our expectations for the future. At the moment, the market for future predictions is enjoying a sustained \textit{boom}, and it seems that everyone (scholars of the social sciences and humanities in particular) is anxious to figure out what is on the horizon. If our past can clue us in to what our future holds, it’s certainly worth exploration. I want to lay out a few theories of what lies ahead, and from there we can determine whether any historical precedent exists or if these theories would see humanity breaking new ground.

The primary speculation around our modern future lies in the domain of Geopolitics and International Relations. Many hypotheses seem to orbit one central question: Does COVID-19 represent a large enough catastrophe to disrupt the global order and the power relations that preceded it? A relatively popular theory sees a new Cold War breaking out with China and the United States as the major players\textsuperscript{190}. IR scholars, students, and commentators can all list their own vision of how these factions would coalesce, and indeed there are some interesting thought experiments and perhaps some game theory to be had. Would India throw its weight behind China or the United States? Would the European Union present a unified front, and will it be empowered or disempowered in the wake of the pandemic? Would we see the return of proxy wars and puppet regimes, and what will be the role of the global south? Often, these theories resolve themselves by declaring that one power has a clear advantage, predicting that it will emerge as the global superpower following some sort of confrontation. Some theorists regard it as plainly obvious that an era of Chinese dominance is on the horizon, others are convinced that U.S. hegemony is firmly established and will remain untouched.


\textsuperscript{189} Ibid.

Other commentators regard this global pandemic as the beginning of a more cooperative era between global powers, one that will be marked by collaboration rather than competition. Perhaps, these thinkers say, addressing the pandemic globally will set the stage for national powers to put aside their differences and work more productively in tandem going forward. It is also not a big stretch to regard international COVID response as a bellwether for climate action. In some ways, COVID is a referendum on international cooperation. More than a year into the pandemic, supporters of this theory cannot be terribly optimistic. The type of coordinated effort that is needed to mitigate the worst effects of climate change is a long way away, if COVID response is any indication.

Finally, there is another prediction that says COVID has dealt (or will deal) a hearty blow to neoliberalism and the present global power structures. This line of thinking would have countries retreat into protectionism and become reliant on national, rather than international economic dependencies, and would also likely be characterized by nationalist movements taking power in countries around the world. This theory seems to have some historical precedent if we consider the period following the 1918 Spanish Influenza and first world war (although at the same time, it seems to be refuted in many ways by period following the Black Death), and it is strengthened by the fact that 1918 is, relatively speaking, rather recent history—at least compared to the plagues of antiquity. In fact, the 1918 Influenza came about after the formation of modern capital, and in a system that is (at least economically) more similar to our current order than it is different. This theory and all its derivatives hinge on the prediction that for one reason or another the COVID-19 pandemic will indeed cause a reorganization of global power; that it will disrupt our current governing authorities in a way that fundamentally changes the global balance of power.

Next, we find questions of our economic futures. I’ve already discussed one plague that facilitated the shift from one mode of production to another, so perhaps people are not crazy to think that this can happen again. Several paths for the U.S. and global economy come to mind—The most hotly speculated theory of the future envisions a triumph of Keynesian economics. With the pandemic bringing market failures to the fore, the theory posits, we will inevitably see the expansion of social programs and the strengthening of welfare institutions. The extent of government involvement seems to vary as widely as these predictions themselves (although common patterns include the adoption of UBI programs and revitalized healthcare infrastructure), but all imagine the government in a more active role than its current one. A handful of theorists suggest a return to Social Contract Theory and predict that one way or another, people will insist that their government facilitate the provision of certain basic

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entitlements (water, housing, medical care). These programs may arrive in the revolutionary or reformist variety, or perhaps a combination of the two. The most confident of these voices expect an international push toward Social Democracy, claiming that the promise of basic entitlements with the stability of moderate (rather than more radical) redistribution will make it the most appealing package. Perhaps this is true, but for now Social Democracy is certainly not the only game in town.

Another theory, perhaps in the same school as the “U.S. power will not be challenged” critique expects neoclassical economics to clinch victory and have its power cemented the world over195. Following the pandemic, these thinkers imagine that fiscal austerity and protectionism win out in the United States and European Union196. Under this scenario, wealth inequality would continue to grow, and it seems that these powers would become susceptible to further destabilization in the vein of the 2008 financial crisis.

The last economic prediction seems to synthesize the other two in a way; perhaps it can be viewed as a middle ground. This outcome would be characterized by Big Tech domination197, with the current economic order being more or less upheld by a new class of business-oriented engineers198. In this outcome, we are propelled into a new era of neoliberalism, where government programs take a deeper back seat and serve only to induce minor wealth distribution for the sake of The Market. Basically, government responsibility will boil down to maintaining a healthy velocity of money and nothing else. This would be achieved through programs like a Universal Basic Income and would, in my opinion, mark a resounding victory of elite technocracy over populism. This scenario seems reminiscent of recent history, pandemic or not—a rehashing of period that created the “neo” in neoliberal.

Finally, we come to questions of social cohesion and popular unrest. One critique suggests that the COVID-19 pandemic will give way to mass protest of international significance. Perhaps during—but more likely after the pandemic, this theory suggests that we will see mass political mobilization from people who look around themselves and find a world in decay199. Many of these thinkers are optimistic that a resurgent, more powerful Occupy Wall Street movement (2.0, per se) will emerge with popular support. Comparisons to the 1960s United States also abound for this scenario. The counter to this theory appears far more grim, but certainly carries the credibility of historical precedent. This opposing prediction would see a second coming of the fallout to the Spanish Influenza and first world war, with tones of the 1930s playing an important role. In this reality, Nationalism becomes fashionable, populist

autocrats have a go, immigration is stifled, economic anxiety is blamed on marginalized minorities and far-away peoples, and near-dictatorial authority (either by individuals or corporations) fills the vacuum that rising global instability has created. The social fabric is frayed further, but strengthened when it might serve the national identity, and so on. Interesting discourses on technology and surveillance in these states can be had, and of course we would see the expansion of military technology with weapons becoming deadlier and less humanizing (of course more 20th-century callbacks here). Refracting through all of these theories is the theme that the COVID-19 pandemic will see the heightening of political tension and action, with extremes becoming more and more likely in the wake of the pandemic (including not only extreme action but also extreme inaction).

By now I’ve raised several new possibilities and considerations, but have done little to speak to our original question: what do pandemics of yore tell us about the novel coronavirus? In my opinion, if anything instructive can be derived from pandemics past, it is their place in history as a cautionary tale. Although they could never warn us directly, the voices of victims of the plague, of genocidal pogroms that followed, of the harsh, exploitative economic framework left in the Plague’s wake, should come through loud and clear: we cannot repeat the mistakes of history. Perhaps COVID-19 will mark a chapter in history as significant as the Black Death. If it does, we should hope that what is written describes not another grim, catastrophic failure, but instead the triumphs and successes of humanity over its environment—and perhaps more importantly, over its past.

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Explaining Reproductive Health Disparities: Violence in the “Colorblind” Institution of Medicine: A Redacted Honors Thesis

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Throughout its history, and to this very day, the United States has declared war on Black and Brown motherhood. Reproductive rights have historically and continue to be restricted for Black women in the United States. The father of modern gynecology, James Marion Sims, performed experiments and perfected his technique on slave women during the mid-nineteenth century. Centuries later, federally funded clinics replicated Sims’ methods by conducting sterilization and eugenics practices disproportionately on Black women. This paper focuses on how the American government has continually perpetrated acts of reproductive violence against Black mothers, resulting in higher rates of negative outcomes. For the purposes of this paper, reproductive violence will be categorized as a form of medical violence. Johanna Shapiro (2018) defines medical violence as when a “... patient becomes a kind of victim, treated differently and damagingly by a physician who (usually unwittingly) has set aside the patient’s humanity.” Thus, the root of reproductive violence is physicians’ choices and actions that harm and victimize women in general, but specifically Black and Brown women. The specific manifestations of reproductive violence that this paper explores are patient experimentation, sterilization practices, and high rates of comorbidities regardless of income or education. Each of these forms of reproductive violence exemplify the dehumanization of African American women and will be explored in detail.

Slave experimentation was a natural occurrence linked to the state-supported ideology that rendered African Americans as naturally inferior to White Americans. For example, former US President Thomas Jefferson performed a vaccine experiment on over 200 slaves in order to determine the efficacy of a cowpox vaccine. Moreover, James Marion Sims, the father of modern gynecology, “is an important figure in the history of experimentation with African Americans because he so well embodies the dual face of American medicine to which racial health disparities owe so much.” Harriet Washington, social scientist and medical enthusiast, argues that Sims is too often revered as a women’s health pioneer and benefactor, while his dark past of performing painful and unanesthetized experiments without consent on eleven slave women for four years has been glossed over. Sims made his scientific “advancements,” through trial and error procedures performed on the eleven female slaves over the course of four years and his treatment of the women was extremely cruel; several male doctors that had initially come to assist Sims all left within the first year, leaving the women to hold one another down

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205 Johanna Shapiro, “‘Violence’ in medicine: Necessary and unnecessary, intentional and Unintentional.” Bio Medical Central, 2018, p. 2
207 Ibid, p. 61
208 Ibid, pgs. 61 and 4
and support each other through the process. In 1852, Sims published a paper on his success with vesicovaginal fistula operations, which he had performed through abusive and unethical surgeries on the eleven African American women. Moreover, it is important to note that Sims was likely aware of anesthesia because it had been discussed in the medical community by the 1840s, and he was often willing to administer it to White women who lacked “apparent regard for its trouble or risk.” The nature of Sims’s cruel and inhumane practices continued well into the twentieth century and were mirrored by other scientists and medical professionals for decades to come.

For example, in 1951, the healthcare providers of Henrietta Lacks, an African American woman dying of cervical cancer, took samples of her cancerous cells and gave them to researchers without her consent. Perhaps more outrageous is the fact that Lacks’s DNA was not discovered until the late 1990s. Her great-granddaughter, Erika Johnson, made this discovery during her biology class, where students were experimenting on cells from a widely used line known as HeLa, originating from tissue taken from Lacks. This horrific story exemplifies the fact that Black bodies--especially Black women--have been devalued by White supremacy that undergirds American healthcare institutions.

By the time of the Great Depression, eugenics--“who’s historical connotations tie it to the selective breeding programs, horrifying concentration camps, medical experiments, and mass exterminations...”--usually mechanized through forced hysterectomies and had become a popular practice in the United States. Eugenics became popular primarily because of Southern segregationists’ opposition towards “intermingling between Blacks and Whites” and fear of Black political advancement. One of the movement’s most vocal advocates was a White woman, Margaret Sanger, who is often lauded as a feminist and pioneer of birth control. Through her strategic efforts and alliances with legislative lobbying organizations, Sanger was able to effectively institute eugenics practices that disproportionately targeted Black mothers. This ultimately resulted in state-sponsored discrimination and forced sterilization. Moreover, by the 1930’s, sterilization practices, particularly through abortions and birth control such as

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209 Harriet Washington, Medical Apartheid the Dark History of Medical Experimentation on Black Americans from Colonial Times to the Present (New York, New York, United States: Random House Publishing, 2008) 61, 64, 65
210 Ibid, p. 66
211 Ibid, p. 65
213 Ibid
214 Ibid
Depo-Provera (and later in the 1990’s, NorPlant), had become regularly practiced on African American mothers. By 1970, Black women were sterilized twice as frequently as White women. Social scientists, including Shatema Threadcraft, have theorized that this was done in order to limit the Black population and maintain the White power structure. In *Killing the Black Body*, renowned scholar, Dorothy Roberts, argues that a reason why reproductive violence was so prevalent during the last twentieth century was because Black women often lacked access to family planning services. This lack of proper healthcare (specifically reproductive healthcare) facilities and supportive healthcare professionals contributed greatly to the racial disparities in mortality rates, which disproportionately impacted Black mothers.

Today, reproductive violence has expanded beyond low-income communities of color and Black mothers who lacked the resources, social platform, education, and income to safeguard themselves from mechanisms of violence and coercion. Rather, Black women including elite athletes Serena Williams Allyson Felix and superstar Beyoncé Knowles-Carter have also experienced reproductive violence during their birthing process. The expansion and pervasiveness of reproductive violence has been accompanied by an intensification in the violence towards Black women, where their health is increasingly jeopardized during pregnancy and child birthing. For example, the strong Black woman trope constructed by society has created a phenomenon where Black and Brown women are distributed lower rates of epidural and anesthetic use, while also having the highest rates of cesarean deliveries. Thus, this trope which dictates that Black women have a high degree of fortitude and thus can overcome even the most difficult of obstacles, translates to Black women having a higher degree of pain tolerance and less need for pain management and consistent healthcare provider check-ups. The strong Black woman trope, while seemingly harmless—or even uplifting—has led to less epidural usage by Black women—who may themselves believe they are capable of laboring effectively without the help of an epidural and/or have been told repeatedly by society that they are strong enough to cope with the pain. Thus, the outcome of not receiving an epidural can still negatively impact Black women, because their pain cannot be relieved. Although the disparities in some reproductive healthcare practices may have some positive implications, “disparities in health care utilization are shown to contribute to the disparities in health

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220 Shatema Threadcraft *Intimate justice the Black female body and the body politic* (New York, New York, United States: Oxford University Press, 2018) p. 2
221 Ibid, p. 3
223 Ibid
outcomes.” Additionally, Black women suffer from greater hypertensive diseases than their White counterparts. As a result, they are more prone to chronic hypertension and preeclampsia during pregnancy than White women. In fact, in 2014, Black mothers had a rate of 69.8 preeclampsia deliveries per 1,000 deliveries in comparison to 43.3 for White women. Further, “African American women are 60 percent more likely to have high blood pressure, [in comparison] to non-Hispanic White women.” Thus, the strong Black woman trope, in conjunction with systemic oppression and other external factors, often propel rather than reduce reproductive health disparities (specifically during the birthing process).

All in all, Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) women in the United States have experienced many forms of reproductive violence, dating back to slavery and the Antebellum south, suggesting that this form of oppression is truly as old as the country itself. This paper analyzed specific examples of reproductive violence--that have mechanized primarily through the devaluing of Black pain and lack of Black representation in positions of authority--that have impacted African American women throughout US history. However, while the examples provided might be particularly troubling cases, it is important to note that there are many, many more. Within the framework of political science, for example, reproductive violence takes place when the State, operating under the grip of White supremacy, forcefully takes Black children from their mothers and essentially declares war on Black motherhood. This occurred during slavery and is mirrored in the latter half of the twentieth century during welfare reforms. Consequently, this paper has employed a historic lens in order to contextualize the contemporary examples of reproductive health disparities and demonstrate that reproductive violence against Black and Brown women has occurred systematically throughout US history.

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232 Ibid, p. 159